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КАФЕДРА АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА И ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ**

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COMPREHENSION»**

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INTRODUCTION

Foreign languages have been taught formally for centuries and records of language teaching materials have been around for over 500 years [9, p.139]. However, teaching listening comprehension as a part of teaching a foreign or second language is a relatively recent development whose history lies mostly in the last thirty years. In the earliest of teaching methods known, the grammar-translation method, learners focused exclusively on the analysis of written texts. Listening was used solely to accompany these texts and to provide models for oral reading. It was not until the late 1800s that listening was used in language instruction as a means of developing oral communication [9, p.139]. It was assumed that students would simply acquire the ability to understand the spoken form of the language if they occasionally heard their teacher speak it or listened to a tape of it being spoken. It was quickly demonstrated that this approach was simply not working.

This led to the development of the direct method in which oral presentations and aural comprehension were emphasized. The target language was exclusively used in the classroom and translation was proscribed. Second language learning was intended to proceed largely as first languages were learned - moving from tangible situations to more abstract ones. Initially, only every day, concrete vocabulary and sentences were taught. Oral communication was initiated by the teacher through question-answer exchanges with the learners. All new language was taught through demonstrations, objects and pictures, much the way that a child is immersed in visual contexts and oral language.

The direct method, which was initially designed for small group teaching, was eventually adapted for use with larger groups and for teaching the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). This new style of teaching, which emanated from England, was later dubbed the oral approach because all lessons started with oral presentations [9, p.140]. Dialogues in which new grammar patterns and vocabulary were introduced were modelled by the teacher. The learners repeated chorally, trying to imitate the teacher's pronunciation. Oral drills, based on the

dialogues, were devised to reinforce these new language points, initially through a listening mode. Eventually, learners were given reading and writing assignments using the structures and words they had practiced.

At about the same time that the oral approach was being developed in Europe, American linguists began to propagate a somewhat more extreme approach called the audio-lingual method [9, p.140]. In this approach also, the emphasis was on oral presentation and oral drills. The purpose of this method was to retain learners to think in the new language by helping them to form new habits, a view that was obviously driven by the behavioral psychology that was popular at the time.

Although these oral-aural methods helped many pupils learn second languages, there has been a gradual decline in their popularity. Starting in the 1970s, there was a worldwide rethinking of the principles involved in second language teaching. The result of this came to be known as communicative language teaching, a movement that emphasized not just the importance of oral language in language acquisition, but the use of realistic and authentic social language [9, p.140]. The communicative language teaching movement gave rise to the use of audio and later video material which reflected authentic language in use. Learners were no longer exposed to ideal grammar and vocabulary samples of oral language. Instead, they were given a steady exposure to situational dialogues and language fictions.

Simultaneous to the development of communicative language teaching, the study of second language acquisition became an accepted and increasingly respected discipline within linguistics and social science.

Created conditions in the field of education in our country serve for bringing up well-educated, modern intelligently thoughtful, intellectually and harmoniously developed generation, who get complete professional preparation. On December 10, 2012, the implementation of the Presidential Decree №1875 on “The measures to further improve foreign languages learning system” creates the basis for reforming on teaching foreign languages in the education system of the country. A

lot of projects have been done as an implementation of this important document [1, 3].

According to this decree, starting from 2013/2014 school year foreign languages, mainly English, gradually throughout the country will be taught from the first year of schooling in the form of lesson-games and speaking games, continuing to learning the alphabet, reading and spelling in the second year.

In 2013 basing on the elaborated State Education Standards in learning foreign languages in the system of continuous education the requirements for obtaining foreign languages to be indicated for gradulators of all stages of education. The same time new curricula on systematically teaching foreign languages starting from the first grade has approved. The requirements on defining the level of language learning competency of learners developed according to the measures of International Standards of “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment” (CEFR).

In language learning and teaching, it is essential for language teachers to help their students become effective listeners. In the communicative approach to language teaching, this means modeling listening strategies and providing listening practice in authentic situations: those that learners are likely to encounter when they use the language outside the classroom.

Listening is drawing more and more of people’s attention in recent years. People recognized its important role in the language learning and communication in the target language. In the 1980s, Krashen came up with his “Input Hypothesis” which emphasizes the importance of listening comprehension. And more and more books on listening, both practical and theoretical, especially dealing with listening skills, have been published. Listening has been given an unprecedented attention. Under this background, a considerable amount of research has been done into listening materials.

According to the Decree of our President S.Mirziyoev adopted on 20th of April 2017, all educational institutions of the Republic should establish close partnerships with the leading international research institutions, broad introduction

of advanced teaching technologies into educational process, educational programmes and teaching materials based on international educational standards, involve dynamically in research activity and professional development of teachers and professors [2]. So, different teaching methods with using modern pedagogical, communication and information technologies in the system of education, which can motivate a new generation of youth to learning foreign languages have been implementing.

The topicality of the research work consists in:

- Analyzing effective approaches and methods towards teaching listening comprehension;
- establishing a new critical view at the methods of teaching listening comprehension;
- discussing basic types of listening;
- figuring out effective activities and tasks in teaching listening comprehension;

The subject of this qualification paper is listening activities and tasks which are used effectively by teachers in teaching listening comprehension. Developing listening skills and methods of teaching listening form **the object** of the present work.

The purpose of the work is to conduct the overview of the main teaching methods of teaching listening comprehension.

The theoretical value of this qualification paper lies in the analysis of problems of conducting listening tasks and activities as a methodological problem and in the conducting overview of the listening process nature.

The material of the present work may be applicable at the general courses on Methodology of English Teaching. Moreover, it may be highly useful for elaboration of programs and classes on teaching listening at all levels. In addition, it may serve as a basis for further research what illustrates the practical value of the qualification paper.

The structure of the research is the following: introduction, two main chapters, conclusion, a list of references and appendices.

Introduction states the topicality of the issue, the purpose and objectives of the research, defines the object and the subject of the qualification paper, enumerates methods applied in the process of research, expounds its practical and theoretical value and lays out the structure of the work.

Chapter I outlines approaches towards teaching listening skills. In this chapter there are analyzed the facts the more pupils listen, the better they get at listening and we suggest that listening is good for language acquisition in general, provides good models for future speaking, writing and offers opportunities for language study and there are analyzed basic types of listening performance.

Materials of **Chapter II** help the teachers to acquire a storehouse of useful, comprehensible tools for using effective tasks and activities for their classrooms. This chapter is devoted to designing tasks and activities for listening comprehension.

Conclusion generalizes the results of the research and summarizes all the information provided in the qualification paper.

List of references comprises bibliography of literature used during the research.

CHAPTER I. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND ON TEACHING LISTENING COMPREHENSION

According to Vandergrift [35, 168], listening comprehension is a complex process in which listeners play an active role in discriminating between sounds, understanding vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpreting intonation and stress, and finally, making use of all the skills mentioned above, interpreting the utterance within the socio-cultural context.

Listening skills are anything but easy to master. For many ESL/EFL learners, listening is the thing they feel most frustrated with. On the one hand, they can't control the speed of speech and they tend to have difficulties decoding sounds that don't exist in their mother tongue. Reduced English sounds (lazy speech) or contractions are two examples. On the other hand, even when they hear sounds correctly, oftentimes they have interpretation problems due to a lack of vocabulary. English slang or colloquial language increases the difficulty of interpretation. For EFL learners in Uzbekistan, there is another problem. Since speaking does not receive as much attention as reading and writing, students always recognize a word by sight instead of by sound. They may have no interpretation problem when they look at the target word; however, when they are asked to decipher the word through sound, problems emerge.

There is no denying that successful listening skills are acquired over time and take lots of practice. For students, to improve their listening skills, they need to build up their "listening vocabulary," familiarize themselves with English intonation and rhythm, expose themselves to as much English as possible and most importantly utilize appropriate EFL listening strategies when listening to English. As an EFL teacher, aside from encouraging students not to give up and to listen to English as often as possible, we have to provide abundant opportunities for them to do listening practice as well as teach them effective listening comprehension strategies.

1.1 The importance of teaching listening

One of the main reasons for getting students to listen to spoken English is to let them hear different varieties and accents - rather than just the voice of their teacher with its own idiosyncrasies. In today's world, they need to be exposed not only to one variety of English (British English, for example), but also to varieties such as American English, Australian English, Caribbean English, Indian English or West African English.

There are, of course, problems associated with the issue of language variety. Within British English, for example, there are many different dialects and accents. The differences are not only in the pronunciation of sounds ('bath' like 'laugh' vs. 'bath' like 'cat'), but also in grammar (the use of 'shall' in northern varieties compared with its use in 'Standard English' - the southern, BBC - type variety). The same is of course true American, Indian or West African English.

Despite the desirability of exposing students to many varieties of English, however, common sense is called for. The number of different varieties (and the degree to which they are different from the one students are learning) will be a matter for the teacher to judge. But even if they only hear occasional varieties of English, which are different from the teacher's, it will give them a better idea of the world language, which English has become.

The second major reason for teaching listening is because it helps students to acquire language subconsciously even if teachers do not draw attention to its special features. Exposure to language is a fundamental requirement for anyone wanting to learn it. Listening to appropriate tapes provides such exposure and students get vital information not only about grammar and vocabulary, but also about pronunciation, rhythm, intonation, pitch and stress.

Lastly, students get better at listening the more they do it. Listening is a skill and any help we can give students in performing that skill will help them to be better listeners [6, p.97-98].

