

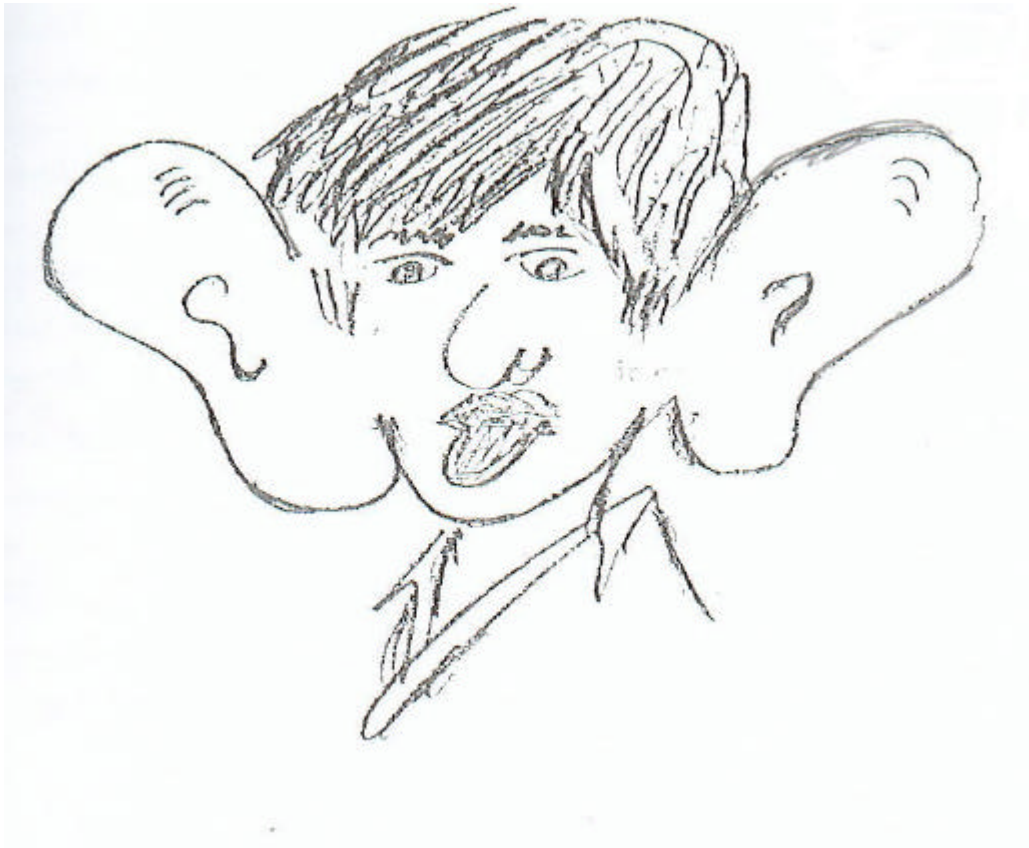
TEACHING LISTENING COMPREHENSION

BY :

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Question : “ Why was man given two ears but only one mouth?”

Answer: “ Because God knew that listening was twice as hard as talking.”

ONE : What is Listening?

Listening can be defined as “ the process of understanding speech in a second or foreign language.” (Richard J.C et al- 1985). It is “ the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This involves understanding a speaker’s accent or pronunciation, understanding his grammar, recognizing his vocabulary and being able to grasp the meaning of what he says.” (Howatt and Dakin 1974) .

For comprehension to be successful, the listener has to do everything at once. For effective listening to take place, the listener must use several skills and strategies, namely:

*** The micro-skills**

- phoneme discrimination
- pause discrimination
- pitch discrimination
- stress discrimination
- intonation discrimination

*** The enabling skills**

- recognizing discourse features
- disambiguating semantically
- disambiguating grammatically
- prediction
- use of context / or presuppositions
- use of assumed / shared knowledge

*** Some listening strategies**

- guessing
 - predicting
 - guesstimating
 - hypothesizing
 - relating sounds to meaning
 - using one’s own knowledge of the subject to help one understand
 - identifying relevant points, rejecting irrelevant information.
 - Retaining relevant points (note-taking, summarizing...)
 - Recognizing cohesive devices (link words, pronouns, references...)
 - Understanding inferred information eg: speakers’ attitude or intentionsetc)
-
- In their book on Listening, Anderson and Lynch (1988) distinguish between reciprocal listening and non-reciprocal listening. Reciprocal listening refers to those listening tasks where there is the opportunity for the listener to interact with the speaker, and to negotiate the content of the interaction. Non-reciprocal listening refers to tasks such as listening to the radio or a formal lecture where the transfer of information is in one direction only- from the speaker to the listener.

- Brown and Yule (1983) make the distinction between ‘ interactional talk’, used to refer to speech that is primarily social, and ‘transactional communication whose main purpose is to achieve a successful transfer or exchange of information.
- Anderson and Lynch (1988) contrast the “bottom-up” view of listening where the listeners segment the stream of speech into its constituent sounds, link these to form words, chain the words to form clauses and sentences and so on with the “top-down” view of listening where the listeners bring knowledge from outside the spoken words to understand and interpret the aural text; where the listeners utilize both “inside the head” knowledge and “outside the head” knowledge to interpret what they hear and see.
- Anderson and Lynch (1988) also make the difference between two types of listeners :
 - the listener as a tape-recorder (very passive)
 - the listener as a model-builder (very active)

TWO: Why is it important to teach listening ?

