

LISTENING COMPREHENSION :

acquiring it

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We tend to take listening for granted. For example, imagine that you are aboard a crowded bus with your friend. You continue to talk with the friend and listen to her remarks and questions: you understand when the next stop is announced; you hear conversation between the driver and a rider; you notice that a child is talking to it's mother; that a youngster is listening to his walkman too loud for his eardrums. All this occurred and you were yet able to comprehend all - - all at the same time and without any noticeable difficulty.

All the above the native speaker/listener understood seemingly without effort. This is because of our experience with the spoken language. Our experience includes contact with a wide range of speakers and topics. Because of this experience, we are able to identify and select those portions in the message [phonological and grammatical patterns as well as lexical items - - which seem to be most important] what your friend is saying to you. At the same time, automatically we are able to retain important portions of the conversation in our short term memory as we continue to listen. Also, because of our experience we are able to predict what is likely to occur next, so that, listening is quite often a confirmation of what we already anticipate. In addition, we usually have contextual clues to help us: participants, setting, topic and the

purpose. Using all the above, we are able to make further predictions and respond appropriately (Byrne, 1976).

We only become aware of this remarkable natural feat of listening we have achieved when we are in an unfamiliar listening environment - such as listening to a language we have limited proficiency. It is difficult enough to separate speech from non-speech sounds; the other elements of the listening process we take for granted in our own language (L1), i.e., dividing a speaker's utterance into words, identifying them, and at the same time interpreting what the speaker meant and then being able to give an appropriate reply. To be able to do all this in a foreign language environment is a formidable task. Thus, it stands to reason that people believe foreigners speak too fast (Richards, 1987).

There are few experiences more rewarding in foreign language learning than being able to comprehend a conversation, broadcasts over radio and TV or a film. Certainly, a L2 learner can understand classroom L2, however, there is a very wide gap between classroom L2 and that spoken and heard in the natural, real world. Listening requires competence that must be developed (Steiner, 1975).

Rarely does a L1 speaker/listener listen to something without some idea of what he is going to hear - - the exception might be when he turns on the radio or the TV for the news. When he turns on either media for a specific program, he is somewhat attuned to the context of what he anticipates hearing. J.C. Richards (1983) states that people listen with a 'script' knowledge, i.e. knowledge he possesses in advance of the subject matter or context of the conversation or program. He usually expects to hear a relevant response to his utterance - - expectation is quite often connected with the purpose of his listening. Thus, he

listens for specific words or phrases and filters out the irrelevant words or phrases incorporated in the response. He has a definite purpose for listening; he expects his purpose to be fulfilled with a response that is coherent with what went on before. Otherwise, he tends not to remember what was said or even understands what the speaker said. Certainly, the listener is more likely to accurately understand something he expects or needs to hear than something that is unexpected, irrelevant or unhelpful.

Therefore, it stands to reason when presenting listening material to a L2 learner to give him some information of content, situation and speakers before the actual listening (Ur, 1984). The ultimate goal is first to understand the gist of what he heard and then to make an appropriate response. Understanding more what the speaker says comes with practice. The classroom condition is an ideal place to start practicing both skills.

Listening is not a question of hearing more; rather, true listening is hearing *less* for successful listening depends on selecting *what* to listen *for* and ignoring a lot of unimportant utterances. In order to understand the gist and recognize the specific information, L2 learner must be able to filter out the 'noise' and listen only for the essential information. In other words, the listener must be able to get the message as intended by the speaker.

In the daily contact with people, usually the listener is required to give some kind of verbal or non-verbal immediate response to what was said. There is an immediate feedback from the listener to the speaker that the message was either understood or not. Yet, in our classrooms, listening comprehension exercises require no response until the end of a

long listening session. Usually the feedback is a 'yes/no' exercise, which is a 'test of memory capacity' rather than comprehend what was heard (Ur, 1984). The next exercise is to fill in the blank spaces, in other words, to reconstruct the listened to material word for word (White, 1980). Such tasks may have their place in the course, however, the listening tasks should be based on short, active responses occurring during and between parts of the listening passage rather than at the end.