In order to define listening, we must outline the main component skills in listening. In terms of the necessary components, we can list the following:

- discrimination between sounds;
- recognizing words;
- identifying grammatical groupings of words;
- identifying 'pragmatic units' - expressions and sets of utterance which function as whole units to create meaning;
- connecting linguistic cues to paralinguistic cues (intonation and stress) and to nonlinguistic cues (gestures and relevant objects in the situation) in order to construct meaning;
- using background knowledge (what we already know about the content and the form) and context (what has already been said) to predict and then to confirm meaning;
- recalling important words and ideas;

Successful listening involves an integration of these component skills. In this sense, listening is a coordination of the component skills, not the individual skills themselves. This integration of these perception skills, analysis skills, and synthesis skills is what we call a person's listening ability [10, p.4].

Even though a person may have good listening ability, he or she may not always be able to understand what is being said. In order to understand messages, some conscious action is necessary to use this ability effectively, so it is not possible to view it directly, but we can see the effects of this action. The underlying action for successful listening is decision making [10, p.4]. The listener must make these kinds of decisions:

What kind of situation is this?

What is my plan for listening?

What are the important words and units of meaning?

Does the message make sense?

Successful listening requires making effective 'real time' decisions about these questions. In this sense, listening is primarily a thinking process - thinking

about meaning. Effective listeners develop a useful way of thinking about meaning as they listen. The way in which listener makes these decisions is what we will call a listening strategy [10, p.4].

Listening as a major component in language learning and teaching first hit the spotlight in the late 1970s with James Asher's (1977) work on Total Physical Response. In TPR the role of comprehension was given prominence as learners were given great quantities of language to listen to before they were encouraged to respond orally. Similarly, the Natural Approach recommended a significant "silent period" during which learners were allowed the security of listening without being forced to go through the anxiety of speaking before they were "ready" to do so.

Subsequent pedagogical research on listening comprehension made significant refinements in the process of listening. Studies looked at the effect of a number of different contextual characteristics and how they affect the speed and efficiency of processing aural language. D. Brown identified five such factors: text, interlocutor, task, listener, and process characteristics. In each case, important elements of the listening process were identified. For example, the listener characteristics of proficiency, memory, attention, affect, age, gender, background schemata, and even learning disabilities in the LI all affect the process of listening [3, 300].

What makes listening difficult? As you contemplate designing lessons and techniques for teaching listening skills, or that have listening components in them, a number of special characteristics of spoken language need to be taken into consideration. Second language learners need to pay special attention to such factors because they strongly influence the processing of speech, and can even block comprehension if they are not attended to. In other words, they can make the listening process difficult. The following eight characteristics of spoken language are adapted from several sources (Dunkel, 1991; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Richards, 1983; Ur, 1984).

1. **Clustering.** In written language we are conditioned to attend to the sentence as the basic unit of organization. In spoken language, due to memory

limitations and our predisposition for "chunking," or clustering, we break down speech into smaller groups of words. Clauses are common constituents, but phrases within clauses are even more easily retained for comprehension. In teaching listening comprehension, therefore, you need to help students to pick out manageable clusters of words; sometimes second language learners will try to retain overly long constituents (a whole sentence or even several sentences), or they will err in the other direction in trying to attend to every word in an utterance.

2. Redundancy. Spoken language, unlike most written language, has a good deal of redundancy. The next time you're in a conversation, notice the rephrasings, repetitions, elaborations, and little insertions of "I mean" and "you know." Such redundancy helps the hearer to process meaning by offering more time and extra information. Learners can train themselves to profit from such redundancy by first becoming aware that not every new sentence or phrase will necessarily contain new information and by looking for the signals of redundancy. Consider the following excerpt of a conversation.

Jeff: Hey, Matt, how's it going?

Matt: Pretty good, Jeff. How was your weekend?

Jeff: Aw, it was terrible, I mean the worst you could imagine. You know what I mean?

Matt: Yeah, I've had those days. Well, like what happened?

Jeff: Well, you're not gonna believe this, but my girlfriend and I—you know Rachel? I think you met her at my party—anyway, she and I drove up to Point Reyes, you know, up in Marin County? So we were driving along minding our own business, you know, when this dude in one of those big ugly SUVs, you know, like a Hummer or something, comes up like three feet behind us and like tailgates us on these crazy mountain roads up there—you know what they're like. So, he's about to run me off the road, and it's all I can do to just concentrate. Then ...

You can easily pick out quite a few redundancies in Jeff's recounting of his experience. Learners might initially get confused by this, but with some training,

they can learn to take advantage of redundancies as well as other markers that provide more processing time.

3. **Reduced forms.** While spoken language does indeed contain a good deal of redundancy, it also has many reduced forms and sentence fragments. Reduction can be phonological ("Djeetyet?" for "Did you eat yet?"), morphological (contractions like "I'll"), syntactic (elliptical forms like "When will you be back?" "Tomorrow, maybe."), or pragmatic (phone rings in a house, child answers and yells to another room in the house, "Mom! Phone!"). These reductions pose significant difficulties, especially for classroom learners who may have initially been exposed to the full forms of the English language.

4. **Performance variables.** In spoken language, except for planned discourse (speeches, lectures, etc.), hesitations, false starts, pauses, and corrections are common. Native listeners are conditioned from very young ages to weed out such performance variables, whereas they can easily interfere with comprehension in second language learners. Imagine listening to the following verbatim excerpt of a sportsman talking about his game:

But, uh—I also—to go with this of course if you're playing well—if you're playing well then you get uptight about your game. You get keyed up and it's easy to concentrate. You know you're playing well and you know ... in with a chance then it's easier, much easier to—to you know get in there and—and start to ... you don't have to think about it. I mean it's gotta be automatic.

In written form this looks like gibberish, but it's the kind of language we hear and process all the time. Learners have to train themselves to listen for meaning in the midst of distracting performance variables.

Everyday casual speech by native speakers also commonly contains ungrammatical forms. Some of these forms are simple performance slips. For example, "We arrived in a little town that there was no hotel anywhere" is something a native speaker could easily self-correct. Other ungrammaticality arises out of dialect differences ("I don't get no respect") that second language learners are likely to hear sooner or later.

5. **Colloquial language.** Learners who have been exposed to standard written English and/or "textbook" language sometimes find it surprising and difficult to deal with colloquial language. Idioms, slang, reduced forms, and shared cultural knowledge are all manifested at some point in conversations. Colloquialisms appear in both monologues and dialogues. Contractions and other assimilations often pose difficulty for the learner of English.

6. **Rate of delivery.** Virtually every language learner initially thinks that native speakers speak too fast! Actually, as Jack Richards (1983) points out, the number and length of pauses used by a speaker are more crucial to comprehension than sheer speed. Learners will nevertheless eventually need to be able to comprehend language delivered at varying rates of speed and, at times, delivered with few pauses. Unlike reading, where a person can stop and go back to reread, in listening the hearer may not always have the opportunity to stop the speaker. Instead, the stream of speech will continue to flow!

7. **Stress, rhythm, and intonation.** The prosodic features of the English language are very important for comprehension. Because English is a stress-timed language, English speech can be a terror for some learners as mouthfuls of syllables come spilling out between stress points. The sentence "The PREsident is INTerested in eLIMinating the emBARgo," with 4 stressed syllables out of 18, theoretically takes about the same amount of time to utter as Dead men wear plaid. "Also, intonation patterns are very significant not just for interpreting straightforward elements such as questions, statements, and emphasis but for understanding more subde messages like sarcasm, endearment, insult, solicitation, praise, etc.

8. **Interaction.** Unless a language learner's objective is exclusively to master some specialized skill like monitoring radio broadcasts or attending lectures, interaction will play a large role in listening comprehension. Conversation is especially subject to all the rules of interaction: negotiation, clarification; attending signals; turn-taking; and topic nomination, maintenance, and termination.

So, to learn to listen is also to learn to respond and to continue a chain of listening and responding. Classroom techniques that include listening components must at some point include instruction in the two-way nature of listening. Students need to understand that good listeners (in conversation) are good responders. They know how to negotiate meaning (to give feedback, to ask for clarification, to maintain a topic) so that the process of comprehending can be complete rather than be aborted by insufficient interaction.

1.2 Goals and techniques for teaching listening

Using general knowledge about language skill development, we can draw up some guidelines for developing listening ability:

- Listening ability develops through face-to-face interaction. By interacting in English, learners have the chance for new language input and the chance to check their own listening ability. Face-to-face interaction provides stimulation for development of listening for meaning.
- Listening develops through focusing on meaning and trying to learn new and important content in the target language. By focusing on meaning and real reasons for listening in English, learners can mobilize both their linguistic and non-linguistic abilities to understand.
- Listening ability develops through work on comprehension activities. By focusing on specific goals for listening, learners can evaluate their efforts and abilities. By having well-defined comprehension activities, learners have opportunities for assessing what they have achieved and for revision.
- Listening develops through attention to accuracy and an analysis of form. By learning to perceive sounds and words accurately as they work on meaning-oriented activities, our learners can make steady progress. By learning to hear sounds and words more accurately, learners gain confidence in listening for meaning [10, p.7].

The following main goals are suggested for the listening comprehension program: to give the learners experience of listening to a wide variety of samples of spoken language.

The purpose here, then, is exposure to:

- different varieties of language (standard/regional, formal/informal etc.);
- different text types (conversational, narrative, informative etc.).

