Strategies for Communicative Listening Guidance

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Abstarct:
The aim of language learning is to fulfill certain communicative goals and in order do that first the learners also have to listen properly. That is communicative listening practice is necessary to be able to use language in various situations. Through decades listening has not been paid necessary attention and it is time that listening be given priority considering the crucial role it plays in the process of language learning. The paper is an attempt to put listening in proper perspective of communication to draw attention to the uses of listening skill among other language skills.

Key words: *Communicative approaches, listening, communicative listening practice, training*

Main features of communicative listening guidance
Listening to everyday real-life situations around us becomes the main feature of the communicative listening guidance as they enable us to form certain frames of mind. This kind of training helps to gain acquaintance contextual knowledge.

1. Situations

It would be sensible if there is available list of all the contexts that happen day in day out in a society. The frequency of their happening would also help which contexts to concentrate more and which are to postpone to later stage. Though such identification of all the activities in human society is gigantic there is some situational guidance available in the sources of electronic media or books.

Listening to a variety of news like weather fore cast, sports events and other announcements etc. on the radio or any other such source
  ▪ discussing work, problems, day events with family or colleagues
  ▪ making arrangements for exchanging news with acquaintances
  ▪ making arrangements and exchanging news over the telephone
  ▪ chatting with guests at a party or other gathering
  ▪ hearing announcements at a railway station or airport

- following instructions to do something or to reach some place
- attending a seminar
- attending an interview or taking interview
- watching a film or television program
- hearing a speech or lecture
- listening to recorded and other broadcast songs
- attending certain formal occasions like taking advice from a lawyer

The list is fairly large to serve the purpose of providing some guidance for the reasons of classroom practice.

2. Responding

The events of social nature do require people to respond to certain stimuli. They may be verbal or non-verbal involving simple nods or gestures. Even speakers in the seminars demand some kind of acknowledge from his audience in the way of facial expressions, eye-contact, interruptions, and note-taking. Only if the message is coming through electronic equipment when the speaker is neither physically present nor addressing himself an audience there is no overt response usually required?

Sometimes classroom exercises do not normally require any kind of acknowledgement when it is the case of a memory or comprehension test. Some level of such activities where is there is no need for outward response are necessary too as Ur (1984) agrees.

The kind of listeners' is important in three aspects. First one is the necessity to acknowledge and response to input that makes the listeners responsible for overt response. Second, through listening they are initiated to certain aspects of meaning and hence are bent to concentrate more. Third some learners will benefit by listening in terms of being able to formulate some concepts for themselves which will ultimately lead to a better understanding of the related concepts.

Instant response cannot be the goal of any listening activity on the part of listeners. Rather responses can be a prior for an upcoming event or activity which demands varied attention. As an example learner's discussion, preparation of reports after listening to a text or information can be taken as an important contribution in itself. Application of the knowledge gained through listening activity should be readily in its place which actually allows students to concentrate more on listening activity than when there is no further application.

Ur also summarizes that most of our real-life listening activity is characterized by the following features:

1. Listening with a purpose and with some expectations.

2. Making immediate responses to what is heard.

3. Seeing the person we are listening to.

4. Contextually, some visual and surrounding clues contribute to the meaning.

5. Stretches of discourse are received in small chunks.

6. Most of the discourse is spontaneous and hence varies from formal spoken language.

Some gaps in all of the responses are quite normal as in the case of watching television. Nobody normally responds back unless it is exhortation of a happy and joyful shout to the watcher himself. During lecture presentation may be listeners have to listen to the lecture without interrupting. On the other hand classroom listening could be likened to real-life speaking and listening environment as it is seen in the society.

3. Listening to Spoken Language

Brown and Yule(1983) highlight the differences between spoken language and written language in *Teaching the Spoken Language.* They especially point to the way English has been studied for years saying that for the purposes of grammatical study majority of the scholars considered written language as a model. Because of the facility written language provides many researchers found it convenient to describe grammatical features. In addition to that variation in written language over centuries is slow compared to spoken language.

Spoken language has an altogether different walk from written language. Mainly spoken language does not use complete sentences and is rather clause based. There are number of response words used to acknowledge and there is lot of overlap in the talk. The syntax in spoken language as per Brown and Yule is not as rigid as written language. They emphasize that the picture of the spoken language presented to the learners is far complicated than it actually is. This is clear from the frequent use of more general unspecific words commonly to refer to anything imaginable for example "thing", "stuff". The thing that spoken language has not so rigid syntax is comforting to second language learners. The difficult part is that learners have problem understanding certain nonspecific general terms pervasive in spoken interactions because learners need to have access to the contexts actual interaction.

Teaching listening comprehension is only successful when certain contextual clues of several oral interactions are provided to the learners to enable them construct appropriate contexts when required. Brown and Yule also make a very useful distinction of the functions of the language on the basis of speakers' goals in spoken exchanges. If an exchange is just to finish some business it is called "transactional" where as there is an implication of social relation in the conversation that is called "interactional".

4. Purposive Listening

Overtime the concept of listening and comprehension has been developed due to the research advancement in these areas. As a result some innovate approaches have emerged. Many memory problems due to lengthy discourse have been identified. As a result training pieces of record don't last more than 2 or 3 minutes. It has been highlighted that during normal discourse people don't normally try to each and every word as if they are important. Conversely people pay attention to what is relevant and important to them. In other words people have some purpose in mind when they listen to something. Hence, nowadays listening comprehension exercises are being developed with an emphasis to hone listening skills what is relevant rather than paying undue attention stretches of information. The methodology involves specifying in advance the task that the learners are supposed to do while listening. The learners can put themselves in native speaker context to concentrate on what is necessary and relevant in a stretch of discourse. This has led the learners to construct a meaningful context to have plausible interpretation. In this journey of only paying attention what is important to them learners might have missed out on some parts of the discourse or even couldn't have understood some parts at all or might have to make up for something vague that had gone in the discourse. But this is all an all useful effort in order to achieve the best kind of comprehension. And moreover this is the kind of listening we normally do in our mother tongues.

