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DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS IN BEGINNER ENGLISH LEARNERS

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Annotation: *This article discusses the importance of developing listening skills in beginner English learners and explains simple classroom techniques that can make listening practice more effective. Listening is one of the first language skills that learners need, because it helps them understand pronunciation, basic vocabulary, classroom instructions and everyday communication. At the beginner level, many students feel nervous when they hear English speech, especially if the speaker talks quickly or uses unfamiliar words. Therefore, teachers should create a supportive atmosphere and use short, clear, repeated and meaningful listening activities. The article highlights the role of pre-listening preparation, visual support, repetition, pronunciation awareness, pair work and real-life audio materials in improving learners’ confidence and comprehension.*

Keywords: *listening skills, beginner learners, English teaching, elementary level, pronunciation, classroom instruction, audio materials, language learning.*

INTRODUCTION

In modern English teaching, listening is considered one of the most important skills for successful communication. A learner may know many words and grammar rules, but if he or she cannot understand spoken English, communication becomes difficult. This is especially true for beginner learners, because they are still becoming familiar with the sound system of English, common expressions and classroom language. For this reason, listening should not be treated only as a final test at the end of the lesson. It should be a regular part of the learning process from the first stages of English education.

Beginner English learners often face several difficulties when they listen. They may not recognize words that they already know in written form. They may feel confused by connected speech, weak forms, different accents or the natural speed of speakers. Sometimes they try to understand every single word and become worried when they miss something. In such situations, the teacher’s task is to help learners understand that listening is a skill which develops step by step. It needs practice, patience and suitable techniques.

The aim of this article is to describe practical ways of developing listening skills in beginner English learners. The discussion focuses on methods that are simple, realistic and useful for elementary classrooms. These methods do not require complicated technology or long materials. Instead, they rely on clear planning, short tasks, active participation and meaningful repetition. When listening is taught in this way, students begin to feel that English speech is not frightening but understandable and useful.

MAIN PART

Listening is the foundation of many other language skills. Before learners speak fluently, they need to hear enough examples of English sounds, words and sentence patterns. Through listening, students become familiar with rhythm, stress and intonation. They also learn how words are used in real situations. For example, a beginner may learn the phrase “How are you?” from a textbook, but through listening the learner understands how it sounds in natural speech and how people usually respond to it. In this sense, listening connects classroom learning with real communication.

One important technique for developing listening skills is pre-listening preparation. Before students listen to an audio text, the teacher should prepare them for the topic. This can be done through pictures, short questions, key vocabulary or a simple situation. For instance, before listening to a dialogue at a café, the teacher can show a picture of a menu and ask learners what people usually say when they order food. This small preparation helps students predict the content. As a result, they do not start listening with an empty mind. They already have some ideas and words that can guide their understanding.

Another useful approach is to keep listening texts short and clear. At the beginner level, long audio recordings can easily make learners tired or confused. It is better to use short conversations, simple instructions, classroom commands, songs, chants or mini-dialogues. A listening text of thirty seconds or one minute may be enough if it is followed by meaningful tasks. The aim is not to make the material difficult, but to help students notice and understand basic language. Short listening texts also allow the teacher to replay the material several times without wasting much lesson time.

Repetition plays a very important role in beginner listening practice. Students usually cannot understand a new audio text fully after the first listening. This is normal. The first listening can be used for general understanding, such as identifying the topic or the speakers. The second listening can focus on specific information, such as names, numbers, places or actions. The third listening can be used for checking answers or repeating useful phrases. In this way, repetition becomes purposeful. It is not just playing the same audio again; it is giving students a new reason to listen each time.

Teachers should also use visual support whenever possible. Pictures, flashcards, real objects, gestures and board drawings can make listening easier for beginners. Visuals reduce anxiety because they give learners clues about meaning. For example, when students listen to words such as apple, chair, red, Monday or five, seeing a picture or object helps them connect sound with meaning quickly. Visual support is especially helpful for young learners and for students who have limited vocabulary. It makes the listening activity more concrete and memorable.