The motivation for the learner should be pleasure, interest, and a growing confidence at being able to understand the spoken language without reference to the written form:

- to train the learners to listen flexibly e. g. for specific information, for the main idea or ideas, or to react to instructions (i.e. by doing something). The motivation for this type of listening will come from tasks, which are interesting in their own right, and which will focus the learners' attention on the material in an appropriate way.
- to provide, through listening, a stimulus for other activities e. g. discussion, reading and writing.
- to give the learners opportunities to interact while listening. In the classroom this must be done largely through discussion-type activities and games, where listening forms a natural part of the activity. This type of activity will be done mostly in small groups, but there are occasions when the teacher can profitably interact with the whole class [4, p.15].

Most language programs neglect listening comprehension. It is generally treated as incidental to speaking, rather than as foundation for it. Classroom exercises are mainly speaking exercises in which the student hears an audio stimulus and then immediately imitates it or makes some other oral responses. When students listen to and participate in exercises with partial sentences, backward build-up, pattern practice, and pronunciation drills they are hearing unnatural speech. As important as these exercises may be for developing skill in speaking, the question may well be asked, "When do the students hear the language as it is actually spoken?"

Texts, guides, and courses of study frequently contain tests for evaluating progress in listening comprehension, but rarely do they contain specific learning materials designed for the systematic development of this skill. Until such

materials become available, teachers who wish to do more with listening comprehension can adapt present materials for this purpose.

The present vogue in learning instruction is centered on memorized dialogues and pattern drills. Within the dialogue-pattern drill approach the teacher can take the following steps to emphasize listening comprehension:

1. Present the dialogue as a story, in the foreign language, using simple language. Explain the meaning of some of the new words and expressions that will appear in the dialogue through gestures, visual aids, use synonyms, paraphrasing, etc. The idea, at this point, is not to teach the exact meaning of every new linguistic element in the dialogue, but rather to convey the general idea of the content in story form. Further, in order to provide additional listening comprehension practice, embellish the story by making up facts about the characters which are not in the dialogue, using only previously learned vocabulary.
2. Present the dialogue orally, acting out the various roles. Point to stick figures students at all times which character is speaking. Stop to get across meanings of new words and expressions through gestures, visuals, paraphrasing and acting out meanings is not wasted as far as listening comprehension is concerned as long as the student is hearing authentic language.
3. Go through the dialogue again, without stopping, to give students a feel for how the entire conversation sounds at a normal rate of speed. If a recording of the dialogue is available, play it, using several voices for this presentation.
4. Have a “programmed” true-false activity based on the dialogue in order to insure comprehension. The teacher presents one or two lines of the dialogue, followed by a question or a statement. The students make a written “yes” or “no” response. The teacher checks the students’ answers, by a show of hands, and then immediately provides the students with the correct response.

Thus, the teacher is also receiving feedback regarding the students' comprehension.

1. Repeat the entire dialogue again at normal rate of speed without interruption. This time have the students listen to it with their eyes closed. Having eyes closed helps eliminate distractions, increases listening concentration, and adds variety to the classroom activities.

2. Have a role-playing activity. Assign roles from the dialogue to individual students or rows of students. Phrase questions in the foreign language to which students will make "yes" or "no", or short responses, according to their assigned roles. Then have the students play themselves or other people, such as famous personalities, using the same technique. This provides further listening practice with the same linguistic elements. The change in roles and the corresponding changes in answers provide variety and prevent boredom.

3. Have the students hear the entire dialogue again, with their eyes closed, without interruption, but this time at slightly faster than normal rate of speed. To make this presentation of the dialogue challenging, inform students that will be at a faster speed and that it will be followed by a listening comprehension test. It will be even better if still another tape can be used of the same test but with voices unfamiliar to the students.

4. Give a listening comprehension test.

5. At this point, periodically, recombination listening comprehension practice can be given, using dialogues from other courses of study, motion pictures or any type of recorded materials which contain, for the most part, language elements previously learned by the students.

In the approach being suggested here, speaking practice would begin after item 8 above. It is expected that students would be anxious and ready to speak at this point. Following the outlined listening comprehension activities, speaking practice might proceed according to this sequence:

1. Pattern practice based on material taken from the dialogue itself.
2. Mimicry practice of the dialogue itself.

3. Memorization of the dialogue.
4. Performance of the dialogue in front of class and seats with students changing roles and partners from time to time.
5. Dialogue adaptation.
6. Free but guided conversation closely paralleling the situations in the dialogues.

Memorization of dialogues and other such material for oral presentation is a difficult task even when it is to be done in a language which we completely understand and have been speaking all our lives. We believe, therefore, that the techniques and sequence suggested here represent an approach that will enable students to memorize larger segments at a time and to perform dialogues as a whole, more quickly, and with greater confidence, understanding, and enjoyment.

The suggestions made in this paper are aimed at having students spend more of their time listening to natural speech and authentic models of the foreign language. They underline the need for the systematic development of listening comprehension not only as a foundation for speaking but also as a skill in its own right.

The usage of the authentic listening materials is one of the problems in the teaching listening comprehension. The important point, as always, is to meet the needs of the learners. On the short-term basis the learners need to listen to material, which allows them to feel comfortable, perhaps because it is mainly recycling known language. In addition to this, particularly taking their long-term needs into account, the learners have to be exposed to listening material, which is beyond their productive level. Whether this is 'authentic' in the early stages is not entirely relevant provided the material gets them used to not understanding every word; encourages them to guess - and, over and above this, stimulates them to talk (or read or write, if these are following-up activities). But, of course, whenever possible, some authentic material should be used, and on an increasing scale as the course progresses. However, it must be kept in mind that the use of authentic material for listening is very different from reading, where, because the learners

can work individually and at their own pace, authentic material carries fewer risks. In the typical listening situation, care has to be taken to see that learners are not discouraged by excessive difficulties. In general, authentic materials are best used where the learners themselves are likely to appreciate them and accept them in spite of difficulties [3, p. 20].

The materials presented here stem from an interest in trying to reduce the problems of foreign language teaching in compulsory secondary education. Language teaching in schools suffers from a series of handicaps. Many students fail to see the relevance of foreign language to their lives or, perhaps worse, they fail to see the relevance of the kind of language they are trying to learn at school compared with 'real language' as they experience it outside in the real world. This can be in part caused by inappropriate learning materials and methods or, possibly, by an understandable failure on the part of the students to see how the objectives set can be achieved given the circumstances in which they have to learn.

Whilst it is not the case that the materials discussed here will be the answer to listening comprehension problems, we do feel that they take into account some of the reasons why foreign languages are relatively unpopular at school and, therefore, help to reduce the size of the problem in some small way. For too long, language learning has been seen merely as the acquisition of an amount of linguistic data. In many cases as another content subject like history or chemistry. It has been assumed that a student comes to class rather like a 'tabula rasa' into which linguistic bits have to be chipped. We have tended to assume that the student comes to class without any relevant experience and has in fact little to contribute to the language-learning process. (This of course has been a common feature in many areas of education, not just language teaching).

In the days when language learning was considered to be for the 'good of your mind', such attitudes might just be understandable, but, given the general agreement today about communicative objectives for language

learning, we must abandon attitudes that see language as purely abstract and an academic exercise and integrate into our teaching meaningful content about the world around our students as well as linguistic forms. In other words, we must strive to give our students something to communicate, a desire to communicate, and the conditions in which they can communicate. At first this sounds like a pretty tall order, but, bearing in mind what a student brings to the classroom, the size of the task is reduced somewhat. A student comes to class with two vital assets: his own knowledge and experience of the world around him and a well-developed set of language skills of his own. He has his own highly developed language strategies in his mother tongue, which are rarely tapped in the foreign language class.

The following materials were presented to a group of practising teachers as part of a one-week in-service course. The aim was to provide the teachers with a framework within which they could develop their own materials for classroom use. In other words, what we have here is a demonstration of a principle rather than a set of materials for universal use. The materials reflect the belief that authentic language has a real place in the language-learning process almost 'from the word "go"'. By authentic language material we mean, quite simply, material that was not initially designed for language-learning purposes. This means that in the narrow linguistic sense there is no grading on a purely structural or lexical basis.

Authentic material could be a newspaper article, an advertisement, a visiting card, a road sign, or, as is the case here, a radio broadcast. There are of course many other sources of authentic material. We are aware of the argument that any language material ceases to be authentic when used for a purpose other than the one it was intended for. In other words, if we use road signs in class to teach 'right' and 'left', then the material is no longer authentic. This is an interesting argument which, however, in no way detracts from the value of authentic material being used in the classroom *as soon as possible*. It is possible in our view to use authentic material to show

students what they *do know* or *can* understand rather than what they do not know or cannot understand. What we are saying is that materials carefully chosen can develop the student's confidence in his own ability to do something with what he knows to be real language rather than what he knows to be heavily contrived language such as is found in most foreign-language teaching material.

If we are to show a student what he can rather than cannot do with some authentic language, then it is, of course, essential that we only ask the student to do what we know he can do. It would be foolish to give a class for beginners the task of showing how political bias is expressed in a newspaper editorial, but it would not be too difficult for a near beginner to ring or underline the names of countries or of famous people that figure in the front-page headlines of that same newspaper. That is to say, the activities the student is engaged in have to be 'graded' according to the student's knowledge of the language, and indeed of the world around him. 'Grading' is important still, but instead of grading the language we are now grading the activity the student has to do in connection with a piece of real language.