Certainly in real life rarely does one speak in a continuous flow of words with each successive sentence containing new information. Rather normal speaking pattern consists of repeated portions, re-phrasing, redundancy and pauses to better convey the speaker's intent to the listener. Redundancy can be in the form of repetition, false starts, re-phrasing, self correction, elaboration, etc. These factors help the listener receive extra information and time to absorb and think. Only then is the listener able to form an appropriate response or question to keep the conversation moving.

Ironically, for L2 learner, these redundancies rather than being helpful utterances, tend to become 'noise' and often hamper comprehension. At such times, the listener should, rather must, take control of the conversation by asking for re-phrasing, slowing down, vocabulary clarification, etc., since it is very pertinent that the speaker's intent be correctly grasped by the listener.

Then, is it possible for a L2 learner to acquire limited proficiency in understanding and speaking a foreign language by rehearsing what he intends to say? Are there any listening situations where rehearsal would be effective? Certainly listening skills are as important as speaking skills for he cannot communicate orally unless both skills are developed

simultaneously. Rehearsed speech is useless if he is unable to respond to the reply generated by the person he is trying to talk to. He cannot practice listening in the same manner as he can rehearse speaking for he cannot predict what he will listen to (Richards, 1987).

The L2 learner has a multitude of difficulties to overcome. First, his experience with the language is limited. As a beginner learner, he may still be mastering the phonological and grammatical patterns, as well as acquiring vocabulary. Thus, he has a very difficult time in selecting and retaining key items uttered by the speaker. In the natural, real world the L2 learner does not have the contextual clues and tries to remember the entire 'script' (Byrne, 1976).

Listening effectively involves a multiplicity of skills. Here are some steps involved in the process of listening to a conversation.

- filter the spoken sounds from the surrounding noise
- recognize the vocabulary
- grasp the syntax and understand the speaker's intended meaning
- compose a correct and appropriate response immediately or after a reasonable pause to what had been said.

In a word, we are listening for a purpose. All these listening skills are not performed as separate operations but simultaneously - - which makes listening a very formidable achievement. In conjunction with the brief outline above, a listener watches for the non-linguistic/verbal communication. Thus effective listening also involves the reliance on the non-linguistic skills. In addition, we listen to the intonation on the vocabulary and phrase used by the speaker to grasp the real intention. Thus the listener creates the exact meaning conveyed by the speaker. All the while the listener is absorbing what is being said, he is matching

his personal experience, his world knowledge and cultural differences with that of the speaker's.

When both the listener and the speaker's background knowledge is similar, the listener's interactional content is high; however, when the listener is unfamiliar with the speaker's then interaction is very low. Experiments have shown that recall under such conditions is not very accurate and the listener frequently draws the wrong inference or becomes inattentive (Rivers, 1983). In other words, an effective listener applies relevant internal information available in him in order to construct his interpretation of what has been said. Thus, it is essential that there is a period for the pre-listening phase in the classroom. The learner should participate actively in this seemingly unimportant activity performed prior to listening to the taped material.

Listening comprehension can begin right from the start of L2 learning. This usually begins with the greetings exchanged between instructor and the learner. Next follows the classroom instructions interspersed with brief, ordinary everyday small talk before getting into the day's lesson plan. Needless to say, this type of conversation is conducted all in the L2 language (Stiener, 1975).

Before the learner gets the opportunity to hear the recorded lesson, the instructor can elicit physical participation by requesting raising of the hands in the early stages of L2 learning to questions relating to the L2 learner's personal experience or world knowledge to what he will eventually hear. This activity helps the learner get involved. It sets the stage to what he will hear and is a good method to train the ear to some of the vocabulary he will subsequently hear. By spending some five minutes in asking a series of pertinent questions, the learner will soon

become accustomed to the preparatory practice and at the same time the instructor can measure to a degree the learner's attitude during the class period (Steiner, 1975).

