

DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS

Activities based on Parrot, M. (1993) *Tasks for Language Teachers*. Cambridge CUP. pp. 163-167

TASK 1A

Look at the following list of techniques that might be used to develop listening skills. Indicate which techniques you believe to be *effective* or *ineffective* writing **E** or **I** respectively against each sentence.

- a. The teacher encourages the class to listen to herself or other speakers of English.
- b. The teacher arouses interest in the material before the class listens.
- c. The teacher uses materials which incorporate features of natural spoken English (e.g. false starts, hesitation, repetition, changes in direction 'mid-stream', ungrammatical or unfinished utterances).
- d. The teacher sets tasks which focus specifically on the features above.
- e. The teacher sets tasks which encourage the learners to listen only for specific information (e.g. a telephone number, the time a train departs).
- f. Prior to listening, the teacher makes it clear to students that they will have the opportunity to discuss their answers in groups, before speaking to the whole class.
- g. The teacher encourages discussion of the process of listening.
- h. The teacher designs tasks which encourage the students to infer information that is not clearly stated.
- i. The teacher encourages the students to guess how the discourse will develop.
- j. The teacher encourages learners to use their knowledge of grammar and context to guess the next word.
- k. When focussing on new language, the teacher gives realistic model, taking care to draw attention to the weakening and elision of syllables in a continuous stream of speech.
- l. The teacher always takes care to speak slowly and clearly.
- m. The teacher always uses good quality recordings, and ensures that there are no distractions or outside noises.
- n. The teacher tries to use materials which provide good models of Standard English (i.e. with no grammatical mistakes).
- o. The teacher always takes care to find out and record how many questions each student answered correctly.
- p. The teacher teaches the students ways of interrupting a speaker in order to ask them to repeat, clarify or expand what they have just said, or to speak more slowly.

TASK 1B

Looking at the techniques you have listed as effective, classify them according to focus:

Confidence building	Strategy training	Language focus

TASK 2A

Which of these example activities would you describe as purposeful listening?

- a. Students listen to someone giving directions and trace the route on a map.
- b. Students listen to a weather forecast and on the basis of this decide where they would spend a hypothetical weekend holiday.
- c. Students look at photographs of the teacher family and when the teacher speaks about these people, they have to identify them by name.

- d. Before listening to a description of a place, students make a list of information they would like to find out. As they listen, they tick the points that were, in fact mentioned.
- e. Students listen to a story and then answer questions about the events.

TASK 2B

Think of an example of a purposeful listening activity and briefly describe it.

TASK 3

Discuss the following questions. Provide short answers, and explain your rationale.

- 1. How many times can a class be asked to listen to the same recording? _____

- 2. Who should control the playback of the recording? _____

- 3. Should students be shown the transcript of the recording? _____

- 4. How important is the use of video in the teaching of listening skills? _____

- 5. Is there any place for dictation in teaching listening skills? _____

TASK 4

Place the following lesson segments in a reasonable order.

- a. The teacher picks out short extracts from the recording and asks the learners to repeat individual words.
- b. Students listen to the tape and complete a table with information.
- c. Students discuss answers in pairs.
- d. Students speculate about the content of the recording.
- e. The teacher teaches some key vocabulary items.
- f. Students listen to confirm their predictions.
- g. The teacher plays the recording in sections while the students answer detail-oriented questions.
- h. Students read the transcript.
- i. Students discuss a topic based on the recording.