Before looking at the materials themselves, there are two other points to be made. The first is that in the case to be illustrated there is no question of testing listening. Most teachers today recognize the fact that almost all materials designed to teach receptive skills only, in fact, serve to test listening or reading and do so in conditions which the student knows to be totally artificial. The second point relates to the need for 'support' in the teaching of listening and is of course closely connected to the first. A lot of listening material has the following format: first listen, second answer the questions. Most students know that listening of this kind is a school rather than a 'life' activity. We usually listen to something for a particular purpose and, what is more, we more often than not know a lot about what we are about to hear (or indeed to read).

A support for listening, often in the form of a worksheet, can do three things. It can tell the student something about what he is about to hear, give him some idea of the structure of the material he is to listen to, and, finally, give the student a reason for listening to it other than the usual one of having to answer questions at the end. In short, support of some kind can help to reduce the size of the gap between 'classroom' language activity and what the student intuitively knows to be the highly complex language activity he has mastered in 'real life'.

The problem we have tried to tackle is that of grading the activities. In the case of the newspaper mentioned above, it is easy to see what the extremes are. At the 'easy' end of the cline there is the recognition of items that might be similar if not common between languages and, at the other end, the problems, say, of political bias in an editorial. The real difficulty is what goes on between these extremes. In what follows we do not claim to have devised a 'scientific, watertight' set of graded activities. What we have done is to show how the same piece of authentic language can be used with students who are at different stages in the language-learning process.

In preparing graded activities there is in fact a two-dimensional grading problem. The first is the format of the support given to the student to help him listen, and the second is the nature of the task that a particular support suggests to a student. It seems to us that materials produced till now have, so far as the first problem is concerned, followed similar lines which are best illustrated with examples related to what most practitioners will accept as the first 'stage' in listening comprehension, namely recognition.

The authentic language we have based our materials on comes from the headlines of the BBC World Service news bulletin, the text of which is as follows:

"BBC World Service. The news read by Robin Jackson. The Saudi Arabian oil minister has given a warning about a world oil crisis within the next few years dwarfing anything experienced up to now. Iraq and Syria have taken another step towards political unity. The Governor of Hong

Kong is seeking American support for attempts to stage an international conference on refugees from Vietnam. There has been some critical reaction in the United States to resumption of flights by DC aircraft in Europe"

The lowest grade activity using this material involves the support of worksheet A.

WORKSHEET A (*Level 1 Type I*)
 SAUDI ARABIA IRAQ SYRIA HONGKONG
 AMERICA VIETNAM UNITED STATES EUROPE

The lesson sequence would have the following pattern:

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| 1 | General orientation stage: | <p>a play chimes of Big Ben or the time signal bleeps and ask students (in mother tongue if necessary) to tell you what is coming next . . . a news bulletin should emerge.</p> <p>b ask students what items of news they might expect to hear mentioned.</p> <p>c ask students what countries might be mentioned in the bulletin. Accept all suggestions.</p> |
| 2 | Task settings: | Distribute worksheet and explain to students the nature of the task . . . eg, tick off, underline or cross through, countries heard. |
| 3 | Listening: | Play the news headlines right through. |
| 4 | Checking: | Students can check in groups or have the teacher check from the front. |

(A teaching sequence with the above pattern differs from most current practices in that it helps the student to listen by using a support that tells the student something about what he is to hear and also gives him a reason for listening other than being tested with comprehension questions afterwards).

This is probably the easiest of activities since the information on the worksheet given to the student is complete in terms of the task in hand. All the countries appear on the sheet and what is more, they occur in the order in which they are heard on the tape. The simplest format therefore that can be offered to the student must be complete in terms of the task in hand and in order in terms of the sequence in which information is given. The next level of difficulty would be to have the complete information on a worksheet but have the same information scrambled. So the second level in terms of format would have a worksheet as follows:

WORKSHEET B (Level 1 Type II)
 SYRIA VIETNAM UNITED STATES IRAQ
 SAUDI ARABIA HONG KONG AMERICA EUROPE

Although we have identified two levels here, we do not mean to suggest that there is nothing in between. A teacher could, of course, rather than scramble the countries mentioned here, just insert a few distractors. In this case, however, we feel that the student is having to call upon selection and reference strategies that in themselves constitute a more difficult exercise than one of straightforward recognition.

The overall task of simple recognition can be made slightly more difficult by a worksheet which is in order but incomplete. In the case of our news bulletin, such a worksheet would look as follows:

WORKSHEET C (Level 1 Type III)
 SAUDI ARABIA IRAQ HONG KONG
 AMERICA UNITED STATES EUROPE

Here the student fills in the gaps, in his mother tongue if necessary. The fourth and final difficulty in terms of format could be a worksheet which is both *incomplete* and *scrambled*. Worksheet D is an example:

WORKSHEET D (Level 1 Type IV)
 IRAQ UNITED STATES EUROPE VIETNAM

It seems to me then that as far as the format of support given to the students is concerned, there are four types, each one slightly more difficult than the other.

- Type 1 complete — ordered
- Type 2 complete — scrambled
- Type 3 incomplete — ordered
- Type 4 incomplete — scrambled

These four types of format can be used whatever the nature of the task might be.

The first level of activity involved the recognition of one-word items which may be similar if not identical to items in the student's mother tongue. A more complex level of activity would still involve the recognition of words, but not necessarily words that are familiar to the student. Furthermore, the words we are asking the student to recognize are the key words in terms of the topics mentioned in the new headlines. For this second level of activity, the related worksheets would follow the complete ordered pattern and would look like this:

WORKSHEET E	<i>(Level 2 Type I)</i>	OIL	POLITICAL UNITY	REFUGEES	AIRCRAFT
WORKSHEET F	<i>(Level 2 Type II)</i>	AIRCRAFT	OIL	REFUGEES	POLITICAL UNITY
WORKSHEET G	<i>(Level 2 Type III)</i>	OIL	POLITICAL UNITY	AIRCRAFT
WORKSHEET H	<i>(Level 2 Type IV)</i>	POLITICAL UNITY	REFUGEES

Depending on what the teacher's specific objectives are, the grid can be added to or taken away from. The almost complete 'picture' could be given with only a few comments left out or, at the other extreme, the students could be given a worksheet with three empty columns labelled Topic, Country, and Comment and be asked to fill them in. The levels 1-2 are only guides. They are based on the fundamental principle of recognition but do, of course, draw upon the student's capacity to select, appropriately, the information relevant to the task in hand. We must insist that these levels, based in the main on lexical difficulties, are not the only ways of defining the level of an activity, and they certainly are not clear-cut levels in themselves. What we have shown here, we hope, is that carefully selected authentic material can be used at a range of levels of learning, including that of the near beginner. The key factor is not so much the material itself but the nature of the task the student is asked to perform in conjunction with the material.

The types of activity demonstrated here and the suggested format of the worksheets provide a useful tool which can help the ever-harried teacher ensure that lively, real language is introduced into language learning from the very earliest stages. As the task of a teacher is ultimately to help a learner cope with the real world, then the real world should be brought into the language learning process as early as possible.

An effective way of developing the listening skill is through the provision of carefully selected practice material. Such material is in many ways similar to that used for testing listening comprehension. Although the auditory skills are closely

linked to the oral skills in normal speech situations, it may sometimes be useful to separate the two skills for teaching and testing, since it is possible to develop listening ability much beyond the range of speaking and writing ability if the practice material is not dependent on spoken responses and written exercises.

Here we have suggested tasks for building up students' listening proficiency. In real-life situations, it is rare that people listen to something without certain background information. Therefore, when asking students to do listening practice, teachers had better provide related information, which will facilitate students' listening comprehension. Pre-listening activities serve this purpose. They help to set the context, generate students' interest, and activate students' current background knowledge on the topic.

An awareness of the way in which the spoken language differs from the written language is of crucial importance in the testing of the listening skills. For example, the spoken language is much more complex than the written language in certain ways, as a result of the large element of 'redundancy' that it contains [5, p.64]. Such features of redundancy make it possible for mutilated messages to be understood. Furthermore, the human brain has a limited capacity for the reception of information and it would often be impossible to absorb information at the speed at which it is conveyed through ordinary speech. Such conversational features as repetition, hesitation and grammatical re-patterning are all examples of this type of redundancy.

Below we suggest tests for checking and improving learners' listening comprehension.

1. SPEED LISTENING (APPENDIX 1): Note only the essential details of what you hear: (Refer to the tapescript for confirmation).

- a. Edinburgh is
- b. The city is
- c. The annual.....
- d. The centre.....

- e. The New Town
- f. The Old Town
- g. The Festival.....

2. NUMBERS AND LETTERS (APPENDIX 2): Refer to the tapescript for confirmation.

- A. 1 2 3..... 4 5.....
6.....7 8..... 9 10.....
- B. 1 2 3..... 4 5.....
6.....7 8..... 9 10.....
- C. 1 2 3..... 4 5.....
6.....7 8..... 9 10.....
- D. 1 2 3..... 4 5.....
6.....7 8..... 9 10.....

3 GENERAL INFORMATION: Listen to Radio Items 1 (Appendix 3) and 2 (Appendix 4) and complete the chart with the basic details: (Refer to the tapescript for confirmation).

	What?	Where?	When?	Who?	How?	Why?
Radio Item 1						
Radio Item 2						

4. GAPFILL: Listen to Radio Item 1 again and complete the gaps in the summary of the passage below with the correct word or phrase you hear:

Violent video (1)could be responsible for a rise in violence by children in society, but not enough (2); has been done to prove it. Although a disturbed child may (3)..... violently after playing a (4).....computer game, it is possible that he or she will react similarly after a less violent stimulus. There is a great amount of violence on TV and in computer games because violence (5)..... well. Young (6).....however,

play less violent games than young males, but this may be because of the way in which (7).....companies package their products. Computer games are (8)..... unlike TV, playing games is not a passive activity. Perhaps children can relieve their (9)..... harmlessly in this way. Or maybe such games reward violence instead of punish it. If you agree, telephone(10).....

5. MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS. Listen to Radio Item 2 a second time and answer the following questions:

1. 'zines can be read:
 - a) on a word-processor
 - b) online
 - c) in a comic
 - d) none of the above
2. Jean has published:
 - a) two issues of the 'zine
 - b) three issues
 - c) four issues
 - d) none of the above
3. The 'zine called 'Fill Me In' is sold in:
 - a) supermarkets
 - b) alternative bookshops
 - c) second-hand bookshops
 - d) all of the above
4. The publishing team's office is:
 - a) at home
 - b) in the Design College
 - c) in an alternative bookshop
 - d) in the front room of a bookshop

6. SPECIFIC INFORMATION. Listen again radio items:

Radio Item 1.

1. Who believes violent video games increase child violence?

2. In the first section of the talk, violent video games are also described as being “video games _____”.
3. How are the video games that appeal to female players described?
4. What may software companies be guilty of in the way they market games?
5. What are the onscreen rewards for violence in video games?

Radio Item 2.

1. Ordinary magazines fortunes 'ebb and flow'. What do you think this means?
2. Jean's 'zine is described as “another desk-topped magazine clone”. The word clone means a replica, or something modelled exactly on the original. What is her 'zine a replica of?
3. How many 'zines has Jean already sold?
4. Where did Jean meet the other members of her publishing team?
5. What does Jean say is the reason for the success of her 'zine?

7. PREDICTION AND PREPARATION: In the Listening Sub Test you are given very little time to look at the questions before the tape begins. However, you must use what time you are given wisely. Try to predict as much as you can about the content of a section you are about to hear, and circle key words and phrases that you should listen for.

Look at the questions in Exercises 8 and 9 and circle the keywords and phrases to listen for. Take no longer than 30 seconds.

Try to predict what you will hear on the tape. Ask yourself:

- who is probably talking and to whom?
- what is the precise topic that the person is likely to be talking about?

8. TRUE / FALSE / NOT GIVEN: Listen to Lecture 1 on the tape (Appendix 4):

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|----|
| a. No-one actually knows how one's first language is learnt. | T | F | NG |
| b. There are very few facts known about how language is learnt. | T | F | NG |
| c. Subliminal language learning can only take place overnight. | T | F | NG |

- d. You do not need to listen closely to the words on the tape. T F NG
- e. You learnt your first language quickly because you were exposed daily to new words. T F NG
- f. Watching TV or playing the radio in a foreign language is useless. T F NG
- g. The words on the subliminal tape must be spoken softly and slowly. T F NG
- h. You should restrict the number of new words when starting to learn a language. T F NG
- i. Reading a foreign newspaper is never a waste of time. T F NG
- j. The author thinks that learning a new language in six weeks is possible. T F NG

9. SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS. Refer to Lecture 1 (Appendix 5) on the tape.

Note that the answers below have a *MAXIMUM NUMBER OF FOUR WORDS*:

1. Who have many theories to explain language learning?

2. Name two suggested times for playing subliminal learning tapes:

A. _____

B. _____

3. What do babies react to in the mother's womb?

4. A vocabulary of how many words is required to learn basic English?

5. What important difference is there between people who speak other languages?

What is the significance of these features for testing purposes? Firstly, the ability to distinguish between phonemes, however important, does not in itself imply an ability to understand verbal messages. Moreover, occasional confusion

over selected pairs of phonemes does not matter too greatly because in real-life situations listeners are able to use contextual clues to interpret what they hear.

Secondly, impromptu speech is usually easier to understand than carefully prepared (written) material when the latter is read aloud. Written tests generally omit many of the features of redundancy and impart information at a much higher rate than normal speech does. Consequently, it is essential to make provision for restating important points, rewriting and rephrasing them when writing material for aural tests [5, p.64-65].

CHAPTER II.

THE USE OF EFFECTIVE LISTENING STRATEGIES

Listening comprehension is divided into four main sections:

- I. Attentive listening
- II. Intensive listening
- III. Selective listening
- IV. Interactive listening

Each section helps students develop a range of skills and strategies.

Attentive listening is designed to give students practice with listening and with supplying short responses to the speaker, either verbally or non-verbally (through actions). Because this kind of ‘responsive’ listening involves immediate processing of information and quick decisions about how to respond, the activities in this section provide a great deal of support to help the learners ‘process’ the information they hear. The support is of three types: *linguistic*, in the form of cue words and previewed utterances, *non-linguistic*, in the form of visual aids, photographs, tangible objects and music used in the activity, and *interactional*, in the form of repetitions, paraphrases and confirmation checks by the speaker. By providing this support, the activities allow the teacher to introduce real-time listening practice to students at all levels, including beginners. Because the support in each activity can be varied, teachers can utilize these activities with more proficient students as well, to help them increase their attention span for spoken English.

Intensive listening will focus the students’ attention on language form. The aim of this section is to raise the learners’ awareness of how differences in sound, structure, and lexical choice can affect meaning. Because this kind of listening involves an appreciation of how form affects meaning, all of the activities in this section are contextualized - placed in a real or easily imagined situation [10, p.10]. In this way, all students - even beginners - can practice intensive listening in a context of language use, from which it is most likely to transfer to ‘real life’ listening situation. Because the activities in this section require attention to specific

contrasts of form - grammatical, lexical, or phonological - the teacher can easily adapt the activities to more proficient students by increasing the complexity of the language forms.

Selective listening will help enable students to identify a purpose for listening. By providing focused information-based tasks, the activities in this section help direct the students' attention on key words, discourse sequence cues, or 'information structures' (exchanges in which factual information is given). By learning to attend to words, cues, and facts selectively, students at all levels come to handle short naturalistic text (such as announcements) as well as longer and more complex texts (such as authentic video programs). Because the task support in these activities can be adjusted, selective listening is useful for students at all proficiency levels.

Interactive listening is designed to help learners assume active roles in shaping and controlling an interaction, even when they are in the 'listener's role'. Because it is important for learners to take an active role as listeners, each activity in this section has a built-in need for information or classification questions by the listener. In order to work toward the goal of active participation by the listener, the students themselves - rather than the teacher or an audio or video tape - become the focus of the activity. To this end, in this section, listening skills are developed in the context of interaction - mainly through information gap pair work, jigsaw groups, and student presentations and reports [10, p.10].

2.1 Effective listening comprehension strategies

In this part of our paper we also try to describe following listening activities and procedures:

1. *'Exposure' listening*. The material for this will consist mainly of: stories, anecdotes, jokes, talks, commentaries (i.e. with one speaker only). Most learners need practice in listening to material with a single speaker only, so that they do not have the added difficulty of trying to identify the speakers when they cannot see them. The material may be recorded or improvised by the teacher.

Conversations, discussions, plays (i.e. with more than one speaker). The students will need to be given some background e. g. about the speakers. For plays they may actually need to follow the written text.

Songs (both traditional and pop). These provide a good form of listening because the students are generally very much concerned to make out the words [13, p.28].

Videos and films. Clearly there is great advantage in using wherever possible recorded material where the students can see what is happening (even if it is only two people talking) as well as listen [3, p.16].

2. Task listening. The number of possible activities here is virtually limitless, although it is intended that the list below cover key areas.

Ear-training. In distinguishing between key sounds, stress and intonation patterns. Most learners need, enjoy and will benefit from activities, which will help to improve their receptive ability in these areas, especially if they are presented in a game-like way.

Game-like activities. ‘Simon says’ and variations on the game of ‘Bingo’ are effective ways of getting learners to respond to instructions, listen out for specific items and so on. Many language games depend for their success on students listening [3, p.17].

Instructions. Activities such as picture dictation, where the students have to draw a picture which the teacher (or another student) talks about without showing them; completing a map or picture; following a route on the map in order to arrive at a particular place; arranging objects (e. g. pictures on an outline scene), involve careful listening without requiring a verbal response (unless the listeners ask for clarification).

Completion-type activities. For these the students have an incomplete version of a story, a description or a song (words, phrases or sentences omitted) which they have to complete either while they listen or afterwards.

Identifying mistakes or contradictions. For example, an object (thing, person or place - either real or in pictorial form) is described and the students have to

listen and note down any mistakes. Similarly, a text (a story or description) containing internal contradictions can be used for the same purpose.

Finding differences. The students hear, for example, two versions of a story or two accounts of an event and have to identify the points of difference.

Problem-solving. For example, the students are shown pictures of 3-4 people, places, events and listen to one of these being described. Their task is to decide which item is being talked about. Students may also be asked to categorize on a worksheet items mentioned in a conversation or discussion.

Extracting information. This is one of the commonest types of listening tasks. For this the students will probably need a chart of some kind, which they have to fill in according to specific instructions. For example, if they are listening to a broadcast they may be asked to note down the main topics or, on an easier level, decide in what order they occur in the talk.

For tasks, which involve extracting information, it is often desirable to define the role of the listener so that he has a clear purpose for carrying out the task [3, p.17].

Listening can be categorized into reciprocal or interactive listening, where the listener is required to play a part, and non-reciprocal or non-interactive listening where the listener listens passively to a monologue or speech. While listening, the listener may use **top-down** strategies or **bottom-up** processing or both.