Strategies for Listening

Strategies of learning involve psychological and communicative systems. Every task assumes a strategic foundation. In most classrooms situations, according to Nunan (1999) learners are hardly aware of the underlying strategies of tasks. Awareness of the underlying process of the learning a learner is learning is of utmost importance without which learning will become purposeless. Researchers like Nunan (1997) and Cohen (1996) reiterate that inclusion of the aspects of strategies in curriculum will go long way in sensitizing the learners to keenly look for the processes underlying any learning activity. So providing training on strategy development will help the learners to exercise wise control over learning and gradually make them self-sustaining. The confidence gained this way will enable the learners to continue their learning individually without having to dependent on anyone in future.

Rebecca Oxford, researcher in the field of learning strategies notes that strategies are useful for two reasons one is that they "are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence" (1990) and the learners exhibit increased confidence by following effective ways of learning through understanding the underlying strategies. She identified twelve central characteristics of the strategies. According to her the learning strategies should

- supply to the main goal, communicative competence
- allow learners to become more self-directed
- increase the role of teachers
- be problem-based
- clear actions initiated by the learner
- entail many actions taken by the learner, not just the cognitive
- maintain the learning both directly and indirectly
- not always be noticeable
- be able to inculcated
- be adaptable
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Further, Rebecca draws a clear distinction between direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies are memorizing, analyzing and reasoning, and guessing. Indirect strategies concentrate on monitoring self performance and cooperating with others in the class. Learning strategies should be followed consistently all along the process of learning to best comprehend the underlying procedures of all tasks.

Strategies for Listening

Learning strategies are considered to be central in developing awareness of the underlying processes of any listening activity of the learners. This awareness will help the learners to shoulder greater and broader responsibility than it is without the awareness of learning strategies. The learners with an increased awareness of a variety of learning strategies will surely benefit from such awareness. Further, this awareness makes the learners better listeners along with being better people to recognize the increased opportunities. Effective learning is invariably a result of the awareness of the underlying process of any learning activity. The chief characteristics of effective listening center on the ability to distinguish between purposive listening, selective listening or general listening. Along with this the learners should also develop ability for predicting, structure forming and inference making. These skills are not alien to the classroom content but should be treated as part and parcel of ongoing classroom activities.

In addition to direct strategies teachers can also announce goals before each activity in order to see the immediate outcomes any activity. Announcement of goals will make the learners aware of the expectations the teachers has in that activity. Further, learners will be able to apply a sort of continuous self evaluation and monitor their progress.

Bacon's coding of Listening-comprehension strategies (Bacon, 1992) and Vandergrift's Listening Comprehension Strategies Framework (Vandergrift, 1997) provides a detailed view of what strategies should be elemental among the learners.

1. **Metacognitive Strategy: "**Metacognitive strategies are those used to manage, plan and evaluate the use of cognitive strategy. In other words, they ask the listener to make a plan for learning, think about the occurring learning process, monitor the production and comprehension dynamically and evaluate the learning upon the finish of an activity. It has rarely been applied to the research in listening instruction." (http://www.academypublication.com/ojs/index.php/tpls/article/viewFile/tpls0802226231/1408)

   1) Guided Attention: e.g. concentrate; get accustomed to speech rate; refocus.

   2) Planning: e.g. deciding how often to listen to a particular part of the record; determining how to cut up the parts of the record into manageable chunks; preview the new words; think deeply about the topic .

   3) Setting Goals: e.g. decide upon what to listen for; decide how much should be understood; think to transcend the limits.

   4) Selective Attention: e.g. focus on the beginning and the closing parts of the parts of the record, transitional points, repeated word or phrase parts and words or phrases with a special emphasis.

   5) Monitoring: e.g. looking for sources of difficulty; separate the problematic parts; self adjusting the strategies and the comprehension accordingly.

   6) Evaluating: e.g. estimate the knowledge of topic; gauge the comprehension and the impact of strategies applied; confirming whether achieving the goals should be in advance or not.

2. **Cognitive Strategy**

"Cognitive strategies are one type of learning strategy that learners use in order to learn more successfully. These include repetition, organizing new language, summarizing meaning, guessing meaning from context, using imagery for memorization. All of these strategies involve deliberate manipulation of language to improve learning. Classifications of learning strategies distinguish between cognitive strategies and two other types, metacognitive strategies (organizing learning), and social/ affective strategies (which enable interaction)." (https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/cognitive-strategies)

1) Predicting skill: e.g. structuring the context based on visual information, background knowledge, identifying probable questions in the exercises of the parts of the record.

2) Inference making: e.g. inferring from personal experience, relating to the knowledge of the world around us, by linking to context; understand by crosschecking predications.

3) Top-down listening: e.g. listening for topic and then details, concentrate on chunks; skip new words.

4) Note-taking: e.g. jotting down difficult parts to process later; design special forms note taking to help retain the content.

3. **Social/affective Strategy**

Griffiths (2010) defines social affective strategies, among other strategy types, as the "activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning"

1) Questioning ability: e.g. asking for confirmation; seeking clarification.

2) Co-operating and Co-ordination: e.g. discussing with fellows about the problematic points with strategies of comprehending.

3) Self-reassurance: e.g. offer positive self-talk; encouraging rewards.

Conclusion:

An in depth knowledge of the concept of communicative listening and proper awareness of strategies can help the teachers implement communicative approaches in the classroom. That way the aims of the listening activity can be achieved. It should be said

that there is still a long way to go so as to be able to embrace strategy based communicative listening.

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