- Most learners will spend more time listening to the foreign language than producing it themselves.
 - Listening and speaking are two major parts of communication. There is no need to say how interdependent they are and how much progress in one tells in the other.
 - The ability to understand a native speaker or a recorded speech testifies to a student’s confidence in communication. They can only talk sensibly when they can understand what is said to them.
 - Failing to understand spoken language people may miss important information presented to them or respond in a funny way.
 - Listening in every day life is a real time skill. Unlike reading, students don’t have the chance to adjust the pace of speech, listen again or check an unknown word. The need to understand what they hear on the spot makes it even more crucial that they develop the ability to listen well.
 - Listening competence is universally “larger” than speaking competence.
 - Through reception , we internalize linguistic information without which we could not produce language.
 - In classrooms, pupils always do more listening than speaking.
 - Listening is a useful skill. Research has demonstrated that adults spend 40-50% of communication time listening, 25-30% speaking, 11-26% reading and about 9% writing. (Rivers & Gilman & Moody – 1984)
 - Listening comprehension is a highly integrative skill. It plays an important role in the process of language learning / acquisition, facilitating the emergence of other language skills.
 - Training in listening comprehension is necessary. It helps our students make the transition from classroom English to real-life English more easily and effectively.
 - It is a necessary skill to facilitate autonomous learning and encourage learner independence; it prepares students for distance learning, with possible learner needs at the university level in mind.
- It is also important to teach listening :
- To foster the passion for regular listening, which should be a basic goal.
 - To cater for some learners’ need to listen for relaxation and pleasure (songs...)

THREE : What are the different listening situations? Implications for teaching?

- A. Following is a list of some of the more common situations in which people living in a modern environment could need to use their listening skills:
- Listening to announcements in airports, stations ...
 - Listening to the radio news, weather forecast, sports report, songs...)
 - Participating in a face-to-face conversation, discussing work / current problems with family or colleagues.
 - Watching a film, a play, or a TV programme
 - Participating in a meeting, seminar or discussion
 - Listening to a talk or a lecture
 - Making arrangements / exchanging news over the phone
 - Taking part in a lesson
 - Receiving instructions on how to do something / get somewhere.
 - Being interviewed/ interviewing
 - Getting professional advice (from a doctor, for example)
 - Being tested orally in a subject of study.
 - Eavesdropping on other people's conversations
 - Chatting at a party/ other social gatherings.
 - Shopping
 - Theatre show
 - Story-telling(listening to story tellers)
- B. When choosing listening material and devising listening tasks, we should think of giving the students something realistic to listen to and prepare them for coping with listening in real life.
- We should , whenever possible, use authentic listening materials that consist of speech recorded in real situations , so that the students are given the opportunity to encounter a totally natural "slice of life."
 - The topics of the listening material should be relevant to the students' needs and interests and suited to their level , meaning neither too easy nor too difficult (challenging but manageable and motivating)
 - The listening material should be varied and cover most listening situations.

Examples of listening material

- Songs
- Poems
- Plays
- Stories
- Radio and TV broadcasts (news, weather reports, interviews)
- Talks , lectures, monologues
- Conversations
- Announcements
- Advertisements
- Interactional speech (social intercourse / maintaining social contact)
- Transactional speech (instructions to get things done)

FOUR : Factors that can aid or hamper comprehension.

Everyday experience tells us that listening is sometimes easy and sometimes hard. Below is a list of the main factors that may aid or hamper listening comprehension:

- The way in which the information is organized
- The listener's familiarity with the topic.
- The explicitness of the information given.
- Educational background
- Physical health and alertness of the listener.
- Memory (short term vs long term)
- Motivation and sense of purpose
- Attitude of the listener to the speaker.
- Listener's powers of attention and concentration
- Attitude of the listener to the message: level of interest
- Speed of delivery
- The language used to convey the message: phonological features, including stress, intonation, weak forms, lexis, syntax cohesion...
- Difficulty of content and concepts.
- Acoustic environment : noise and interference.
- Amount of support provided by gestures, visuals.
- Type of input : (a story / a description / concrete / abstract / short / long ..etc)
- Redundancy
- Performance variables (hesitations, false starts, pauses, corrections etc...)
- Colloquial language.

FIVE : How is listening actually taught ?

To explore the way listening is actually taught in our area, we (the team that conducted the action research project) used two data-collecting procedures.

- a- classroom observation:
- b- administering questionnaires to :
 - teachersand
 - pupils

1/ Classroom observation:

Some veteran teachers visited different classes from different schools in Monastir Educational Area to investigate the way listening comprehension is taught. The team came up with the following remarks.

- *- The objectives are not clear for teachers.
- *-Pupils are not assigned clear tasks before listening.
- *-Inappropriate use of the tape recorder during the lesson.
- *-Not enough exposure to the taped material; the opposite happens : over- exposure.
- *-Some tasks are not valid.
- *-Instructions are difficult.
- *-teachers are not well-prepared / equipped.
- *-Teachers do not use visuals to facilitate listening.

- *-Unnecessary disruptions of the listening activity.
- *-Teachers treat listening as a memory test; questions are used to assess how much the pupils can remember of the spoken discourse and not to assisst them to understand spoken language.
- *-Pupils are not trained to listen = pupils do not know how to listen.
- *-Pupils want to understand every single difficult word (no selective listening skills)
- *-Some texts do not lend themselves to being treated as a listening material.
- *-Listening is treated as a subskill.
- *-Not enough listening in the text book.
- *-Unfavourable/ hostile environment: the schools do not provide facilities; poor quality of the tape-recorders, no wall plugs etc...
- *-The teaching focus in listening is still on comprehension and linguistic elements divorced from developing the learner’s listening skills and strategies (more focus on the product at the expense of the process)
- *-Though the teachers thought they were familiar with the different techniques of teaching listening, this was not mirrored in many instances of their actual classroom practices.
- *-The teachers ask questions that require lengthy written answers.
- *-Most of the “comprehension” questions are answered by the “best” pupils while the majority of the students just remained silent.

