

FOCUSED LISTENING

■ INSTRUCTIONAL GOAL:

For students to understand the speech of native speakers

■ TARGET STUDENTS:

Students at any level who encounter spoken English outside the classroom

Developing listening skills for second-language learners is extremely important when we consider that listening is the most frequently used language skill. Half the time we spend communicating requires listening. Listening is not a passive skill that students acquire automatically. Listening skills need to be taught if instructors are to bridge the gap between classroom English and English that students encounter outside the classroom.

In listening to spoken English, second-language learners will have difficulties in the following areas:

- Distinguishing sounds (e.g., pan versus pen)
- Understanding intonation and stress (e.g., Mary! versus Mary?)
- Understanding reduced speech and juncture (e.g., want to versus wanna)
- Recognizing redundancy (e.g., I mean...)
- Coping with noise (e.g., other voices or traffic)
- Deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words and/or phrases from the context
- Making predictions about what is going to be said next (e.g., She's a good student, but...)

Research in the area of listening comprehension indicates that real-life listening situations have these characteristics:

1. Listeners have a purpose and have some expectations about what they will hear.
2. In most normal daily situations, listening passages come in short chunks and the listener responds immediately.
3. Except when talking on the telephone, listeners can usually see the person with whom they are speaking.
4. There are visual/environmental clues that help listeners understand the meaning of what they have heard.
5. Listening to informal discourse—the features of which include spontaneity, unevenness, and richness in colloquialisms—is more common than listening to formal discourse.

(continued on page 4)



FOCUSED LISTENING (continued)

Classroom listening activities should incorporate these real-life listening characteristics to prepare students for the situations and problems they might encounter in their daily lives. Instructors need to select materials that are as close to the real listening situations as possible (e.g., conversations, loudspeaker announcements, news reports, weather forecasts). Recordings and videos of listening texts as well as "live" teacher discourse (e.g., storytelling) can be suitable listening materials. Materials need to be presented with normal intonation, stress, and volume so as not to distort the speech and meaning of the message.

Instructors need to present information about the content, situation, and/or speakers prior to the actual listening so that the students will have some expectation of what they will hear. After listening several times, students should be given immediate feedback as to the accuracy of their comprehension. In order to verify student comprehension, instructors need to include exercises that require short, active responses during or between sections of the listening passage. *Active responses* mean the listener responds by doing something, such as performing an action (Total Physical Response), completing a worksheet (e.g., marking a map, making a diagram, making a list), or responding to questions. Examples of these tasks should be provided before the actual listening or in conjunction with the first listening.

“Total Physical Response Principles and Procedures”

Presented by Dr. Lynn Henrichsen, Brigham Young University

The Natural Approach (Stephen Krashen, U of Southern California)

Conditions for Second Language Acquisition

- **Comprehensible Input.** People acquire language when it is understandable. They need to understand the intent of the message, but not every word. Teachers can make language more comprehensible by supplementing it with visuals, media, body language, and gestures—whatever conveys meaning.
- **Low Affective Filter.** People acquire language when their anxiety level is low and they are engaged in activities in a safe, comfortable, supportive environment where they feel free to take risks in using the language.
- **Meaningful Communication.** People acquire language when they use it for real purposes. Language use must be relevant, meaningful, and authentic. Function (getting things done) takes precedence over form (grammatical correctness).

Speech Emerges in Natural Stages

1. **Preproduction.** Learners can comprehend second language commands but cannot speak the language yet. *(Allow learners time to develop their receptive skills before you expect them to speak. Provide them with opportunities to listen to language that is made clear through pictures, objects, gestures, etc. Ask simple “yes/no” and alternative questions that can be answered non-verbally. Use TPR.)*
2. **Early production.** Learners comprehend more complicated language and can make simple (one or two word) responses like “yes/no” or names. *(Select meaningful, enjoyable activities that allow learners to respond with short answers. “Echo” and paraphrase their one-word answers by putting them into full sentences. Expose students to language that is more complicated than they can produce. Continue to provide non-verbal support.)*
3. **Speech emergence.** Comprehension has increased to a higher level and learners can speak in phrases and sentences. *(Provide “safe” opportunities for learners to speak. Encourage them to speak and interact in natural situations where the focus is on communicating a message.)*
4. **Intermediate fluency.** Learners combine phrases and sentences and express themselves both orally and in writing. *(Provide activities that challenge learners to respond with increasingly complex sentences—for example, retelling and paraphrasing a story they have just heard. Use process-writing activities and introduce grammar/mechanics as learners edit their work.)*

