

The Need of Practicing Listening in Teaching English to Young Learners

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Listening is the communicative skill most of us use the most frequently. A recent study points out that many of us spend 70 to 80 percent of our waking hours in some form of communication. Of that time, we spend about 45 to 50 percent listening. Although producing meaningful speech is a central aspect of the foreign language acquisition, learning actively to listen is an equally essential and closely-related skill to be encouraged in all students of foreign languages.

Teaching listening skills helps the learner acquire language subconsciously. The more they listen, the better they understand. The teacher's task is to select authentic material adapted to the level of the students. Unlike language study, reading or writing, where individual students can learn at their own pace, the tape goes at the same speed for everyone. When it comes to reading, students can go back and read again if they fail to understand, but in case they fail to understand with listening, they are lost and panic if they miss a word or a phrase.

Games that Teach Listening

- **Mistakes in reading.** Teacher selects a text in the children's course book and tells students that she is going to read it aloud. But she makes deliberate mistakes and they must tell her where the mistake is. Teacher substitutes, adds or omits words. The children should tell the teacher immediately.

- **Guess the star.** Teacher thinks of a famous star/singer/sport star/author and describes him/her to the class. E.g. *She isn't tall. She's got fair hair and blue eyes. She's a singer. She is American.* The teacher asks students to guess who it is. E.g. *Is it Madonna?* The student who guesses has the next turn.

- **The robot game.** Teacher chooses 4-5 volunteers to be 'robots' and asks them to come in front of the class. The teacher gives the robots simple instructions: E.g. *Walk to the door! Run to the window! Turn around! Put your hands up in the air!* The teacher encourages the children to act like robots, as much as possible, in their movements. Children take turns in giving 'robots' instructions.

- **Switch Seats Game.** This is an active game that is loads of fun and one that requires good listening skills.

Language: listen and do

Level: beginners

Timing: 10 minutes

Procedure:

- Children are asked to sit on chairs in a circle.
- Teacher stands outside the circle and gives directions such as:
 - ❖ "Children with blue eyes switch seats".
 - ❖ "Children with red shirts switch seats".
 - ❖ "Children who have baby sisters switch seats."
- **Stand, Walk and Sit Musical Chairs.** Chairs are placed back to back in two lines. The number of chairs should be one fewer than the numbers of children playing. Instead of listening to music, children will listen to the teacher and follow the teacher's oral instructions to stand, walk or sit. When teacher says 'Walk', the children should walk around the chairs. When teacher says 'sit', children should find a chair and sit as quickly as possible. The child without a chair will be the next person to say the instructions.

Songs that Teach Listening. Songs can be used as texts in the same way that poem, short story or novel or any other piece of authentic material can be used. Songs and music can be used as a launching pad for conversation in the same way that poetry or other forms of written discourse can be used. In using songs and music in the classroom we are exposing students to the rhythms of language.

- **Drawing the Song.** Visual images clarify definitions and make remembering vocabulary words easier. There are several possibilities:

1. Draw as many food items as you can hear in the song “ Favourite foods”

I like <u>apples</u> , they are sweet,	<u>Hamburgers</u> just can't be beat
<u>Water</u> 's cool,	With <u>carrots</u> to crunch
<u>Corn</u> is too!	For a lunch!
<u>Ice cream</u> is my favourite treat	<u>Salad</u> is so good with fish,
<u>Cake</u> is neat,	<u>Pancakes</u> are my favourite dish
I like <u>meat</u> !	<u>Tomatoes</u> are so red and round,
I love <u>fries</u> and <u>apple pies</u> .	
You'll love these foods, just try!	



All the underlined words are supposed to be drawn by the students. The role of this activity is to interpret the song visually.

- **Add the missing words**

Teacher teaches children a song and then sings it together with the class, either without the *nouns* or without the *verbs*. For example:

(missing nouns)
 _____ and _____ went up the _____
 To fetch a _____ of _____.
 _____ fell down and broke his _____,
 And _____ came tumbling after.

(missing verbs)
 Jack and Jill _____ up the hill
 To _____ a pail of water.
 Jack _____ down and _____ his crown,
 And Jill _____ after.

Playing songs in a classroom is an excellent way to establish rapport and introduce fun into learning English. Above all, the use of songs creates an atmosphere of interest in the study of English, and can lead to a change from a *teacher-centred* to a *student-centred* class. More than this, when teaching English through songs and games, students get involved by working in pairs and groups which definitely help team-building, allowing students to be less inhibited and participate and work within the group. All in all, using songs is a good way not only to motivate and raise students' interest but also to test their knowledge in all skills.