2/ Questionnaires

Two types of questionnaires were administered

- a) one for the teachers (see pp: 8/ 9 / 10)
- b) one for the learners (see pp: 11)

The results of the two different questionnaires are shown on pp12-15

A. A Questionnaire for teachers

The main aims of this questionnaire relate to the following three points :

1. Identifying the main problems teachers face when teaching and evaluating listening.
2. Analyzing and describing the approaches adopted by teachers when teaching and evaluating listening.
3. Teachers’ suggestions and recommendations for future action.

Would you please complete the attached questionnaire as soon as possible and return it by to the inspector.

Thank you very much indeed for your help.

The inspector, TOUMI Lafi.

Part I

Listening Problems:

A- Listener- related problems:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.

9.
10.

B- Material- related problems :

With reference to your situation, decide whether the listening passages are relevant to the learners' needs or not. Are they (write Yes or No)

1. Adequate in number?
2. Varied?.....
3. Authentic? Is this important?
4. interesting?
5. Relevant to real-life needs?
6. At the right level in terms of:
 - a- Linguistic level ?
 - b- Conceptual level ?.....
7. Long or short ?.....

C- Other Types of problems (echo, noise , poor-quality equipment, etc ...)

1.
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Part II

Ways in which you approach teaching / evaluation of listening comprehension:

Which of the following approaches do you use most frequently? Tick under your choice.

(N: Never; R: Rarely; S: Sometimes, O: Often; NA: Nearly always)

I	N	R	S	O	NA
1.prepare learners for the listening material(brainstorming, warm-up activities					
2.ask learners to predict the words and expressions likely to appear in the passage.					
3.write questions that help learners understand the passage					
4.give students different roles in a listening task(and do it as a group activity)					
5.do a "jigsaw listening" activity.					
6.let students take notes while listening.					
7.play a section of a tape-recorded passage and stop when necessary to allow requests for clarification and repetition.					
8.give learners a list of comprehension questions to read silently for themselves					
9.play an audio-recoded passage in its entirety.					

B. A Questionnaire for students.

Please answer the following questions. Put a tick in the appropriate box.

1. What is your response to the listening comprehension like?

Is it :

good satisfactory poor

2. Do you find that listening comprehension is :

Interesting difficult boring and useless

3. Which listening comprehension material do you prefer?

Songs dialogues lectures

4. If you have difficulties in listening comprehension; it is due to ?

The content of the text insufficient practice in class

Poor quality tapes types of questions

5. How do you find the listening comprehension test? Is it?

Understandable complicated

long difficult and unrelated to our environment

6. Do you find the questions ...?

Within your reach complicated long too many

7. If you find listening comprehension difficult, what do you suggest?

-eliminate L.C from the syllabus intensify practice

other suggestions:

- clearer recordings
- easier texts
- use videotapes
- have scripts while listening
- slower rhythm of speech

Findings from the teachers' questionnaire (teaching listening)

After reading the data yielded by the teachers' questionnaire carefully, I gathered all the problems related to the teaching of listening comprehension.

Part I : Listening problems

a- Listener-related problems:

- lack of motivation
- pupils are not familiar with native English speakers
- classroom "shyness" due to lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes in front of others
- the class is not homogenous

→ Only the most brilliant answer the questions. The others feel bored and excluded.

b- Material- related problems

- 1- 60% of the teachers questioned think that the listening passages are adequate in number.
10% think that the listening material is adequate with some levels but not with others.
- 2- 65% think that listening material is varied and authentic
100% of teachers think that it is important to have authentic materials
- 3- most of the teachers think that some listening passages are not interesting
- 4- 65% of the teachers believe that the listening passages are relevant to real-life needs.
- 5- 45% of the teachers think that the listening passages are not at the right level linguistically and conceptually.
 - 100% think that the passages are too long.

c- Other types of problems:

- 40% of the teachers consider the poor –quality equipment as an important problem that hinders the listening activity
 - old tape recorders
 - the passages are not well-recorded
 - echo
 - noise
- 40% mentioned that some recordings are done by non-native speakers.
- Some classes are too large for a listening lesson
- Lay out of the class
- The source of sound is unique; only the pupils at the front can hear well.

Part II: Ways in which teachers approach teaching / evaluation of listening comprehension

- 1-80% of the teachers often prepare their learners for the listening material (brainstorming, warm-up activities...)
- 2-60% of the teachers sometimes ask their learners to predict the words and expressions, likely to appear in the passage. 20% never do that
- 3-40% of the teachers sometimes write questions that help learners understand the passage .
30% nearly always write questions to help their learners understand the passage.
- 4- 40% rarely give their students different roles in a listening task.
Only 30% mentioned that they sometimes do that.
20% never do that.
- 5-Most teachers rarely or never do a “jigsaw” listening activity.
- 6-More than 60% let their students take notes while listening.
- 7-85% of teachers often or nearly always play a section of a tape recorded passage and stop when necessary to allow requests of clarification and repetition.
- 8- 40% always give their learners a list of comprehension questions to read silently for themselves.
20% rarely do that.
10% never do that.
- 9- 40% sometimes play an audio-recorded passage in its entirety
30% often do that
20% rarely do that
- 10- 50% sometimes limit the number of repetition of the material (2 or 3 times)
- 11- 70% sometimes use role- play as a follow-up activity.
- 12- 70% never read the listening material to their students several times if necessary in a listening test to help them answer quickly and correctly. 10% often do that.
- 13- 80% never change a listening material into a reading material or vice versa for the sake of creativity. 20% rarely do that.
- 14- 60% rarely assign a listening task in an oral test. 30% never do that.
- 15- 80% sometimes use poems and songs to encourage extensive and intensive listening and bring variety and fun to teaching listening. 20%rarely do that.
- 16- 20% ask comprehension questions before playing the tape.
40% always ask comprehension questions while playing the tape
40% always ask comprehension questions after playing the tape.
- 17- 60% sometimes use visuals to facilitate listening
- 18- 50% often ask students to give simply short phrase or “check” answers in a listening sub-test.
- 19- No teacher lends learners his cassette to encourage home listening.
- 20- Only 20% use English news programmes from the Voice of America and the BBC World Service as teaching material for training in listening comprehension.
- 21- No teacher uses videotapes as listening material in his/her lessons.
- 22- 20% often give learners a summary of the listening material with the new words as a pre-listening activity in order to speed up understanding. 60%never do that.

