

What?? Teach Listening Without a Textbook?

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Often teachers and learners become bored or dissatisfied with the commercial listening textbooks. However confusion, follows when the book is put aside and other things tried. We think that listening is not a passive skill, but one in which learners must connect with and respond to what is being said. We have found that our learners are willing to do this if what they are listening to is of interest to them. It is also our feeling that our learners need more intense work on developing their bottom-up processing skills along with their top-down processing ones. In this paper we have developed several such listening activities based on current SLA listening strategy research for which no textbook is needed. Additionally the activities below help learners activate various core listening strategies, while improving their skills at processing incoming language.

教師や生徒が、市販のリスニング教科書に飽き、不満を感じる事がよくあります。しかし、教科書を使わず、他のやり方をしようとする、混乱が生じます。我々は、リスニングを受身の技術とは考えず、生徒がつながりを感じ、言われている事に対して返答をしなければいけない技術だと思っています。我々は、生徒達にとって興味深い話題なら、これらの事を積極的に行ってくれるという事を知りました。また、生徒達は、トップダウンプロセシングの技術と共に、ボトムアッププロセシングの技術の発達が大事だと我々は考えています。この論文では、そのような教科書のいらないリスニングアクティビティーを現在のSLA研究に基づいて、いくつか紹介しています。また、紹介されているア

クティビティーは、生徒の中心的なリスニングストラテジーを活発化すると共に、聞き取る言語を消化する技術を改善していきます。

The activities below are chiefly designed with an emphasis to aid learners' development of bottom-up processing in which listeners attend to incoming data. There are activities also for helping learners to use top-down processing or their prior expectations and knowledge of life to understand spoken discourse. In order to process language efficiently, the learner must use listening strategies. Some listening strategies that Rost (in press, p.6) recommends for use in classroom listening instruction are: predicting, monitoring, inferring, responding and clarifying. Rost goes on to explain that it is helpful to link listening activities with some combination of the other three language skills: speaking, reading and writing (in press, p.6).

In addition to the strategies noted above, Vandergrift (1996, p.208-211) has a detailed taxonomy of listening strategies used by learners of French in Canada. Strategies can be taught both explicitly and implicitly.

Rationale

We think that if a learner can listen effectively, speaking will follow naturally. On the other hand, if the learner cannot 'catch' the incoming language then she will not

be able to speak to the point with her interlocutor. In our 30 years of teaching Conversation classes in Japan, we have noticed that when the interlocutor tries to change the subject or ask for different information a break-down in communication often develops. This is because the L's ability to do bottom-up processing, has never been developed above the beginning level. Scholars involved in listening research and teaching, such as Rost (2001, p. 7), tell us of the importance of teaching bottom-up processing and top-down processing skills concurrently. While we agree that the teaching of top-down processing is important, we strongly feel that the listening materials now available in textbook form do not have enough bottom-up processing activities. Even when there are such activities, they are not the appropriate levels for our learners or of much interest to them. We feel it is important to attempt to create our own listening activities, personalized for our learners both in content and level. The following activities were developed for freshmen women learners at a women's university where we have taught for ten years. They demonstrate how bottom-up and top-down listening skills can be developed in an integrated manner.

For Bottom-up Processing *Objectives*

1. To develop our learners ability to distinguish sounds, identify words and understand the

relationships between agents and objects in spoken English

2. To teach our learners strategies that are of use in developing bottom-up listening skills

Procedure

The learners are told that the teacher is going to read a story entitled 'Jogakuin Hanako's Summer Vacation'. They are asked to form groups of three and choose a leader. The leader is told to write the title of the story at the top of a piece of paper. Only the leader is asked to do the writing. The teacher then explains that at some point in each sentence in the story the learners will be asked to choose one out of three words that best fits the contents of the sentence. The teacher then begins to read: "Hanako had a really (busy, small, straight) summer vacation." At the time of the three choices the teacher can put up a finger for each word so the learners know these are the words they are to choose from. The teacher says each sentence twice and continuing; "She did (strong, several, frequent) things during the vacation. First she wanted to (lose, drop, save) money to take a trip with, so (got, spent, forgot) a part-time job in a bread shop. She worked in the bread shop 4 days a (week, hour, semester) from 8am until 4pm. She (hadn't, didn't, wasn't) get paid much. She only made (\750, \7,500, \75,000) an hour. However she worked there for six weeks and (had to, hated to, managed to)

save \50,000."

When the story is finished the learners in groups are asked to recall as much of it as they can and the leader writes it down.

Suggestions and options

Instead of choosing the best word out of three the learners could be asked to provide the missing word. The teacher instead of giving three choices would just say 'blank' or something that lets the learners know they have to supply a word. In another variation the teacher could purposely make a mistake and ask the learners to find and correct it. Or the teacher could say some sentences with mistakes and others that are correct and ask the learners simply to say if the sentence is correct or has a mistake.

Benefits

Not only do our learners get a lot of practice which helps them become more efficient at bottom-up processing, but they are also developing their own strategies for dealing with the different listening tasks set for them. Some such strategies are listed by Vandergrift (1996): selective attention, comprehension monitoring, repetition, translation, and deduction/induction. While recalling and writing down as much of the story as they can the learners are additionally activating such strategies as reviewing, resourcing, questioning for clarification and cooperation.

For Top-down Processing

Objectives

1. To develop our learners top-down processing, or their ability to use their prior experiences and knowledge of life to help while listening.
2. To teach our learners strategies that are of use in developing top-down listening skills

Procedure

The learners are read more of the story about Hanako's vacation, doing the activities described above. In part of the story Hanako goes to Hokkaido where she has a really good time travelling around and eating delicious Hokkaido Chinese noodles (ramen). At this point the story is discontinued and the learners are asked to activate their top-down processing skills by predicting. The teacher asks the question; "What do you think Hanako did after she got back to Kobe?"

Similarly after Hanako has returned to Kobe and attended driving school to get her license, the story is discontinued and the teacher asks the learners to activate their monitoring comprehension strategies by writing down the different things Hanako has done during the vacation. They give answers stating that she had a part-time job, went to Hokkaido and got a driver's license.

Benefits

Through these top-down processing activities, the learners are able to see how much they have understood of the story and retained. Often they are surprised at how easy it is to predict what Hanako would do and recall the different things she did. When monitoring their learning by recalling the different things Hanako did they activate again strategies used while recalling the story: reviewing, resourcing, questioning for information and cooperation.

Conclusion

We believe that by using activities tailored to our Ls' own lives and level we can increase our Ls' interest. While doing the activities we are helping our learners improve their processing skills, and at the same time introducing them to different strategies that are invaluable in becoming better language learners.

References

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