In expending the listening comprehension practice as an integral part of the oral skill practice, instructors should be cautious about forcing L2 speakers to speak before he is ready to speak (Byrne, 1976). However, in the instance of Japanese L2 learner, the instructor must cope with the cultural aspect of the learner's reluctance to talk in public and classroom surroundings. There are several reasons for the silent oral period. Until the age of 18 or so, many have never had to speak out in English. Instead, he did a lot of reading and writing exercises for the sole purpose of preparing for his chosen university's entrance examination. Therefore, with this background information, the L2 learner has always used English for 'examination purpose' and not for the purpose of oral communication.

Also, the Japanese L2 learner is reluctant to speak out for fear of making a mistake - grammatical or otherwise; does not wish to reveal his control or lack of control of the English language (vocabulary, phrases, pronunciation, grammar, etc) in front of others; if he is a good speaker, he does not want to be seemingly flaunting his speaking ability to others. As an instructor in an English conversation class, it is difficult to determine which category the L2 learner is in. But, whenever the L2 learner does have the courage and confidence to speak out, the instructor should not demand that the learner be accurate in all aspects of the English language. Accuracy with respect to phonology, grammatical patterns, as well as vocabulary, is attained only with time and active oral participation (Byrne, 1976).

We have so far referred to some of the reasons L2 learners have experienced difficulty in processing and speaking out what he has heard. Of course there are other problems related to understanding a language in which he is only partially proficient. Now we shall look at the relationship between comprehension and learning. Much of today's approaches to teaching listening comprehension is based on the observation of essential factors of L1 acquisition. Through observing how L1 learners learn to comprehend spoken words and then be able to speak coherently, L2 instructors are seeing the similarity in acquiring L2 strategies for listening comprehension and speaking.

Listening and speaking skills are reciprocal: one reinforces the other. The learner starts at the receiver's end but needs to experience being the speaker as well. The relationship between the listening and speaking skills is: one begins to hear better after one has tried to say it. One says it better after one has learned to hear it (Dubin, 1977). When L2 learner learns to make sound discrimination, recognize the intonation pattern, becomes familiar with sentence rhythm as well as trains his memory capacity, he has the beginnings of starting to speak.

Traditionally, listening has often been regarded as a passive language skill. We now know that it involves more than language: a successful listener must be an active one. Understanding is not something that occurs because of what a speaker says; the listener has an important role to play in the success of process of communication. The success is determined by various knowledge - world knowledge, for example, and by applying what he knows to what he hears and trying to understand what the speaker intends by his utterance: there is understanding and communication. In other words, an effective listener applies relevant internal

information available in him in order to construct his own interpretation of what has been said.

New learning draws on previous learning. This new learning becomes a part of the learner's personal knowledge. Using both this personal knowledge and world knowledge, the learner comprehends what he hears in a listening comprehension practice. Thus listening certainly is not a passive skill (Rivers, 1983). Listening involves active cognitive processing. Rather than 'just listening,' it involves assimilating the message from the phonetics, so sometimes the message the L2 learner receives is different from the message the speaker intended. This often happens even in real life. To facilitate ease in the listening, L2 learner needs training in listening for meaningful segments or chunks. In this manner, it is easier to grasp the gist of the listening material. But, prior to listening to the taped material, learner should be warned to pay close attention to the preparatory discussion, titles, pictures and in particular to participate in the question and answer period between instructor and learner. It is during this pre-listening period many clues to the theme of the taped material will be presented. In this activity period, the learner will have an opportunity to recall his own experience, to associate what he is going to listen to to what he already knows - - personal and world knowledge. At the same time, having this preparatory activity, he can sharpen his predictive skills. He is actively listening.

When speaking, the L2 learner/speaker selects the language used. He has control of using whatever communication strategies he chooses (Littlewood, 1981). When listening, however, he cannot control the language used. Moreover, he must be prepared to deduce the meaning conveyed by the speaker in whatever language he chooses. The listener must be

able to understand the productive range of the speaker rather than to the learner/listener's receptive range. He must also adjust to speech which contains false starts, hesitations, etc. that occur in natural speech.

