**Students’ Personal and Social Development through listening in English Language Teaching**

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There is nothing new about the main idea that communicative ability is the goal of foreign language learning. A communicative approach opens up a wider perspective on language. In particular, it makes us consider language not only in terms of its structures (grammar and vocabulary), but also in terms of communicative functions. Thus, it makes us more strongly aware that it is not enough to teach learners how to manipulate the structures of foreign language. They must also develop strategies for relating these structures to their communicative functions in real situations.

Language learning takes place inside the learner and, as teachers know to their frequent frustration; many aspects of it are beyond their pedagogical control. So, communicative activity (inside or outside the classroom) is an important part of the total learning process. Most learners will spend considerably more time in listening to the foreign language than in producing it themselves. In the foreign environment, the ability to make sense of these messages is often crucial for survival. In their own country, many learners will have more opportunities to hear the foreign language than to speak. In addition, he must be prepared to cope with wide range of situational or performance factors which outside his control: communication is made difficult by physical factors such as background noise, distance or unclear sound reproduction (e.g. over loud speakers at airports or stations). Here also we can speak about the variety in tempo of speech, clarity of articulation and regional accent. Thus, we should discuss briefly the nature of listening comprehension.

**The active nature of listening comprehension**

Listening has often been called a passive skill. This is misleading. Listening demands active involvement from the hearer. The hearer must actively contribute knowledge from both linguistic and nonlinguistic sources. For example, it is only by applying his knowledge of the language that he can divide the continuous stream of sounds into meaningful unit at all. Thus, a single word as “Ready?” might have the force of invitation to come and eat in some situations, but a very different meaning in others. In fact, the majority of utterances that we hear in daily life could be conceived as carrying different meanings in different circumstances. It is only because we are actively involved in the communication process that we are generally able to relate them to a single appropriate meaning. The nature of listening comprehension means that the learner should be encouraged to engage in an active process of listening for meanings, using not linguistic clues but also his nonlinguistic knowledge.

**Listening with a purpose**

The active nature of listening means no less than in speaking. The learner must be motivated by communicative purpose. This purpose determines to a large extent what meanings he must listen for and which parts of the spoken test are most important to him. For example, there may be parts where he does not need to understand every detail, but only listen to the general gist. At other times, a task may require him to listen for specific pieces of information distributed throughout of the text.

The activities will be grouped according to the kind of response that the learner must produce:

1. Performing physical tasks (selecting pictures).
2. Transferring information (into tabular form).
3. Reformulating or evaluating information.

The main idea will be on listening for functional information, but sometimes for social information. The results of successful listening contribute to some further purpose that the learners are most motivated.

In the activities included under transferring, learners are still required information; learners are required to look for specific types of meaning. In one of the activities, learners are told that they will hear descriptions of five people:

1. A girl describing her boyfriend.
2. A boy describing a girl he dislikes.
3. A writer describing the celebrity.
4. A police description of a criminal.
5. A friend describing his aunt whom you are going to visit.

They are provided with the following table:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| People and information | Hair | Build | height |
| 1 Criminal |  |  |  |
| 2 Boy |  |  |  |
| 3 Girl |  |  |  |
| 4 Writer |  |  |  |
| 5 Police description |  |  |  |

As the learners listen to each description, they must first identify which person is being described, then fill in as much information as possible on the table. Here are some of descriptions:

* “He is 56 years old, approximately5ft 8 in tall with short black hair. He is well built and extremely strong. This man is dangerous and fierce and may attack without warning. Members of public should not approach him.
* She will be at the station at 7.30. She has dark hair and she is very beautiful. She’s tall and very slim. I’m sure you‘ll enjoy meeting her.”

As other example, learners may be asked to listen to a series of station announcements (authentic or simulated), and to record important details of trains:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Destination | Time of departure | Platform | Calling at |
| Oxford |  |  |  |
| Bristol | 13.16 |  |  |
| Manchester |  | 8 |  |

One of the announcements could be:

“The train now standing at a platform4 is the 12.45 to Bristol, calling at Cheltenham and Gloucester. Passengers for Cardiff should change at Gloucester.”

The spoken text can be in the form of conversation, which the learners ‘overhear’.

Thus, activities we used in listening:

* **Identification and selection**
* **Sequencing.**  Learner must now identify successive pictures that are described or mentioned, in order to place them in their correct sequence
* **Locating.** A further variation is that learners are required to place items not into a sequence, but into their appropriate location, e.g. on a plan of a house or town or they may have to follow a route on a map
* **Drawing or constructing.** Learners are asked to listen to a description or discussion, and draw the scene( or plan of a house, etc.) which is described or referred to
* **Performing other actions.**  Learners may be required to perform or mime other actions, as instructed or described.
* **Transferring information**. The outcome of the listening is no longer a physical response to the language. Learners must now extract relevant information from the text in order to transfer it to some other forms, such as a table, a chart or diagram. This structures and motivates the listening activity. The criterion for success in listening is not whether he has understood every word, but whether he has constructed enough of the meanings in order to satisfy his own communicative purpose.

Overall, listening activity provides opportunities for positive personal relationships to develop among learners and between learners and teacher. These relationships can help “to humanize” the classroom and to create an environment that supports the individual in his efforts to learn. We can provide more systematic opportunities for developing listening strategies when we control the learner’s listening by means of specific goals, which depend on it.