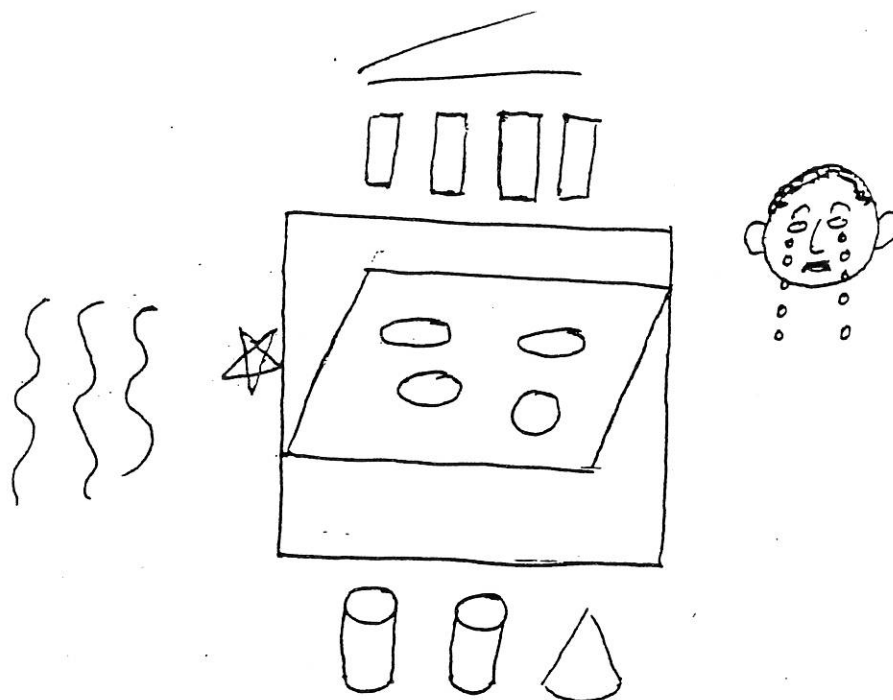
Total Physical Response: Basic Principles

(James J. Asher, CSU-San Jose)

- Language acquisition can be accelerated through the use of kinesthetic behavior.
- Comprehension precedes production. Listening skill is far in advance of speaking skill. (e.g., "Run to Grandma and give her a kiss.")
- Body movements and other actions provide evidence of comprehension.
- Adults manipulate children's physical behavior by a massive number of commands. Children become ready to talk only after months of responding to these directions. ("Nature's model for language learning.")
- Speech emerges naturally; it should not be forced. Delaying speech production facilitates learning by reducing anxiety.
- When speech emerges it will be imperfect, with many distortions and errors. The teacher must be patient, tolerate these errors, and focus on communication without raising the anxiety level.

Total Physical Response: Basic Procedure

1. Teacher says words/phrases and models the meaning. Students respond by doing the same action.
2. Teacher commands and models with...
 - a. A large group (the whole class)
 - b. A small group
 - c. An individual volunteer
3. Teacher commands without modeling. Students respond by performing the action as...
 - a. A large group (the whole class)
 - b. A small group
 - c. An individual volunteer
4. Teacher recombines old and new commands, in random order, with and without modeling. Students respond by performing the action as...
 - a. A large group (the whole class)
 - b. A small group
 - c. An individual volunteer



In the center of the page draw a large parallelogram. Inside it draw three ovals and a small circle. Around the parallelogram draw a square which is just touching the two ^{acute} angles of the parallelogram. To the left of the square draw a five pointed star which is just touching the square. To the left of the square draw 3 wavy lines.

Above the square draw 4 long, slender rectangles. Over the rectangles draw 2 non-parallel straight lines. Then under the square draw 2 cylinders and one cone. Now to the right of the square please draw ten teardrops falling from the eyes of a weeping face.

CTW
Listening Exercise
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