Findings from the pupils' questionnaire on listening comprehension:(secondary schools)

- 1- 45% of the pupils questioned admit that their assimilation of the listening comprehension activities is satisfactory.
55% admit that their assimilation is weak
- 2- 68% find that listening comprehension is difficult
22% find that listening comprehension is boring and not interesting
12% find that listening comprehension is exciting.
- 3- 75% prefer songs to dialogues and texts
16% admit that dialogues is their favourite listening activity..
only 8% prefer texts.
- 4- 60% think the difficulties they encounter in listening comprehension are due to the bad recording quality / poor- quality tapes
45% refer these difficulties to the lack of training in class
only 8% refer this to the content of the text.
- 5- 72% of the pupils find the listening passage complicated
16% find it long
20% find it difficult and does not reflect their real life situation.
12% find it understandable
- 6- 80% find the questions complicated
16% find the questions long
8% find them understandable
- 7- Pupils' suggestions
76% think that listening comprehension should not be taught at all.
10% suggest more listening passages.

Other suggestions :

- listening while reading the passage
- better recording quality
- the listening tasks should be made clear
- more training on the listening tasks.

The same questionnaire which was administered to students from different preparatory schools in Monastir yielded the following results:

Please answer the following questions. Put a tick in the appropriate box.

1.What is your response to the listening comprehension like?

Is it :

good

12%

satisfactory

48%

poor

40%

2.Do you find that listening comprehension is :

Interesting

24%

difficult

64%

boring and useless

12%

3.Which listening comprehension material do you prefer?

Songs dialogues lectures

4. If you have difficulties in listening comprehension; it is due to ?

The content of the text insufficient practice in class

Poor quality tapes types of questions

5. How do you find the listening comprehension test? Is it?

Understandable complicated

long difficult and unrelated to our environment

6. Do you find the questions ...?

Within your reach complicated long too many

7. If you find listening comprehension difficult, what do you suggest?

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other suggestions:

- clearer recordings
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- use videotapes
- have scripts while listening
- slower rhythm of speech

SIX : How should we teach listening ?

A) To investigate the teachers' beliefs about the way we – practitioners- should teach listening comprehension, the participants in an inter-regional seminar in Sousse (25-26 April, 2001) were set the following task:

What are your beliefs and assumptions about listening? Read, discuss and say whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about listening. Put a tick in the appropriate column and justify your choice

		Agree	disagree	Comments
1	Listening is a passive language skill in which the listener's role is passive (the listener as a tape-recorder)			
2	To develop the learners' listening skills, you can hand out a copy of the text of the conversation to all students, play the tape; the pupils read while listening. You can , then, ask comprehension questions.			

3	The best method for developing learners' listening skills is to get them to listen to a piece of language and then answer subsequent comprehension questions.			
4	With beginners, teachers should not use authentic listening materials as they are very complex.			
5	For listening to be successful, L2 listeners should rely solely on identifying sounds and words one by one and try to understand every single word.			
6	In the beginning of a language course, priority should be given to the development of the learners' comprehension without requiring them to produce the L2. they respond in a non-verbal way(performing physical action, marking worksheets, ordering scrambled pictures..etc)			
7	Listening exercises are most effective if they are constructed round a task. The students are required to do something in response to what they hear that will demonstrate their understanding.			
8	Failure in listening is due not only to language and environment problems but mainly to the learners' inability to use the appropriate tactics and strategies to overcome these problems			
9	Successful listeners are those who can utilize both "inside the head" knowledge and "outside the head" knowledge to interpret what they hear			
10	Everyday experience tells us that teaching listening is always easy.			

After discussing the different statements, we came up with the following suggestions :

1. Listening is an active, creative skill that demands active involvement from the hearer who must actively contribute knowledge from both linguistic and non linguistic sources. Indeed , the listener brings knowledge from outside the text to the task of interpreting and comprehending the text itself.

Meaning does not reside exclusively within words on the tape recorder or on the page. It also exists in the head of the listener(background knowledge/ schemata)

→ top-down view of the listener as a "model builder" as opposed to the bottom-up view of the listener as a "tape recorder."

2. If the pupils are given the script, they do not actually need to listen. Giving the text turns it into a reading exercise.

Reading is usually easier for most students than deciphering the stream of speech and probably most students will work out the answers from the printed page rather than struggling to listen.

3. By setting the questions before the tape is listened to, we give our students the opportunity to listen with a clear aim in mind. In everyday life, we usually have some purpose in mind (to find out

about today's weather, to find out about the latest news,...)- even when listening to entertainments such as plays, jokes, songs, we have a definite purpose.

