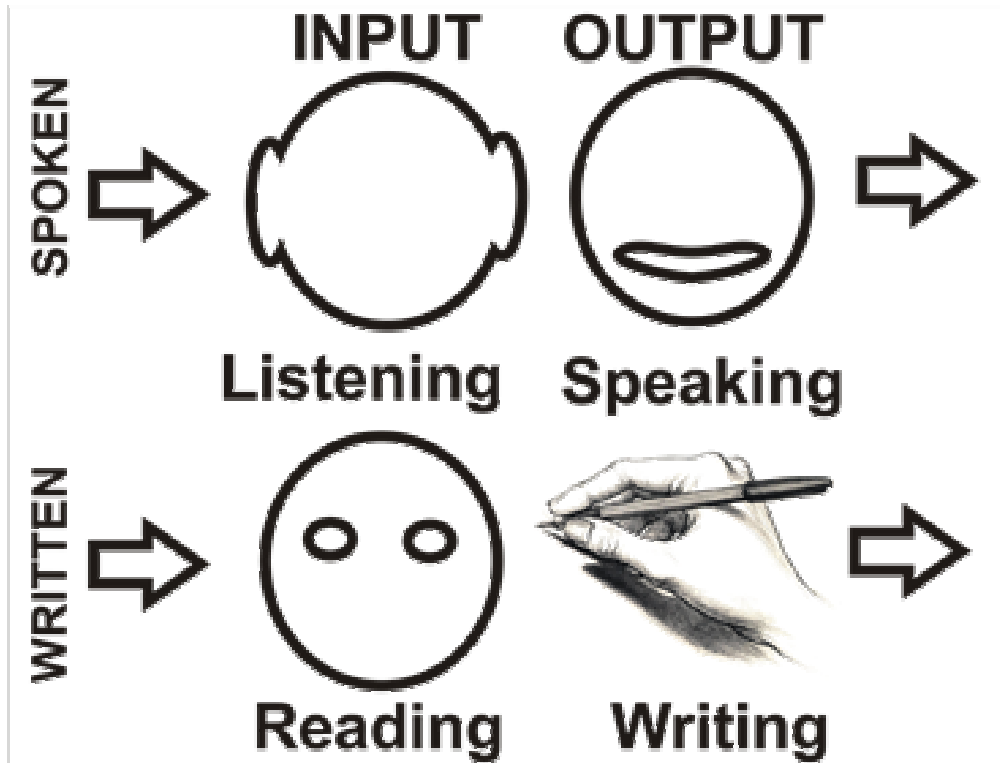


Listening - language skill #1

When we learn a language, there are four skills that we need for complete communication. When we learn our native language, we usually learn to listen first, then to speak, then to read, and finally to write. These are called the four "language skills":

- Skill #1: **Listening**
- Skill #2: Speaking
- Skill #3: Reading
- Skill #4: Writing

As you can see, listening is the first language skill. It is perhaps the most important skill of all, the basis for the other three.



The four language skills are related to each other in two ways:

- the direction of communication (in or out)
- the method of communication (spoken or written)

Input is sometimes called "reception" and output is sometimes called "production".

Spoken is also known as "oral".

Teaching Listening

It is worth recalling a famous quotation: *'Listening is not merely not talking... it means taking a vigorous human interest in what is being told us. You can listen like a blank wall or like a splendid auditorium where every sound comes back fuller and richer?'* (Alice Duer Miller)

Learning to Communicate is one of the rare school courses that emphasize the importance of listening in the language curriculum and the need for learners' active participation in the listening process.

The section **Learn to listen** incorporates the two fundamental processes of listening comprehension: *top-down* and *bottom-up* processing. Top-down processing requires learners to use background knowledge and other clues to arrive at comprehension while bottom-up processing requires them to make sense of elements like words and sentences in a listening text to arrive at meaning.

Why should we overtly teach listening in the English classroom?

1. Listening is a necessary part of our routine. As Wilga Rivers (1981) remarked: 'We listen twice as much as we speak, four times as much as we read and five times as much as we write.'
2. Listening effectively involves a unique set of skills that are quite different from those of the other language skills.
3. Listening is as important as speaking. We cannot communicate face-to-face unless the two are developed in tandem.
4. Since listening and speaking are, in many contexts, reciprocal skills, learning to speak well depends crucially on learning to listen well.

Task 1

1. What are the skills required when we learn a language?

2. Which two fundamental processes are incorporated in the section “learn to listen”?

3. List any two reasons as to why we should teach listening in English Classroom?

How can we help learners develop their listening skills?

- a. *By helping them listen for a purpose.* If they have a clear purpose, they will be able to employ an appropriate listening strategy, such as listening for key words or listening for information.
- b. *By helping them listen for meaning.* If they are trained to locate the main point or gist of the listening text, they will learn that the aim is not to recall specific words or phrases the speakers used but to understand the main idea.
- c. *By helping them listen in realistic contexts.* If they learn to listen to a range of texts including interactional (or social) talk and transactional (or informative) talk, they will easily build a bridge between the classroom and the real world.
- d. *By helping them listen flexibly.* If they are encouraged to listen to the same input several times, each for a different purpose, they will develop their own goals for listening, like ‘skimming’ for gist and ‘scanning’ for specific information.
- e. *By helping them recognize the organization of a listening text.* If they are trained to recognize advance organizers (like ‘I will first talk about...’) they will learn to cope more easily with academic texts across the curriculum.

Task 2

We have just learnt about how to develop listening skills in the learners.

1. If you were a teacher which method would you find best. Give reasons.

Teaching 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.

Listening involves a sender (a person, radio, television), a message, and a receiver (the listener). Listeners often must process messages as they come, even if they are still processing what they have just heard, without backtracking or looking ahead. In addition, listeners must cope with the sender's choice of vocabulary, structure, and rate of delivery. The complexity of the listening process is magnified in second language contexts, where the receiver also has incomplete control of the language.

Given the importance of listening in language learning and teaching, it is essential for language teachers to help their students become effective listeners. 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.

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Goals and Techniques for Teaching Listening

Strategies for Developing Listening Skills

Developing Listening Activities

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Assessing Listening Proficiency

Goals and Techniques for Teaching Listening

Instructors want to produce students who, even if they do not have complete control of the grammar or an extensive lexicon, can fend for themselves in communication situations. In the case of listening, this means producing students who can use listening strategies to maximize their comprehension of aural input, identify relevant and non-relevant information, and tolerate less than word-by-word comprehension.

Focus: The Listening Process

To accomplish this goal, instructors focus on the process of listening rather than on its product.

- They develop students' awareness of the listening process and listening strategies by asking students to think and talk about how they listen in their native language.
- They allow students to practice the full repertoire of listening strategies by using authentic listening tasks.
- They behave as authentic listeners by responding to student communication as a listener rather than as a teacher.
- When working with listening tasks in class, they show students the strategies that will work best for the listening purpose and the type of text. They explain how and why students should use the strategies.
- They have students practice listening strategies in class and ask them to practice outside of class in their listening assignments. They encourage students to be conscious of what they're doing while they complete listening tape assignments.
- They encourage students to evaluate their comprehension and their strategy use immediately after completing an assignment. They build comprehension checks into in-class and out-of-class listening assignments, and periodically review how and when to use particular strategies.