Keeping this in mind, the learner should be encouraged to engage in an active process of listening for meaning, using not only linguistic clues, but also his world and personal experience knowledge. It should be emphasized to him that it is not necessary to listen to each and every word to understand what he hears. Rather, he should learn to listen for the general gist. Of course, there are times he must listen to almost every word, but he should realize that he must filter non-essential information from the essential. Rather than getting tense over what he could not 'catch,' he should learn to make inferences from what he understand. Much of the taped material he listens to is for functional information. Similar comprehension techniques can be used to listen for social meanings.

To make the listening task easier for the L2 learner, the instructor should inform the learner about the content, situation and the speakers involved. He can thus assist the learner focus his attention to only the relevant information. First, the learner is informed only of the schema of the material he will listen to (Steiner, 1975). Then the instructor, functioning as a facilitator, elicits from the learner the probable conversation that might occur in such a given situation. In this process, vocabulary and phrases are provided in somewhat natural manner. In addition, the learner has some visual aid to assist in helping him predict and anticipate what he could be listening to. The visual aid he looks at while listening should be simple and uncluttered so as not to distract the listener with too much information. This support should help re-

enforce the listener's task by focusing his attention on the important parts of the message and training him to listen for specific information. Thus, he is able to filter out the irrelevant 'noise.' In practicing listening comprehension, the learner must accept the fact that if he does not understand every single word he hears, it is all right. The important thing is to pay attention to the overall message: get the message, get the gist. Successful listening is being able to get enough meaning in order to fulfill the purpose at hand.

One of the listening strategies is to be able to predict what might be said in the flow of the conversation. When the listener uses his perception of the key features of the context of what he will hear (Hymes, 1964) and uses his knowledge of the world, he can then limit the range of possible utterance he might hear. This ability to predict means the listener does not have to listen carefully and actively process every phoneme, syllable, word phrase or even to every intonation of the message. He can process only the message for what is expected. In this manner, the learner is reducing his memory load to understand the incoming message more effectively. Therefore, it is very important that all listening material is completely contextualized.

The instructor should help encourage learners to participate in setting up the pre-listening portion of the study plan. The learner should participate actively to recall his own experience in the same context. If the L2 learner is unaccustomed or unaware of the cultural differences, this fact should be brought to his attention by the instructor for lack of this information could be a barrier to comprehension. Comprehension will be a puzzle and the learner may understand the words but still not comprehend the situation. When the L2 learner has this background

information that is key to the context of the listening material, it will help his predictability skills.

The L2 learner's responses during the pre-listening period are important for other reasons. The active responses provide him with a motivation for listening. The activity of responding provides him with a framework of what he will be listening to and internally realizes that seemingly unrelated information are indeed integrated into one contextual unit.

When selecting the text to be used in the classroom, it would be wise to check to see if the lessons are often listening test oriented. Does the learner have to perform 'comprehension' exercise and the feedback to the exercise is to have 'right' answers (Sheerin, 1987). When using such texts, listening is not being taught but it is being tested. Although many listening comprehension texts claim to train listening skills such as predicting, listening for specific information, and listening for gist (White, 1980) often upon close examination, the material seems to test rather than teach. Important factors to look for in a text are:

- pre-listening activity
- support (visual aid)
- appropriate tasks.

After sufficient pre-listening activity, the listening time should be accompanied by some activity in order to keep the learner's attention to the task of comprehension. As a result of this comprehension, the learner has the pleasure of success. Activities most suited for this type of activity could be 'true/false' statements, filling in a word or phrase in the blank spaces provided in the text. Another activity would be to match items in column A with that of column B. Maps and diagrams would also be listening comprehension tasks. Of course, each of these

activities are done separately - - either listening to the same taped material several times or listening to new material for each new activity. This approach to listening tasks makes the listening exercises more purposeful and maintains learner's attention and motivation. These activities develop listening strategy skills rather than testing the learner's memory skill. When the activities are carefully constructed, the activities can pinpoint exact misunderstanding on the part of the learner rather than testing his memory ability.