Asking a question at the end of the listening is a memory test rather than a way of assisting comprehension. Indeed "the technique of asking questions after a listening is a testing technique and not a teaching technique." So, we should opt for the "TASK BEFORE TAPE" approach.

4. This statement turned out to be a controversial issue as the participants asked the big question: "What is authenticity?" which generated a long debate. From the group discussions, I could discern two main views :

- a) Even low learners should be exposed to authentic listening material to expose them to a "slice of life", therefore the activity/ task rather than the listening text should be graded.
- b) Authentic texts are often too long and difficult to understand, so we can use scripted or specially constructed material, but the naturalness of speech should never be sacrificed. Speak at a normal speed and do not make unnatural efforts to enunciate or exaggerate stress and intonation.

5. This is a bottom-up view of listening where the listener is supposed to proceed from sounds to words to grammatical relations, which is not always the case.

Usually the listener focuses on bits of the message rather than the exact words. It is not necessary to understand every word in order to understand the information you might need from a recording.

We should help learners to worry less about understanding everything and work more on catching the bits they do need to hear .

The learner should be encouraged not to panic when he misses a piece of information.

The criterion for success in listening is not whether he has understood every word, but whether he has constructed enough of the message in order to satisfy his own communicative purpose.

6. Beginners' productive skills are not well-developed. The learners are not linguistically equipped to produce verbal answers with much confidence and without losing their self-esteem. It is therefore, important for teachers to design techniques in such a way that students' responses indicate whether their comprehension has been correct. Different ways to check listeners' comprehension without requiring them to produce lengthy spoken or written answers include :

- listen and draw
- listen and colour
- listen and reorder the scrambled pictures
- listening and marking worksheets
- listen and trace the route (on a map)
- listen and perform physical actions etc.

7. (see:3) If the learner knows in advance that he is going to have to make a certain kind of response, he is immediately provided with a purpose in listening and he knows what sort of information to expect and react to it.

8. We need to teach the learners/ train the learners to help them use the appropriate skills and strategies.

9. Successful listening involves the integration of information encoded in the message itself with broader knowledge of the world, the integration of top-down and bottom-up processes in reconstructing messages.

"significance is in the mind of the listener" W. Rivers

10. It's sometimes easy, and sometimes difficult depending on various factors. It all depends on how well-prepared teachers are and the use they can make of the listening passage.

B) The teaching of listening relies on the use of the tape – recorders or language labs because most teachers are non-native English speakers who may lack proficiency in English. However, in the classroom in which the tape recorder is used, there are some common problems. Teachers may just manipulate “the machine” supplemented by a few comprehension questions after the students listen to the aural material. This can hinder the students’ motivation. Normally, most of the teacher-posed questions are answered by the best students. Meanwhile the majority of the learners just remain silent. In such cases how can we motivate all the students in the class to participate actively in the listening lesson?

In order to enhance our students’ competence, they must have sufficient language input. At the same time language learning must be linked to meaningful language use on the part of the learner in the communicative classroom. The language learning experience must involve the expression of the learner’s opinions and thoughts as he negotiates interactively with other classmates, with the teacher and with the material.

Eventually, the merit of using authentic spoken English into the classroom is obvious. It helps students to make the transition from classroom English to real-life English more easily and effectively. It also helps to compensate for the defect that only one accent is used in classroom teaching.

C) The phases of a listening lesson:

A commonsense way of dividing up a listening lesson is into three phases.

- Things to do before the students hear the passage to help them get the most out of what they are going to hear.
- Activities to be carried out as the students listen to the passage to guide them as they try to grasp the main information in it.
- Things to do once the class has come to grips with the meaning and content of the passage and is ready to look back to reflect on some of the language points in it, or to do some extension work based on the content of the passage.

1- Pre-listening activities :

- To understand a piece of spoken discourse, one has to have not only knowledge of the language but also some background knowledge of the world. Listening demands active involvement from the learner. In order to reconstruct the message that the speaker intends, the hearer must actively contribute knowledge from both linguistic and non-linguistic sources.
- The purpose of the pre-listening activity is to elicit the learners’ background knowledge / schematic knowledge and prepare him for what is going to be said.
- Pre-listening activities make it possible for all students to share a common background knowledge before listening, we cannot for example, expect all students to have the same level of knowledge about a particular world event. Some students who are concerned with international affairs and read newspapers regularly will know more than those who do not.
- When all this background knowledge has been elicited the teacher needs to create an information gap or set a task for them just before they listen. This makes the listening to follow more purposeful.

- Another advantage of pre-listening is that it makes it possible to set “new” vocabulary items in the context. Thus these assumed new words can be presented naturally in questions and discussions.

However, there are some passages whose whole point would be ruined if students knew too much about them before they listened. For example, if you want to give them practice in “tuning in” – guessing what is going on by using clues in what the speakers say as happens with eavesdropping.

2- While- listening

- When listening to our national radio news broadcasts, we do not need to memorize the exact words or sentences that are said. We just catch the major ideas. This principle can also be applied to our listening activities.
- First it must be made clear to our students that listening comprehension does not mean 100 percent correct understanding.
- Second, various kinds of techniques can be used to lead the students to focus on the general idea and the subject matter of the text they are listening to. Directed listening helps the students to extract the relevant information from the spoken discourse.
- Third, the teacher should ask more global rather than partial comprehension questions. Specific questions are asked only after the students have recognized the major ideas of the listening text. What is more, the teacher should preserve a flexible approach and not always insist on a unique correct response. He must demand a response that is sensible within the context instead of expecting students to answer in the exact words of the text ...
- It is possible to record the students’ answers so that they listen to each other’s responses and correct them.
- Some forms or worksheets can be made beforehand by the teacher for the students to fill in after they listen to the tape.
- Students should be encouraged to gather as much information as they can from the passage while they are listening to it, not afterwards, which would turn it into a memory test.
- At the while-listening stage, the students should not worry about interpreting long questions and producing full answers.