Top-down means using our prior knowledge and experiences; bottom-up processing means using the information we have about sounds, word meanings, and discourse markers to assemble our understanding of what is heard one step at a time (Brown, 2006). Also, from a psychological point of view, the cognitive activity in language learning is differentiated and categorized into two main types: **cognitive** and **metacognitive**. The former manipulates the material to be learnt or applies a specific technique to the learning task while the latter involves planning, monitoring and evaluating [23, 49].

Now let's discuss main classification of strategies.

What kinds of listening strategies are there? How are they classified? Researchers classify listening strategies in different ways. H. D. Brown [4, 200] emphasizes that teaching effective listening strategies improves the chance of students' becoming good learners, and he presents the following eight strategies:

1. looking for key words;
2. looking for nonverbal cues to meaning;
3. predicting a speaker's purpose by the context of the spoken discourse;
4. associating information with one's existing cognitive structure (activating ground information);
5. guessing at meanings;
6. seeking clarification;
7. listening for the general gist;
8. various test-taking strategies for listening comprehension [4, 259].

Nunan (2001) urges teachers to make the learners conscious of what they are doing and of the process of learning and introduces the following eight strategies:

1. listening for gist;
2. listening for purpose;
3. listening for main idea;
4. listening for inference;
5. listening for specific information;
6. listening for phonetic distinctions;
7. listening for tone/pitch to identify speaker's attitude;
8. listening for stress [21, 219].

Mendelsohn (1995) divides listening strategies into seven major categories:

- strategies to determine setting;
- strategies to determine interpersonal relations;
- strategies to determine mood;
- strategies to determine topic (where this is not known in advance; for example, when coming in on the middle of a discussion or presentation);

- strategies to determine the essence of the meaning of an utterance;
- strategies to form hypotheses, predictions, and inferences;
- strategies to determine the main idea of a passage [18, 138].

Though strategies are clearly a way to ease the burden of listening and should be taught to students, with so many strategies available, how can teachers put them into real practice and thus benefit students? In other words, what are the pedagogical implications of these learning strategies? Brown (2006) suggests that systematically presenting listening for main ideas, listening for details, and listening and making inferences helps students develop a sense of why they listen and which skill to use to listen better. He also asserts that like reading lessons, in a typical listening lesson there are “pre” activities, “while” activities, and “post” activities. Vandergrif (1999) also indicates that the pedagogical sequence of pre-listening, listening and post-listening activities, if used consistently, can guide students through the mental processes for successful listening comprehension, and promote the acquisition of metacognitive strategies in three categories: *planning*, *monitoring*, and *evaluating*. In the next part, workable pre-, while-, and post-listening activities will be presented for teachers’ reference.

2.2 Guidelines for designing listening activities

The following are guidelines for designing listening activities.

1. Materials should be authentic.
2. Videos/texts should last from two to five minutes.
3. Tasks for each text/video should be arranged from easy to difficult.
4. Texts/videos should be presented three to four times to students, with a different task each time.
5. In teaching listening, homework is a must.
6. Speaking and listening should be paired.
7. Video clips are highly recommended for arousing students’ interest.

Websites such as YouTube and Dotsub provide English learners with a useful tool to improve their listening skills. These websites offer very authentic examples of everyday English used by native speakers of English. Based on my observation, using video clips in class now and then makes learning interesting and delightful because students are always attracted to the “real life” situations of the videos. By so doing, we are helping students explore the possibilities of online learning. However, when choosing video clips, teachers should ensure that the video clips chosen are challenging to students but still allow them to complete the tasks assigned to them. Also, to suit different levels of language proficiency, teachers can design easier tasks for low achievers and more difficult tasks for higher achievers, while using the same clips. The procedure for presenting a video clip in class is provided for teachers’ reference.

Step 1 First viewing: present the clip with the sound off and ask students to speculate about it. Discussion: check their understanding.

Step 2 Second viewing: present the clip with sound and then ask students to do the pre-listening activities. Discussion: check the assigned task.

Step 3 Third viewing: present the clip again and ask students to listen for some specific details. Discussion: check the assigned task.

Step 4 Fourth viewing: present the clip again with the captions and ask students to pay attention to the details they have failed to comprehend.

In foreign language listening, most times the learners cannot comprehend all of what the native speaker says. Even in our own native language, for various reasons we sometimes might not understand everything the speaker says. In fact, we guess when we don't completely understand something that we have heard and predict what will come next. However, language learners tend to forget this fact. As Ur (1984) insists, "They have a kind of compulsion to understand everything, even things that are totally unimportant, and are disturbed, discouraged and even

completely thrown off balance if they come across an incomprehensible word" [33, 14]. If learners adjust this attitude regarding listening, they will become more effective listeners. As Mendelsohn [18, 110] concludes, some strategies, such as guessing, inferencing, etc., should be taught to the learners to compensate for the lack of understanding. Moreover, "through these, students will not only become better listeners, they will also become more effective language learners".

We would like to adopt a simplified classification so that students can learn strategies with ease. We will divide the strategies into five kinds:

- 1) listening for the gist (main ideas);
- 2) listening for specific information;
- 3) listening to predict;
- 4) listening to make inferences;
- 5) using non-verbal cues.

Listening for the gist (main ideas). In this listening, students are not asked detailed questions. For example, they might just be asked the following general questions: "Where are the speakers talking?" "What are they talking about?" "Why are they talking?" In short, students have to grasp the main ideas without worrying about the details.

Listening for specific information. In this listening, students are asked the following more detailed questions, such as "What time did this event happen?" "Who are they talking about?"

Listening to predict. It is impossible for students to catch all the information as they listen. Thus, they have to guess what they cannot understand or what would come next by using many clues, such as speakers' gestures and facial expressions, rhetorical markers, key words, their own world or topic knowledge, etc. For example, if listeners hear the words "one of the most important things is...", " they can predict that the speaker will say an important thing next. In this listening activity students would be asked the following questions: (after listening to a conversation) "Can you guess what words will be said next?"; (after watching a

film without sound) "By observing speakers' gestures and facial expressions, can you guess what words are being said?"

Listening to make inferences. Inferences are different from predictions. Take the following example:

A= a son

B= a mother

A: I'm going out to play tennis.

B: It's cold outside, isn't it?

To understand this brief exchange listeners must infer, and then possibly conclude, that since it is cold outside, the mother's intention is that the son should not go out. If students listen to the above dialogue, the following question would be asked; "What does the mother mean?" That is, in this type of listening, students need to understand that "everything is comprehensible, but there is meaning to the discourse that exceeds the understanding of each of the utterances or parts of it" [18, 105].

Using non-verbal cues. Using non-verbal cues means paying attention to paralinguistic signals. Paralinguistic signals include body language, gestures, facial expressions, speakers' lip movements, settings of where conversations take place, etc. Although these visual cues are very important to understand what speakers say, in teaching listening the importance of these signals is often ignored. However, given the fact that listening on the telephone is very difficult for the learners, the significance of using the visual cues should be clear. Teachers should instruct students to take advantage of these visual cues in listening lessons. To do so, using and analyzing videos will be necessary.

In teaching the strategies, lessons should be structured so as to guide the students through the listening process. The kind of lesson in which students just listen to the whole segment and answer questions without any instructions must be avoided because it would be testing not teaching. That is, while students are actually listening, teachers should make them aware, beforehand, of what they

should be listening for in the message, and, moreover, how they should do it. In other words, teachers should make students do focused listening, such as "listening for gist", "listening for main ideas," "listening for specific information," etc.

To do so, the following example can be applied in the classroom. As a "listening for gist" activity, students might be given material in which a conversation is taking place at a bank and, before listening, might be asked to listen for the answers to the following two questions:

- 1) Where is this conversation taking place?
- 2) What makes you think that?

The purpose of the question "Where is this conversation taking place?" is to make students do focused listening and to be aware of the reason for listening.

The purpose of the question "What makes you think that?" is to make students aware of what to do in the process of listening. Some students might look for key words. After listening, students might have discussions as a class or in pairs to answer the two questions. Some students may respond "a bank," judging from the words "deposit" and "dollars" which they could hear. Others may respond "a shop," judging only from just the word "dollars." Although teachers wouldn't give the answer at this stage, they should write down the words "deposit," "dollars," etc., on the blackboard. After finishing the discussion, students listen to the material again so that they can confirm if their answers are correct.

Through the above activity, teachers can make students aware of the effectiveness of the strategies they use and, as G. Brown (1995, p. 71) mentions, give the students the experience of success. Even if students cannot arrive at a correct answer, they can experience the importance of and the effectiveness of using the listening strategies.

2.3 Suggested tasks for building up students' listening proficiency

2.3.1 Pre-listening Activities

In real-life situations, it is rare that people listen to something without certain background information. Therefore, when asking students to do listening practice, teachers had better provide related information, which will

facilitate students' listening comprehension. Pre-listening activities serve this purpose. They help to set the context, generate students' interest, and activate students' current background knowledge on the topic.

Brown (2006) suggests that a pre-listening task should consist of two parts. Students should be provided with an opportunity to learn new vocabulary or sentence structures used in the listening material and a chance to activate their prior knowledge. Some suggested pre-listening activities are listed as follows:

1. Looking at a list of items before listening.
2. Reading the text before listening.
3. Reading through comprehension checks, questions or completion activities.
4. Predicting/speculating—useful with high achievers.
5. Previewing new words. (*Less than 10 words*)
6. Using advance organizers - pictures, charts, films or comprehension questions.
7. Give a clear and definite purpose for listening each time.
 - (A) Listen for main ideas.
 - (B) Listen for details.
 - (C) Listen and make inferences.
8. Group/pair discussion about the topic.