In addition to the above, the tasks should not demand exact recall of verbal details, rather, the listening comprehension tasks should be appropriate to the conversational type. For example, what is the main purpose of the verbal exchange; personal relationship; intentions, moods, and how the interaction/transaction are managed. However, even the best and most appropriate listening task - - grid, chart, illustration, or whatever - - will not teach listening.

Feedback of the listened material can be in the form of checking between two L2 learners. If there is this opportunity to work out the differences between themselves, they are learning to interact and transact then and there. This is a far better method of doing remedial work rather than the instructor just telling what the correct answers are. There are a number of Japanese L2 learners, especially those in the post-beginner level, who are very unhappy if the classroom activities follow the above pattern. They insist on listening to only the native English speaking instructor and want to be corrected each and every time the learner makes a mistake. He strongly feels that he does not want to listen to a fellow student because of his 'mistakes' in English and strongly asks for correction when he knows he has made a mistake. Inas-

much as all the English structure had been learned when he was in the junior and senior high school levels, there is nothing new in this field that a native English instructor can 'teach' him. Surely this error correction should be a self-correction activity when the L2 learner knows he has made a mistake. Self-correction can be in the of form repeating portion of the sentence, re-phrasing and re-starting the sentence; all of these forms of self-correction are being performed constantly by even native speakers.

Many of the present listening comprehension taped material contain redundancy, re-phrasing, pauses - - all features that will greatly aid the learner to acquire listening competency.

In the first year of a L2 learner at the university level, the classwork will prepare him to acquire proficiency by indentifying pictures with what he hears, be able to filter specific information to complete a specific task - - getting the gist of the listening material. Most learners can achieve the listening objectives, but many will not achieve the speaking ability equal to that of his listening comprehension ability . In the early stage he is on the receiving side of conversation but is not really ready for interaction at the same level of what he hears.

But eventually, before the first year is over, the learner will be able to respond verbally, quickly. He must process what he heard and at the same time respond with an appropriate reply. One method of such training would be to listen to recorded interaction between speakers at natural native speaker speed. Thus, the learner will become aware of the speed, rhythm, intonation and stress. The learner who cannot speak or by choice will not speak cannot demonstrate his proficiency in listening comprehension. However, the learner who has acquired even the

minimal speaking skills should be encouraged to speak out in the classroom. He is thus demonstrating his comprehension by giving answers to the assigned task and may even be able to summarize what he has heard. The instructor must be aware the learner is demonstrating his listening comprehension ability, not his speaking ability. Learners who feel comfortable being a part of the silent majority and are afraid of being different from the majority, will need to put forth more courage and have the confidence that he can communicate even with the minimal L2 speaking abilities with respect to structure and vocabulary control. The L2 learner should not be concerned what his fellow classmates might think about his speaking ability or his views in a discussion session.

Included in the classroom work should be a period for error pattern diagnosis, remedial work and positive feedback to the learner. These are important elements in teaching listening skills. However, too often this practice is neglected because of lack of class time. This is particularly true in the case of Japanese L2 learners. They not only need extra time for the pre-listening phase because of their reluctance to participate audibly and actively but also they have had very little practice in using their imagination in relationship to listening comprehension and the subsequent verbal communication.

For homework, the L2 learner can go over the transcript after the classroom listening and task completion activities in order to check and make sure what he understood and what he could not 'catch.' Going over the transcript at home will clarify what his weak areas are insofar as listening comprehension is versus his reading comprehension. This is certainly a good and important resource for remedial work at home

as well as in the classroom (Sheerin, 1987).

So far, we have been talking about listening comprehension and the most efficient method to follow in the classroom. Now let us consider the distinction between the activities of 'hearing' and 'listening.' What is it? Anderson (1988) says that there is a difference between the processes involved in each case. Notice the use of the word 'listen' in these four situations. What are the differences?

1. The parents asked the babysitter to listen at the child's door every fifteen minutes or so.
2. I had to listen to his complaints about the cost of living for the best part of a hour.
3. The President's spokesman has admitted that a listening device had been placed in the Secretary of State's office.
4. The most important skill a doctor has to learn is to be a good listener.