3/ Post-listening or follow-up

Students take the information they have gained from the listening passage and use it for another purpose. For example, having taken notes they may want to re-form these notes into a written description of a process. If they have been filling in a map or a chart with information during the while-listening phase, they might summarize the information orally. If they have been listening to a conversation, role-playing one of the speakers makes students listen more attentively to the speaker whose role they will play.

Listening can also be followed by language work. First, you can draw the students’ attention to relevant points about the grammar and vocabulary in the listening passage.

The teacher can then make students more aware of features in the sound system of the language that are important for understanding what the speaker means. Pause, stress, use of intonation and tone of voice are all important.

D) Task-based listening : some techniques

To help students listen better we may use some of the following techniques.

- keep the recording short-not more than 2minutes or so.
- Play the tape a sufficient number of times.
- Let students discuss their answers together (perhaps in pairs)
- Don't immediately acknowledge correct answers with words or facial expressions _ throw the answers back to the class : “ what do you think of x's answer_ do you agree?”
- Don't be led by one strong student. Have they all got it?
- Aim to get the students to agree together without your help. Until they agree, play the tape whenever they need to hear it, to confirm or refute their ideas.
- Play little bits of the tape (a word; a phrase; a sentence) again and again until it is clear.
- Give help if they are completely stuck- but still with the aim of getting them to work it out if at all possible rather than giving them the answers.
- Give them control of the tape recorder- to listen as and when and to what they wish.
- Don't cheat them by changing your requirements halfway- i.e. don't set one task but then afterwards ask for answers to something completely different!
- Don't let them lose heart: try to make sure the task is just within their abilities. It should be challenging, but achievable. The sense of achievement in finishing a task should be great: “It was difficult- but we did it!”
- Grade the task- not the tape.

PS/ Getting the right answer is not our only goal. The main goal is the listening itself.

SEVEN: Listening and the other skills

The teaching of listening should not be divorced from teaching the other skills. Indeed , a listening passage can be used as a source of information when you want to give students practice in writing factual accounts. Notes taken from the listening passage can be re-worked into full written form, and you can do useful work on the differences between the spoken and the written form of the same information. Intensive listening can also supply some of the background information that students need in order to carry out a role play or a simulation successfully.

In the popular type of simulation, in which students are asked to discuss possible solutions to some social problems, some of the background can be given through listening. A talk describing the situation could be given live, or students could hear a set of recorded interviews with different people involved in the situation. Listening is often used as a stimulus to provide facts with which students can work, reacting to or against or think along particular lines or again be put in a particular mood.

If learners are going to discuss or write about a controversial subject, for example, they may find it interesting to start off by hearing some English speakers' views. These can be given as short statements or interviews, possibly recorded by you. It is best if the views are contrasting, and if they do not present great language difficulties for the students. This allows them to react directly to the message, and to find a speaker with whom they agree or disagree.

Another way in which listening can be used to evoke a response from students, is when you wish to put them in the right mood or frame of mind to respond to a piece of literature. The use of a song to introduce a literary theme is not to be excluded.

Jigsaw listening is a specific technique used as an input to a discussion that revolves around trying to solve a problem or complete a partial story given on tape. The puzzle is set up because none of the students hear the complete information to start with, but have to exchange information with each other to arrive at the full picture.

At the end of the lesson each group can briefly report back on its conclusions to the rest of the class, so that they can compare versions of the story. Very often there is an extra tape which everyone can hear together. This reveals the end of the story or the answer to the problem, so that everyone goes away satisfied and able to judge for himself how close he or his group came to solving the puzzle. Another possibility is to use dictation work as a follow up activity. After the students have heard a passage and have understood its content fairly well, let them work with the tape, pausing and rewinding as they need. The aim is for them to produce an accurate transcript of a small section of it. They can check this afterwards against a correct transcript. This type of work reinforces the ability to expect, and therefore to notice, the small grammatical words, as well as providing useful revision of some of the language items in the passage.

Pace reading is another possible follow up activity. Speaking in unison with a native speaker gives the learner more empathy with the way in which English is produced, particularly with its rhythm, rather than to improve pronunciation, although this might also happen.

For this exercise, students need individual tape recorders which, ideally, should be fitted with headphones which allow them to listen to their own voices as well as to the tape.

A tape is played, and the learner follows it on a transcript which has been provided. He tries to read aloud in unison with the speaker on the tape. He will try to squash his unstressed syllables in a similar way to the native speaker. Even if he fails he will have had direct experience of the problem and he will thus be more aware of the phenomena of connected speech in English. The best sort of tape to use for this is a monologue, one which is read aloud with a fairly regular rhythm.

Students can also be given a tape and a transcript and asked to listen and mark in all the stresses. Alternately, they can be asked to count the unstressed syllables between stresses...

EIGHT : Tasks to foster the learners' listening skills.

Students should be encouraged to gather as much information as they can from the passage while they are listening to it, not afterwards, which would turn it into a memory test as was mentioned before. In order to help them to do this easily, you need to provide the type of exercises in which reading and writing is kept to a minimum, so that the students can concentrate on the task in hand-listening.

A. True / False statements:

1. You are going to hear six different people talking about Harry. Before you listen, look at these four statements:

- a. Harry is unpopular with everyone
- b. He is quite rich
- c. He is generous
- d. He is generally polite.

2. Now listen to the tape. While listening, decide if the statements above are True or False. Write T(true) or F (false) against each one.

