

TEACHING LISTENING WITH TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract: *In the article the authors define the importance of listening in language learning and teaching, they disclose how language teachers can help their students to become effective listeners with the help of technology. 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.*

Key words: *teaching listening, language learning, technology.*

Introduction: Technology — it's a word that buzzes in our ears, crackles in our conversations, and resonates in our world. We're surrounded by the digital dynamism of the 21st century, where teaching transcends textbooks, learning leaps out of libraries, and classrooms aren't just confined to four walls anymore. It's an exhilarating time to be an educator, and equally so to be a student.

As teachers we witness and participate in the paradigm shift in the education sector — the blackboards replaced with smart screens, handwritten notes replaced by online modules, and the evolution of pedagogical methodologies that have made learning more interactive, inclusive, and intuitive. Amidst these advancements, a particular skill remains timelessly valuable, often overlooked — *Listening*.

Listening is the language modality that is used most frequently. It has been estimated that adults spend almost half their communication time listening, and students may receive as much as 90 % of their in-school information through listening to instructors and to one another. Often, however, language learners do not recognize the level of effort that goes into developing listening ability. Far from passively receiving and recording aural input, listeners actively involve themselves in the interpretation of what they hear, bringing their own background knowledge and linguistic knowledge to bear on the information contained in the aural text. Not all listening is the same; casual greetings, for example, require a different sort of listening capability than do academic lectures. Language learning requires intentional listening that employs strategies for identifying sounds and making meaning from them.

The one of the best ways introduce students to listening strategies is to integrate listening activities into language lessons using multimedia technology. As multimedia technology (interactive videodisc, CD-ROM, CD-I, etc.) becomes more accessible to teachers and learners of other languages, its potential as a tool to enhance listening skills becomes a practical option. Multimedia allows integration of text, graphics, audio, and motion video in a range of combinations. The result is that learners can now interact with textual, aural, and visual media in a wide range of formats. The past two decades have brought to language teaching and learning a wide range of audio-visual technologies. From among these, no single tool for teaching and learning has had greater impact than the personal computer. Today, individual learners can, in addition to interacting with computer-generated text and graphics, control combinations of analog and digital sound and images. Arranging these combined media into intelligent, pedagogically driven material is a challenge to teachers. Over the years, a wide variety of teaching aids have been placed at the disposal of language teachers. Charts, slides, tape-recorders, videos, overhead projectors and many other technological innovations have taken the place of traditional chalk and board, though not completely. Not long ago a language laboratory was widely used in learning listening as it was tied to the belief that individual listening practice with audiotape helps build a learner's ability to understand and speak the target language. Technology continues to be perceived as an enhancement to the process of language acquisition. The large-scale infusion of computers in language instruction programs in the past decade attests to this belief. The rationale behind what is now growing support for Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is not unlike earlier enthusiasm for audio tape based technologies. That is, both media provide individualized access to target language material that the learner can control and use in a self-study format. However, expectations for CALL in general, and multimedia in particular are much higher. The fast and powerful computational capacity, in conjunction with the orchestrated video, text, and graphics of today's multimedia learning systems would predict more sophisticated paradigms within which students can interact with the target language and, consequently, more effective learning. Learning a language via individualized instruction with the computer — especially when audio and video are involved — is an extremely appealing proposition, one that has sold to many an administrator in search of instructional panaceas.

The significance of listening skills in a classroom is irrefutable. They are the foundation of effective communication, fostering empathy, understanding, and a conducive learning environment. While it's an integral part of the curriculum, teachers often find it challenging to impart these skills effectively. Here's where our partner, Technology, steps in, offering novel and nuanced methods to tackle this challenge.

Remember how we used to strain our ears to catch every word our teachers uttered during a lecture, in a world before digital audio recorders? Today, students can replay a recorded lesson, focusing on absorbing the content rather than frantic note-taking. Such technological tools not only offer convenience but also promote active listening. They allow

students to revisit and reflect upon the lesson, thereby reinforcing learning and enhancing their listening skills.

Podcasts are another incredible medium that weave together education and entertainment. Teachers can utilize this platform to share stories, conduct interviews, or discuss various topics. Just imagine the depth of knowledge a history podcast could offer, the riveting journey of a science fiction narrative, or the sparkling charm of a literary analysis. The brilliance of podcasts lies in their audio-only nature, necessitating students to focus and listen attentively, honing their listening skills organically.

Interactive language learning apps like Duolingo and many more take a step further. They use voice recognition technology, enabling students to learn a new language by listening and speaking. Here, students get instant feedback on their pronunciation, encouraging them to listen more carefully and improving their auditory comprehension.

Then there's the realm of virtual reality (VR), a cutting-edge technology that is revolutionizing education. VR offers immersive learning experiences, creating environments where students can interact with the lesson content. Imagine a geography class where students can *travel* to The Taj Mahal or an English literature class where students can *attend* a Shakespearean play. Such realistic experiences foster active listening as students engage in dialogue within these simulated environments.

As we advance further into the digital age, the importance of listening skills continues to rise. The ongoing global shift towards remote working and learning necessitates seamless communication, and listening becomes crucial in avoiding misunderstandings. Moreover, in our increasingly multicultural societies, understanding diverse accents, dialects, and nuances requires adept listening skills.

We as teachers have the opportunity to guide students in this digitally transformative journey. Let us leverage technology to cultivate robust listening skills, equipping our students with the ability to understand, empathize, and effectively communicate.

Conclusion: So in this changing world, Technology is not a challenge to overcome; it's an ally to embrace. Because when we teach a child to listen, we are not merely teaching, we are contributing to a more understanding, empathetic, and connected world.

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