What meaning is the word 'listen' conveying in each of the above sentences? Brown and Yule (1983a) coined the terms 'interactional talk' and 'transactional talk.' Interactional talk is used to refer to speech that is primarily social. Transactional talk is used to achieve a successful transfer or exchange of information.

As teachers, we can never really know what problems the learner of L2 may experience and the skills he uses to comprehend what was said. When the listener misunderstood, was it because he did not pay attention? Was he unfamiliar with the words, syntax, content? Did he try actively to construct an interpretation of what was said? In the process of understanding, we must consider the input (words said by the speaker), the listening process (the listener's application of his world knowledge,

personal experience, anticipation and observation available to him) and output (the response from the listener).

Richard (1988) states that there are two distinct kinds of processes involved in comprehension. They are often referred to as 'bottom up' and 'top down' processing (Chaudron and Richards, 1986). The first processing refers to the use of incoming information data as a source of information about the meaning of the message. That is, the process of comprehension begins with the message received, then analyzed as sounds, words, clauses, phrase and sentences. Finally, the intended meaning is understood. Thus comprehension is a process of decoding - - something native speakers start to do at a very young age - - almost from the time of birth.

Examples of bottom up processing in listening include;

1. scanning the input to identify the words
2. breaking up the stream of words into segments, for example, being able to recognize that 'abookofmine' actually consists of four words
3. using intonation cues to identify focus of utterance
4. using grammatical cues to organize the input into units of messages.

The listener's lexical and grammatical competence provide the basis of the bottom up processing. Once the listener performs the above steps automatically, he forgets the exact wording and retains the meaning.

The top down processing on the other hand refers to the use of the background knowledge to understand the meaning of the message. This background knowledge could be any one or all of the following:

1. previous knowledge about the topic being talked about
2. situational or contextual knowledge

3. knowledge stored in memory in the form of 'schemata' and 'script'
 - - knowledge of the overall sequence of events and the relationship between them (Richards, 1988).

A lot of our knowledge of the world consists of knowledge about a given situation, the people or events to meet in such situation, etc. In applying this prior knowledge about people and events to a particular situation, we can proceed from the top down to understand. We apply what we heard to confirm our expectations and fill in the specific details.

Example of top down processing in listening are the following:

1. putting places, people or things into categories
2. inferring cause and effect relationship
3. anticipating outcomes
4. inferring the topic of discussion
5. inferring sequence of events
6. inferring missing details (Richards, 1988)

If the listener is unable to make use of the top down processing, an utterance of conversation might be incomprehensible. Bottom up processing alone is often times insufficient for comprehension. When one first encounters a foreign language, he is heavily dependent on the top down processing -- using all previous schemata and script to use.

It is quite natural to speak of speaking fluently. Listening also has fluency. This depends on the use of both top down and bottom down processing. One cannot state that one dominates over the other. It all depends on the listener's familiarity with the topic under discussion, what background knowledge he can apply and the purpose of listening.

Depending on purpose of listening, the listener uses different ways of

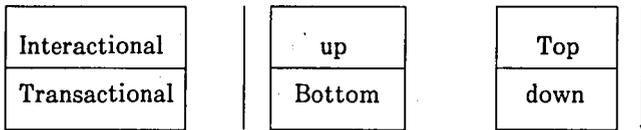
listening. We use language for different functions and purposes. Brown and Yule (1983) make a distinction between interactional and transactional functions of language.

Interactional uses of language is primarily for the purpose of social communication. The emphasis is to create harmonious interaction between speaker/listener. In creating this good will, the information is communicated, but the accurate and orderly presentation of information is not the primary purpose. Some of the interactional uses of language are greeting, small talk, jokes, compliments, casual 'chat' to pass the time with friends or to make the stranger comfortable. Brown and Yule suggest this type of language is listener-oriented. One of the rules for this type of conversation is to elicit agreement for agreement creates harmony and diminishes threat to the listener. Therefore, it is important to be able to have small talk on 'safe' topics such as weather, scenery, the news of the day, etc. As can be seen, there is a constant change of topic. In addition to this interactional uses of language, the listener frequently is able to fill in the details by using the top down processing.