B. Using Pictures:

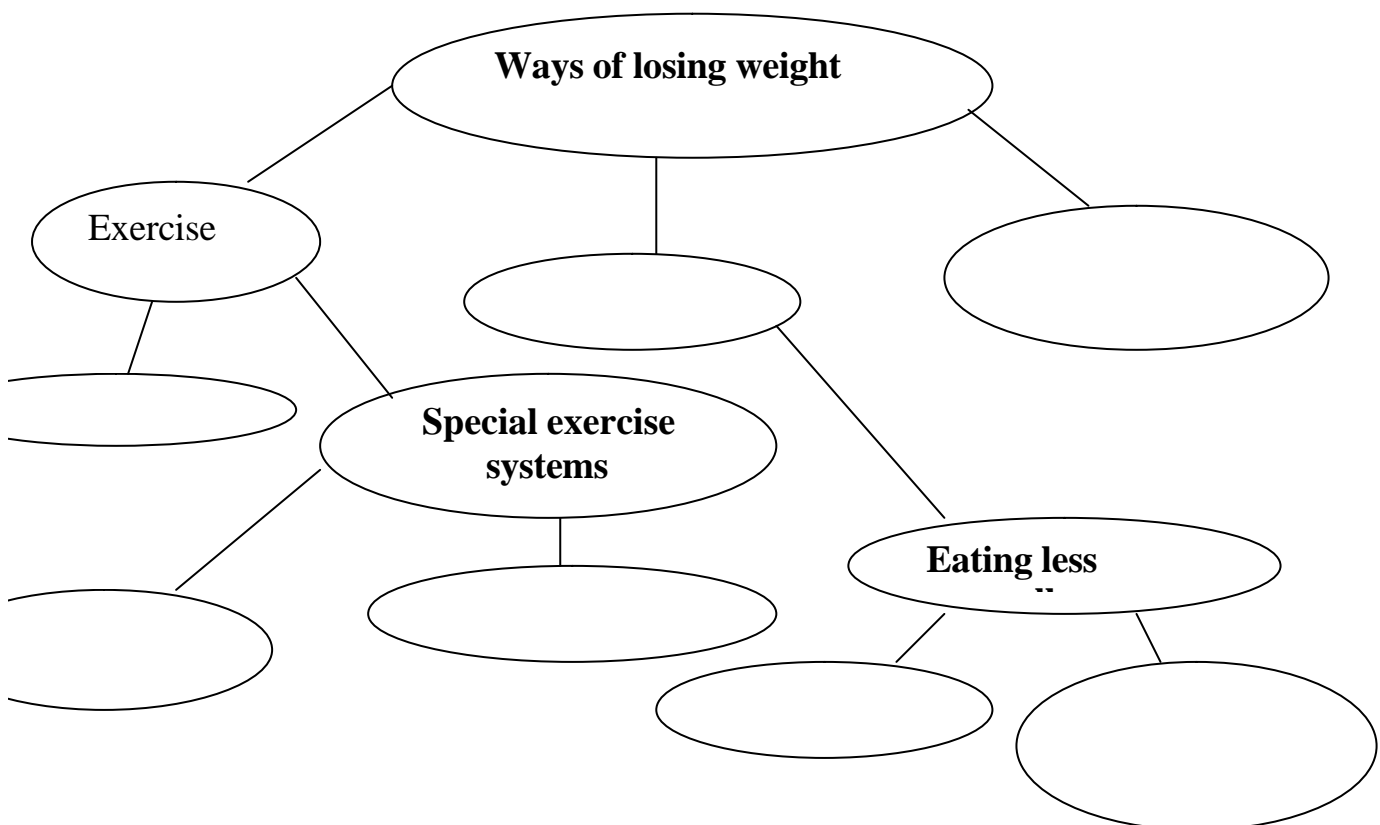
1. Look at these pictures carefully
2. Listen to identify the picture described.
3. These pictures tell a story but they are in the wrong order. Look at them carefully. While listening, put them in the correct order

C. Using charts / diagrams (Transferring information)

1. Look at the chart . Some information about England and Italy has been filled for you. Listen and fill in the rest of the information:

	Italy	England
Age at which children must start school	5	
Minimum age for leaving school		16
Earliest age for getting married		
Earliest age for starting work		
Voting age		18

2. You are going to hear two people discussing different ways of losing weight. Put the key information in the correct places on the diagram. Some information has already been filled in for you.



D. Multiple-choice questions

Listen to the recording twice. In each group of four sentences, only one is true. Put a tick (?) in one of the boxes . A, B, C or D

1. The radio station broadcasting the programme

A. is in Manchester

B. is somewhere outside London

C. is in London

D. is in Brighton

2.

E. Following instructions correctly (a listen and do exercise)

a) Locating : Learners are required to locate items into their appropriate location eg: on a plan of a house or town

b) Following a route on a map : Mary wants to go to the post office. Look at the town map carefully. Now listen and trace the route she has to follow to get there.

c) Drawing / constructing : learners are asked to listen to a description or discussion, and draw the scene (or plan of a house etc) which is described.

F. Listening and taking notes (eg : the dicto-gloss / dicto-comp. Technique)

The teacher reads a passage at a normal speed to learners who listen and write down as many words as they can identify. Then they collaborate in small groups to reconstruct the text on the basis of the fragments which they have written down.

The dictogloss technique provides a useful bridge between bottom-up and top-down listening. In the first instance, learners are primarily concerned with identifying individual elements in the text- a bottom-up strategy. However during the small group discussions, some or all of the top-down strategies might be employed.