2.3.2 While-listening Activities

While-listening activities are usually designed to help learners develop the skill of eliciting messages from spoken language. Here are some suggested while-listening activities.

1. Cloze exercises.
2. Dictation. (picture dictation, partial dictation, dictogloss)
3. Taking notes.
4. Filling gaps with missing words.
5. Map activities.
6. Choosing the correct pictures from a description.

7. Sequencing pictures.
8. Identifying numbers or letters.
9. Carrying out actions.
10. Following a route.
11. Arranging items in patterns.
12. Completing grids, forms and charts.
13. True-false or multiple choice questions.

Dictation (Picture dictation, dictogloss). Dictation is an effective way to train ESL/EFL learners to be aware of English sounds and make meaningful interpretations of utterances. When practiced in classrooms, dictation can be categorized into picture dictation, dictation, and dictogloss. Dictogloss is probably the most unfamiliar for ESL/EFL teachers here in Taiwan. According to Wikipedia, “dictogloss is a language teaching technique that is used to teach grammatical structures, in which students form small groups and summarize a target-language text.” Dictogloss is implemented in classrooms to help students use the grammatical structures they have learned by working in groups to reconstruct a short passage of four to twelve sentences (depending on the students’ level of language proficiency). Students are asked to write down as many sentences as possible after the text is read. The most important point to stress is that the original sense of each sentence should be present and the reconstructed sentences have to be as grammatically accurate as possible, but the words and phrases don’t have to be identical to the ones in the original passage. The dictogloss procedure takes about one hour each time. The teaching procedures for different dictation types are listed as follows.

Teaching Procedure for Dictation:

- Step 1. Prepare a text (a short paragraph from our reading text).
- Step 2. Read the text at normal speed.
- Step 3. Students can ask teachers to stop, go back to the previous sentence, or go on with the next sentence.

Teaching Procedure for Picture Dictation.

Step 1. Pair students up.

Step 2. In pairs, student A describes a picture and student B draws it, asking questions if necessary.

Step 3. Student B cannot look at Student A's picture until the whole activity ends.

Teaching Procedure for Dictogloss

Step 1. Model the steps of the dictogloss process with students first.

Step 2. Select a short passage from the text that is being studied which contains a particular grammatical structure that you wish to emphasize or a form that students know well but often produce inaccurately. Make sure students know the majority of the vocabulary in the passage.

Step 3. Review difficult or possibly unknown vocabulary that appears in the passage by writing it down on the blackboard.

Step 4. Quickly review the grammatical structure being emphasized.

Step 5. Read the passage through once at a normal speed, asking students to listen carefully. Read the passage a second time at a slower speed.

Step 6. Ask students to listen carefully and jot down the key words.

Step 7. Ask students to work in groups to reconstruct the passage. Before the reconstruction, students have to choose their writer first. Ask them to try to write their text so that it will be as close to the original as possible in grammar and in content.

2.3.3 Post-listening Activities

Post-listening activities can be used to check comprehension. The comprehension check is either related to pre-listening activities, such as predicting, or extends the topic and helps students remember new vocabulary. The following are some suggested activities for the post-listening phase.

1. Group/Pair discussion.
2. Paired reading.
3. Summary writing.

4. Shadowing.
5. Role play.
6. Comprehension checks.

Now, we want to describe some of above-mentioned post-listening activities:

Paired Reading

Paired reading is a research-based and classroom-tested strategy used to improve students' speaking fluency. In paired reading, students, paired up with partners of the same level or different levels, take turns reading aloud to each other. They can take turns reading a sentence, a paragraph, a page or even chapter at a time. It is kind of collaborative learning with students working together and assisting each other. In teaching listening, it is necessary to pair listening and speaking up because when people use language naturally, we take turns being the speaker and the listener [5, 206]. Therefore, teachers can build on listening tasks to provide speaking practice by asking them to do paired reading, which is proven to be both easy and effective. In addition, based on my observation, asking students to do paired reading every fifteen or twenty minutes in each class keeps students focused on what they are learning. At least, having something to do keeps them from falling asleep!

Shadowing

The individual sounds, rhythm, stress and intonation of English are always confusing to ESL/EFL learners. Oftentimes, a lack of awareness of these areas makes listening difficult or incomprehensible. Therefore, when students complain that the speakers are speaking too fast or they can't comprehend a complete sentence, the actual reason for this may be that they don't know how English rhythm and intonation work. Their first language, namely Karakalpak, doesn't provide this kind of setting. It is a tonal language while the interaction of intonation and stress in English is important when a sentence is interpreted. Consequently, teaching English pronunciation is necessary when teaching listening. Only when students know

the sounds of each word in their English vocabulary can they identify them correctly when listening.

The only challenge in our EFL classrooms in senior high schools in our republic is that with only two to three pairs a week and with so many materials waiting to be covered, how can we EFL teachers spare extra time to do pronunciation or intonation drills? Thus, using an effective way to help students have a good command of English sounds is vital. Here, shadowing can probably help to meet both the teachers' and students' needs.

What is shadowing? According to Sylvie Lambert [16, 269], shadowing is a paced auditory tracking task. With the same language, the person who shadows is doing "parrot-style" word-for-word repetition. This special technique is widely used when training people to become interpreters. In our EFL classrooms, however, we do not expect students to become successful interpreters but by using this technique with some modifications, we can at least train our students to be more aware of English sounds. The following are the steps used for shadowing.

Procedure for Shadowing

Step 1. Show students how to shadow. That is, ask them to repeat what they hear, copying the emotions and pace of the speaker.

Step 2. Start with a little paragraph from the text, using the CD provided by the publisher. Before the real shadowing, ask students to listen to the paragraph on the CD first. Then, play the text again but pause after each sentence, asking them to repeat as many words as they can.

Step 3. For the first time (and second time if necessary), ask students to do the shadowing with the text. If students can do the shadowing really well, ask them to shadow without the text. This process may be repeated once or twice depending on how much time the teachers have.

Step 4. Teachers can also make good use of the end-of-lesson dialogue or conversation lessons to provide students with more lively materials. Ask students

to shadow only one of the speakers in the dialogue or conversation. The procedure with and without the text is listed in steps 2 and 3.

Step 5. Ask students to shadow one of the actors or actresses when they watch a film or a TV series.

Step 6. For extension, teachers can further develop the shadowing process into a dubbing project. This can be a perfect summer or winter group project and surely will help improve students' speaking and listening skills. Dubbing is a post-production process used in filmmaking.

Teachers can use software such as Video Studio or Premiere to do the trimming and to extract the sound track before asking students to group themselves to do the project with everyone playing one of the characters in the film clip. Animations are highly recommended when choosing the film. Shadowing can definitely help students improve their speaking fluency and in turn polish their listening skills. When shadowing, students will unconsciously learn how to do meaningful chunking within a sentence, which is a decisive technique when students are interpreting the sentence. Also, this strategy can be easily utilized in the EFL classrooms and will not take up too much of the class time. Useful websites about shadowing are listed as follows.

CONCLUSION

We have outlined the main reasons for teaching listening comprehension in a foreign language. It is now widely accepted that oral communication plays a vital role in second language teaching for it provides an exposure to language which is a fundamental requirement for the learner. Progress in listening guarantees a basis for development of other language skills. Spoken language provides a means of interaction where participation is a significant component of the listening program.

We have provided a methodological organization of the listening comprehension process and we have discussed the principles of developing receptive skills of the learner. All subtypes of listening provide a natural progression from activities that entail minimal verbal interaction to those that involve a maximum of interaction. The goal of any activity is to provide the optimal challenge for the students. Since learners' listening abilities vary, teachers should note how the activities could be adapted to the learners' capabilities.

In showing a considerable variety of listening activities we have explored some of the many ways to help students acquire the confidence to use their skills for self-expression in language situations. Different activities and procedures provide the development of the listening for communicative tasks and for extracting general or certain specific points in the discourse.

We have discussed the use of authentic listening material and stressed the need for authentic-like texts at different levels. The teachers and students may encounter some difficulties not only in the reliability of the listening material, but also in the quality of English language media (TV and radio broadcasts, audio and videotapes, records) with the help of which listening material is presented. The important point is to satisfy the learners' requirements and to involve their abilities to understand and reproduce the given material.

We have stressed the importance of careful selection of practice material for testing listening skills of the learners. It is necessary to construct different types of

practical exercises for students to experience language. Listening comprehension tests present an effective method for developing listening abilities.

The teaching of listening has been receiving a great level of interest, it a core component of teaching and learning process. EFL teachers today began to take notice of its importance, which shows that if listening isn't tested, teachers won't teach it.

However, how to teach listening is a big question. In EFL classrooms, the teaching of listening is divided into two parts: in-class practice and self-study. In each class, five to fifteen minutes are set aside to be spent on speaking or listening practice, which we believe should be paired. In the self-study part, our students are asked to keep a listening journal in which they listen to something they are interested in and record their learning process. In order to let them have something concrete to do, and to keep them on target, some websites are recommended for them to build up their listening skills. Finally, the following reviews some of the most important tips for teachers' reference when teaching listening.