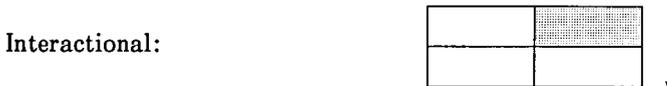
In transactional uses of language, the language is used primarily to communicate information. The information is 'message' oriented rather than 'listener' oriented. In this case, accurate and logical communication of the message is very important. At the the same time, the listener must confirm that the message has been understood. Preciseness and directness of meaning are essential, whereas in interactional uses of language the message is often vague and indirect. Transactional uses of the language are employed to carry out a task, listening to lectures, descriptions and instructions. Brown and Yule (1984) suggest this is the kind of talk which dominates in classrooms.

Tikunoff (1985) states that effective learner classroom participation requires a command of language in both interactional and transactional functions. Interactional uses of the language is used in order to interact with the instructor and learner and learner with learner to accomplish tasks, and at the same time, transactional uses of the language is needed in order to acquire new skills, internalize new information and create new ideas.

Using the four classifications of listening processes and listening purposes, a framework can be constructed to compare the different listening techniques used for different listening activities. Listening activities may be at different positions as shown below (Richards, 1988).



A person engaged in greeting, exchanging compliments or engaged in small talk would represent interactional uses of language:

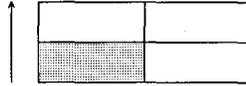


A person attending a cooking class would be considered as doing the following:



Someone learning how to cut someone's hair and then giving that person a hair permanent would be shown as:

Transactional:



Next is a person trying to understand a joke and trying to time his reaction at the proper time.

Interactional:



Both the top down and the bottom up processes are used to understand the speaker's intention. Therefore, in order to provide practice for the L2 learner listening comprehension, classroom activities should incorporate listening strategies in recognizing and using meanings rather than information recall as in a test.

At the same time, in the practice material, the L2 learner should have practice in recognizing what answers are required for interactional listening and those for transactional purposes. In other words, learner should be trained not to listen to casual conversation with the same intensity as they listen to a lecture. Classroom listening activities should provide the L2 learner practice in developing strategies to listen to a variety of situations for varying but for relevant purposes. By selecting appropriate activities and situations, the learner can make the transition from the classroom environment to the real world. The aim of the activities should provide opportunity for the learner to listen to a vari-

ety of situations to determine what to listen for, i. e., interactional, transactional, top down, bottom up. Each of these identities is for different purpose and require a different mental processing (Richard,1988).

After all that has been said and done, the success or partial success of classroom activities from the very beginning of class time depends to a great extent on the learner's being truly motivated to achieve some degree of listening comprehension abilities (Littlewood, 1981). Perhaps in selecting the text to be used, the instructor might keep in mind whether the situations portrayed in the text are those the learner might encounter in real life -- both interactional as well as transactional uses of the L2 language. Another factor to look for in the text is whether the functions of the language are likely to be useful for communication in various situations encountered in real life. Finally, are the topics included in the text likely to be important or interesting to the L2 learner.

Equally important in selecting the appropriate text to be use in the classroom is the fact that the L2 learner quickly becomes accustomed to a brand new method of using the English language he has so diligently studied prior to attending the junior college or university. In particular, L2 learner must accept the fact that native English speaking instructors look forward to active learner participation. They will coach and encourage the learner to speak out -- the important thing is to have the learner demonstrate that he understood what he listened to, not whether the learner was able to respond with the 'right' answer with 'perfect' English.

As Tanaka (10/1988) says, he finds 'teaching 34 American students at Waseda University a challenge for it is fun to talk to young people...

he appreciates American students for being enthusiastic, assertive and active in class discussions, and expressing their own views. He encourages Japanese students to do the same.

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