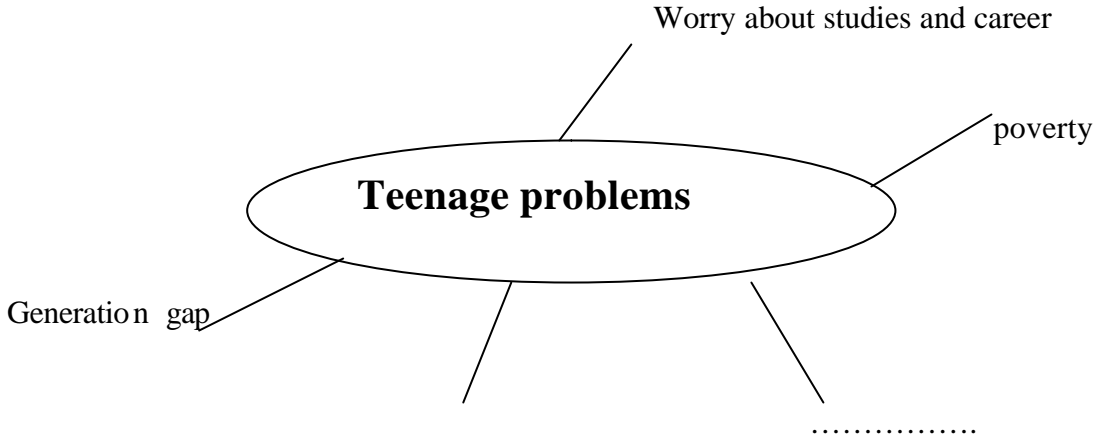
The dictogloss technique allows pupils to:

- Integrate top-down and bottom-up processes
- Integrate language skills
- Integrate language skills and language systems
- Integrate types of interaction

G. Using songs:

“ In the Ghetto” by Elvis Presley can be used to supplement Section 1, Unit 7 in Book level 4 (7th Forms) about teenage violence

I. Brainstorming : A spidergram



II. Listening: Listening 1 (No script)

- Listen and decide if the tone of the song is: CHEERFUL /SERIOUS ./ SAD / ANGRY /COMIC / TRAGIC

Listening2 : listen and complete the gapped script.

Listening 3: write the number of the corresponding stanza before each heading:

Heading	Stanzas
Neglected therefore angry	Stanza number
A vicious circle	Stanza number
Poverty leads to deviancy	Stanza number
An unwanted child	Stanza number
The fatal mistake	Stanza number

- focus on lines 6-26. Can you detect any mistakes? Do you think they **are** mistakes?
- What is the main reason why the boy became violent and deviant?
- Can you think of any more reasons why teenagers resort to violence?

In The Ghetto

**By Elvis Presley
Written by Scott Davis**

As the s.....flies,
 On a cold and gray Chicago mornin'
 A poor little baby child is b.....
 In the ghetto
 And his mama cries
 'cause if there's one thing she don't need
 it's another h.....mouth to feed
 In the ghetto

People, don't you u.....
 The child needs a helping hand
 Or he'll grow to be an ayoung man some day

Take a look at you and me
Are we too b.....to see,
Do we simply turn our heads the other way

Well the world turns
And a hungry little boy with a runny nose
Plays in the street as the cold wind b.....
In the ghetto

And his hunger burns
So he starts to r.....the streets at night
And he learns how to steal
And he learns how to f.....
In the ghetto

Then one night in d.....
A young man breaks away
He buys a gun, steals a car,
Tries to run, but he don't get f.....
And his mama cries

As a crowd gathers 'round an angry young man
Face down on the street with a gun in his hand
In the ghetto

As her young man dies
On a cold and gray Chicago mornin'
Another little baby child is born
In the ghetto

NINE: Recommendations for the future

- Increase teachers' awareness about their own classroom practice : teachers should stop thinking of comprehension questions primarily as a means of assessing how much learners have understood and should use listening tasks as a framework for assisting them to understand spoken language.
- Teachers should become aware of the fact that the teaching of listening is different from the testing of listening. The classroom methods that most of the teachers think of as tools for teaching listening comprehension in fact amount to a form of continuous testing :” It is truism to point out that the technique of asking questions after a reading or listening task is a testing technique and not a teaching technique”. (Mc Donough-1981)
- Better equipment quality/ better tapes.
- More relevant texts.
- Provide schools with language labs

- More variety in texts
- Use of video-tapes
- Encourage pupils to watch English-speaking channels
- Smaller classes
- Use of authentic materials
- Use interesting passages and do the right sort of exercises in a coherent sequence.
- Vary the types of tasks- do not over use any one type of exercise
- Use a mixture of live and recorded listening materials.
- Make of the listening lesson a training session : let the pupils hear a passage several times, in small sections with pauses or in any other way that is helpful to them.
- Leave the learner with a sense of achievement during and after the listening lesson- do not leave him with a sense of failure or anxiety that will incapacitate him.
- We would gain much if specialized rooms were made available to teachers of English in our schools.
- Teachers should prepare the pupils for the listening and encourage purposeful listening.
- The texts proposed should be carefully chosen. They should not be heavily loaded with lexical or grammatical difficulties.
- It is of paramount importance that trainees and inexperienced teachers should be given a sounder training in all skills especially in teaching listening; the present situation being a vicious circle, the 8th and 9th graders, the basic ones, are given to young teachers who fumble their way along. The result is that many learners lose interest, a problem which cannot be easily leveled in higher grades.
- Teachers and learners have no urgent incentive for dealing with listening since this skill is not tested in the diplome and bac exams. Until a listening section is included in the public exams listening comprehension will continue to receive little attention (wash back)

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