1. Ask students not to try to “catch” every single word while listening. Teach them to just ignore difficult words as long as they can still complete the assigned tasks.
2. Immediate feedback is best. Teachers should do comprehension checks as soon as the students finish listening.
3. Teachers should be always well-prepared and understand the purpose of each listening activity and how it will benefit students.
4. When using clips of videos, don't explain the script word by word.
5. Make sure that before listening, students know clearly what they are going to do in the following exercise. That is, always present the tasks before each listening.
6. Make sure that each time a listening text is used, students always have a specific purpose for listening.

7. Ask students to listen for short periods, ten to fifteen minutes a time and four to five times a week.

8. Present the listening materials at least three times, with different tasks each time. Remember to arrange the tasks from easier to more difficult ones.

9. Ask students to listen to the same material many times when they are doing their self-study. Each time they will find something they have missed. By so doing, they will become more aware of the English sounds.

10. When using difficult listening materials, teachers should create easier tasks. When the listening material is easier, teachers can assign more difficult tasks to students, such as passage dictation.

11. It is really good to use video clips in classrooms, but since the Internet sometimes does not flow smoothly, it is better to download the video in advance by using software such as Real Player.

12. Always listen to the material before it is presented to students.

Acquiring listening skills when learning a foreign language is difficult. Teaching listening to students is never easy, either. However, as long as both students and teachers persevere, students' comprehension skills will greatly improve as they continue doing their listening practice.

This paper have discussed how to teach listening so that English as a Second Language students can develop a level of listening ability that is useful in the real world, not just only in the classroom. However, how to teach listening is a big question. In our EFL classrooms, the teaching of listening is divided into two parts: in-class practice and self-study. In each class, five to fifteen minutes are set aside to be spent on speaking or listening practice, which we believe should be paired. In the self-study part, students are asked to keep a listening journal in which they listen to something they are interested in and record their learning process. In order to let them have something concrete to do, and to keep them on target, three websites are recommended for them to build up their

listening skills. Finally, the following reviews some of the most important tips for teachers' reference when teaching listening.

Teaching listening to students is never easy, either. However, as long as both students and teachers persevere, students' comprehension skills will greatly improve as they continue doing their listening practice.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Listen to the following sentences, pausing your tape after each sentence to write down the essential details of what you have heard:

- a. Edinburgh is the capital city of Scotland.
- b. The city is often regarded as the most cultured and cosmopolitan city north of London.
- c. The annual Edinburgh International Festival attracts over a million visitors from all around the world.
- d. The centre of the city is in two parts: the New Town and the Old Town.
- e. The New Town was designed to improve upon the cramped and crowded city conditions.
- f. The Old Town, medieval in style, is a maze of narrow alleyways down which sewage once ran freely.
- g. The Festival is actually a concurrent series of separate arts festivals lasting for three weeks.
- h. Now the largest Arts festival on Earth, it was once dominated by opera.
- i. Today, festival performances range in taste from the exotic and controversial to the highly sophisticated
- j. This most romantic of cities boasts a spectacular castle, set high on top of an extinct volcanic rock.

APPENDIX 2

Write down the numbers you hear in the following sentences:

A)

1. The earliest known inhabitants-established settlements in Scotland in 6000
2. Scotland is 275 miles long and, at its broadest point, only 150 miles wide.

3. Edinburgh averages 140 days of rain a year, with an average of 1.89 and 2.72 inches in January and July respectively.
4. Its average temperature in summer is 65 degrees Fahrenheit or 18 degrees centigrade.
5. Its average temperature in winter is 43 degrees Fahrenheit or 6 degrees centigrade.
6. The original Celtic language, Gaelic, is understood by less than 2% of the Scottish population.
7. In 1992, polls showed that 1 out of 2 Scots favoured independence from England.
8. Edinburgh Zoo, with Scotland's largest animal collection, is set amidst 197.6 hectares of parkland.
9. Robbie Burns, Scotland's most revered poet, was born on January 25, 1759 in a cottage in Alloway.
10. There are more than 440 golf courses in Scotland; the game being played as long ago as the 1400s.

APPENDIX 3

Radio Item 1: This week's controversial topic is... 'violent videogames'. Are they responsible for a rise in the number of attacks ITEM by children in the schoolyard?' Some social commentators say yes. Worse, it has been suggested that two recent killings by teenagers were prompted by the playing of video games with extreme content. But is it proven?

The jury is out on this issue. Not nearly enough research has been done to either prove or disprove that violent gaming leads to violence in children in real life. What is known is that a child who is already disturbed might certainly react violently after playing a violent computer game; but a psychotic child might just as easily react inappropriately to having seen a family video or after reading the newspaper.

Unfortunately, it is too early to say yet whether the immense amount of violence on TV and in video games has a deleterious effect on children, but one thing is

certain - violence sells. And, interestingly, violence appeals far more to young male video gamers than to young female players; the latter preferring games which rely more on discovery and the development of the relationships between the characters onscreen. Does this prove that boys are somehow instinctively more violent than girls? Not necessarily. It could merely be that the way in which non-100 violent 'so-called girl's' games are packaged, with their pink and fluffy characters and backgrounds, does not appeal to boys. Software companies may be guilty of stereotyping when it comes to how they package their products for the two sexes.

Are violent video games merely a form of degrading entertainment? Or do they have some socially redeeming value after all? It has been argued that because computer games are interactive - gaming is not a passive activity like watching TV - they might, in fact, allow a child to indulge his or her violent fantasies and relieve pent-up frustrations in a socially acceptable and less harmful way. On the other hand, violent games may be heightening the release of tension children experience upon destroying an onscreen character; violence, instead of being punished as in the real world, is rewarded with higher scores and faster music.

So, what do you think? Let us know if you believe that violent video games lead to child violence by ringing this number now: 01256-381574. That number again ... 01256-381574.

APPENDIX 4

Radio Item 2:

ITEM Newsman: The latest publishing craze which has taken off all over the world, is the publication of what have 2 come to be known as 'zines, short, of course, for 'magazines'. However, unlike magazines, whose fortunes ebb and flow, these thinner and less glossy 'zines can be desk-top published at a greatly reduced cost. Of course, 'zines are also available to be read on-line, that is, on the Internet. 'Zines are rather like comics, except that they also contain intelligent and often controversial articles on topics that interest today's highly

educated youth. I spoke earlier today to Jean Cramp, the publisher of yet another desk-top magazine clone called 'Fill Me In'. Jean, can you tell us why you called your 'zine 'Fill Me In'?

Jean: Well, it's a joke really. You know, most newspapers and magazines don't tell the whole story, or at any rate, they don't talk about issues that me and my friends want to know about. So that's why we started this 'zine, you see - to 'fill the reader in' on the real news.

Newsman: So how well is your 'zine selling?

Jean: Oh, great - in fact it's only the fourth week of publication of the first issue and we've had to reprint another 2000. We've sold about 2300. Mostly in alternative bookshops that cater for people who are er ... different. Newsman: How, in fact, do you publish them?

Jean: On a computer - all the graphic work and, of course, the word-processing, too. It's pretty simple and there's only three of us in the publishing team. We work from our office which is actually in the front room at home - we were all students together at Design College you see. We've quit now to spend more time on it. Newsman: Why do think your 'zine is such a success?

Jean: We tell it like it is, you know, we don't leave out any facts and we don't tell lies like the other media.

You know, current affairs shows like this one for instance ...

Newsman: Well, thank you, er ... , and, well, I wish you all the best of luck with your ... er ... 'zine, Jean.

LECTURE Can a new language be learnt in six weeks as some courses promise?

Learning a language is not an easy task, though the reason why it is so difficult cannot be explained without an understanding of how human language is acquired, and unfortunately, no-one knows exactly how it is done. Linguists have many theories, but it is still a mystery and one that may never be fully solved. Since hard and fast facts about first language acquisition are in short supply, it is not surprising to find that there are numerous competing theories on how best to learn a second or third language. One thing is certain, though, it doesn't happen overnight. Or does it? One theory that has been promoted for some years now is that of subliminal language learning - taking words into your mind while not consciously aware of them. Play a cassette tape of words and phrases you wish to learn while you are asleep or perhaps while driving a car. It doesn't matter if you listen to them or not, or even if the words are within your normal range of hearing. Your brain will 'hear' the words and store them deep within your mind, ready for easier extraction when you practice certain exercises containing those words and phrases.

The argument goes like this: when you learnt your own language you had been spoken to and were constantly exposed to words in that language from the day you were born and possibly even before you were born. Yes, babies react to words spoken to them inside the mother's womb. This constant exposure ensured that the words were already planted in your mind before you actually learnt them. The subliminal method, then, is based on similar principles. Even having the TV or radio on all day in another language serves the same purpose. But best results come from playing tapes with specially selected words and phrases over and over again.

Recent surveys seem to indicate that early success in learning a foreign language requires at least two other conditions to be met. First of all, the range of vocabulary you need to learn should be restricted. It has been known for decades now that most of what one needs to say everyday in the English language can be

effectively communicated with a vocabulary of just 760 words. Secondly, the practice you do needs to focus on manipulations of those very same words. When starting to learn a language, reading the newspaper in that language is largely a waste of time - there are far too many new words to learn. Later, of course, reading all kinds of material in the new language is essential.

Remember that learning a language is something you have already managed. All of us are constantly, if not always consciously, engaged in increasing the knowledge of our own language, and the language itself is changing slowly every day. Language learning is a part of everyone's daily life. The only real problem with most quick-fix language learning solutions is that they do not take into account one vital difference between the learning of one's first language and the learning of other languages. And that is, people who speak different languages actually think in very different ways. No wonder students are suspicious of six week courses that promise the earth!