A good listening lesson should include simple tasks. If the task is too difficult, students may lose confidence even when the audio itself is not very hard. Suitable beginner tasks include ticking the correct picture, numbering items, matching names with objects, circling words they hear, choosing true or false, completing a short table or answering very simple

questions. Such tasks help learners focus their attention. They also show the teacher whether students have understood the main information. The task should match the level of the learners and the purpose of the listening activity.

Classroom instructions are also a natural source of listening practice. Many teachers use the students’ mother tongue too often when giving simple instructions. However, beginner learners can understand a lot of classroom English if it is used regularly and supported with gestures. Expressions such as “Open your books,” “Listen and repeat,” “Work in pairs,” “Look at the picture,” and “Write the answer” should become familiar through daily use. When students hear these phrases again and again, they begin to understand them automatically. This develops practical listening skills and creates an English-speaking atmosphere in the classroom.

Pronunciation awareness is closely connected with listening. Learners sometimes fail to understand spoken English because they expect words to sound exactly as they are written. English spelling and pronunciation are often different, so teachers should help students notice sounds carefully. For example, learners can practice distinguishing similar sounds, such as /i:/ and /ɪ/, or hearing the final -s in words like books, pens and cats. Teachers can also use simple listen-and-repeat activities, chants and minimal pairs. These activities train the ear and improve both listening and speaking.

Pair and group activities can make listening more active. Listening should not always mean that students sit silently and answer questions individually. After listening to a short dialogue, learners can practice the same dialogue in pairs. They can also compare answers, ask each other simple questions or complete an information-gap activity. For example, one student may listen for a name and another for a phone number, and then they share information. These activities encourage cooperation and help learners use listening as part of communication.

Songs and chants are especially useful for beginners because they combine rhythm, repetition and enjoyment. A short song can help learners remember greetings, numbers, days of the week, colors or classroom objects. Chants are also effective because they allow students to repeat useful phrases with natural stress and rhythm. However, songs should be selected carefully. The language must be simple, the pronunciation clear and the speed suitable for the class. A song is useful not only for entertainment but also for focused listening when the teacher gives a clear task.

Another practical technique is using real-life sounds and situations. Beginner learners should hear English in contexts close to everyday life, such as short introductions, family descriptions, school dialogues and simple conversations about hobbies. These materials show that English is not only a school subject, but also a tool for communication.

Teachers should pay attention to learners’ emotions during listening activities. Many beginners feel embarrassed when they do not understand. Some students may think that they are weak because they miss several words. The teacher should explain that successful listening does not always mean understanding every word. Often it is enough to understand

the main idea or important details. Positive feedback is very important. When learners answer correctly, even in a small task, the teacher should encourage them. Confidence grows through small successes.

It is also helpful to combine listening with other skills. After listening to a short self-introduction, students can introduce themselves; after a dialogue about daily routine, they can write two or three sentences about their own routine. In this way, listening becomes a meaningful step toward speaking and writing, not a separate mechanical exercise.

A successful listening lesson usually has three stages: before listening, while listening and after listening. Before listening, the teacher prepares the topic and vocabulary. While listening, students complete a clear task. After listening, they check answers and use some useful phrases in speaking or writing. This structure helps beginners feel more organized and confident.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, developing listening skills in beginner English learners is a gradual and important process. Listening helps students understand spoken language, improve pronunciation, learn vocabulary and prepare for real communication. At the elementary level, listening activities should be short, clear, repeated and supported by pictures, gestures and simple tasks. Teachers should not expect beginners to understand everything immediately. Instead, they should create regular opportunities for learners to hear English in a safe and motivating environment.

The most effective techniques include pre-listening preparation, meaningful repetition, visual support, classroom English, pronunciation practice, songs, pair work and real-life dialogues. These methods help students become more confident and active listeners. When listening is practiced regularly and naturally, learners begin to recognize English sounds and phrases more easily. As a result, they become better prepared for speaking, reading, writing and everyday communication in English.

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