How to teach listening skills

"Great speakers are not born, they’re trained." - Dale Carnegie (1921)

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

✓ To enhance deeper understanding of the process of listening as a communicative skill.
✓ To explore ways of teaching listening skills in meaningful and enjoyable ways.
✓ To reflect upon effective ways of teaching listening

Pedagogical beliefs about teaching listening skills

1. Which is more important listening or speaking skills? Give 2 reasons.
   a. …………………………………………………………………………………………………
   b. …………………………………………………………………………………………………

2. In groups: Does teaching listening skills cause problems for teachers? In pairs, list 2 main problems and suggestions to overcome them.
   Problem 1: ………………………………………………………………………………………
   Suggestion: ………………………………………………………………………………………
   Problem 2: ………………………………………………………………………………………
   Suggestion: ………………………………………………………………………………………

3. In pairs: Do you agree with these 2 statements? What implications may you get?

   • Hearing is an act of receiving the language through ears without interpretation. In real life we can hear somebody speak but actually do not listen to what is being said. Listening is a communicative skill to get the meaning from what we hear. (Millrood 2001)
   • Listening to the spoken language involves hearing the sounds, recognising words, understanding different accents, understanding intonation, coping with “noise” (external interference and indistinct pronunciation), recognising sentences, predicting the meaning, understanding whole discourse (Ur 1998:11-34 in Millrood 2001:99).
4. Is listening active or passive skill? Why?

5. Many school teachers ignore teaching listening. Give 2 reasons:
   a.
   b.

6. Which of these are listening purposes? Can you add more purposes?
   a. To listen for the **content** of the message (informational listening).
   b. To fulfill the **instructions** in the heard text.
   c. To **evaluate** critically what they hear or to give supportive empathy (critical/evaluative listening).
   d. To listen for **enjoyment & pleasure** from what they hear (appreciative / aesthetic Listening).

7. Carefully read the list below and answer these questions:
   a. What is common about this list? Choose a title for it.
   b. **In groups:** To what extent are they available in *English for Palestine*? Try to find one example for each of them.

1. Listening for pronunciation
2. Listening for intonation
3. Listening for the main idea (skim)
4. Listening for specific information (scan)
5. Predicting – students try to guess key information contained in the recording before they listen.
6. Inferring meaning – students listen to identify the difference between what the speaker says and what they actually mean.
7. Identifying emotion – students listen to identify the mood of certain speakers.
8. Listening for opinions – students listen to identify the attitude of certain speakers.
9. Inferring relationships – students listen to identify who the people are in the recording and what the relationship is between them.
10. Recognizing context – students listen to aural and contextual clues to identify where the conversation takes place, who is speaking, etc.
8. Which of the following variables affecting and effecting successful listening?

a. **Noise**: Distractions and noise during the listening should be reduced.

b. **Equipment**: make sure that the cassette player or CD player being used produces acceptable sound quality.

c. **Repetition**: playing the text 2-3 times might be required in respect of the types of texts. In case of no chance of repetition, learners may become anxious about catching it all the first time and that will impede their actual performance.

d. **Content**: It is a strong variable to be able to make difference in developing skill. The material should be interesting and appropriate for the class level in topic, speed and vocabulary.

e. **Visuals**: Most texts should have visual supports like clippings, maps, diagrams, pictures or images in video that contextualize the listening input and provide clues to meaning in order to aid their interpretation.


9. Do you agree with all these tabulated differences between extensive and intensive listening? Can you add more differences?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference point</th>
<th>Extensive listening</th>
<th>Intensive listening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Goal</td>
<td>accuracy</td>
<td>Fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Purpose</td>
<td>Listen for details/specific information; Mimic text; Improve and develop listening strategies</td>
<td>Get general information; Enjoy; Build word recognition ability; Chunking language into meaningful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Focus</td>
<td>Sounds, words, and pronunciation; linking, connected speech; Notice new language features</td>
<td>Meaning; Global comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Material type</td>
<td>Audio simplified readers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Material quality</td>
<td>Often difficult; Shorter passages; Teacher chooses</td>
<td>Easy; Longer passages; Learner chooses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Amount</td>
<td>Not much</td>
<td>A lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Speed</td>
<td>Slower</td>
<td>Faster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Method</td>
<td>Must finish; Time constraints</td>
<td>Stop if don’t like; Rewind &amp; Repeat—Listen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Examine the following lessons taken from *English for Palestine* and try to find if they include extensive or intensive listening activities?

### Grade 4

#### Unit 1 Period 5

**1. Listen and match.**

What's your favourite hobby, Walid? My favourite hobby is reading.

- [ ] Walid
- [ ] Hamroh
- [ ] Hala
- [ ] Fiona

**Grade 4 Unit 5**

**Grade 7 Unit 1**

#### Unit 1 Lesson 3

**Listening**

1. **Before listening.**
   
   Do you remember Ben and Omar from Books 5 and 6? Ben has left Palestine and lives in England now. This week he is on holiday in New York. He meets a Palestinian boy called Majed. He is Omar's cousin. What do you think they talk about?

2. **Listen and answer.**
   
   a. Has Majed been to Palestine?
   b. Does Majed speak Arabic?
   c. Does Majed want to visit Palestine?

3. **Listen and complete**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First language</th>
<th>Other languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. Effective teaching of a listening text in *English for Palestine* requires evaluating it properly. To evaluate the listening material well, certain factors (criteria) are needed to decide how to teach a listening text. **In pairs**, try to agree on the 2 most important criteria among the following ones. Try to add more.

a. Aim of teaching a short or long text  
b. Linguistic complexity (number & type of words & type of sentences used in a text).  
c. Length of listening material: long, short or average  
d. Level of familiarity with the topic of the listening material and information included and thus level of learners’ interest  
e. Speed of speaking: fast, slow or normal  
f.  

**Methodology: listening teaching stages (3Ps)**

12. Many lessons in *English for Palestine*, (stage 2 & 3- Grades 5-12), have pre-listening questions. Which of the following functions of pre-listening questions do you agree most?

a. Increasing learners’ motivation to listening through arousing their interest curiosity.  
b. Enhancing learners’ prediction and guessing skills  
c. Activating and building on learners’ prior knowledge  

13. Read these guidelines listed under each of the 3 stages of teaching listening. Are they all useful and practical in Palestine? Which ones you like most? Why?

**Pre-listening**

1. Tell your students they shouldn’t worry that they have to understand every word they hear. Not every word is important!  
2. Where possible, make sure students know what they are listening for before you start listening. Explain they should focus only on the information they need.  
3. Give 2-3 general questions to check students comprehension of the basic details.
4. If possible, check for any words that your students may not know. Pre-teach these so they do not interfere with understanding.

5. Brainstorm students’ ideas on the topic they are going to listen to. This will help focus them.

6. If a listening text is too long, stop the recording at certain points and review what students have understood so far.

**While listening**

1. As a general principle, try to play the recording once for overall comprehension. Then play the recording again for specific details.

2. Tell students to note any dates, people or places they hear.

3. Divide students into groups and give each group a different listening task (e.g. different questions). Then swap their answers and have students listen again and check their classmates’ answers.

4. Don’t be afraid to repeat the recording… especially the parts students have most trouble understanding.

**Post-listening**

1. Tell students to compare their notes and discuss what they understood in pairs or small groups.

2. Encourage students to respond to what they heard. For example, where possible ask questions like *Do you agree?* and encourage debate.

3. Tell pairs to write a summary of the main points. Then have them compare their summaries and check if they covered all the main points.

4. Play the recording again and tell students to call out ‘Stop!’ when they hear the answers they were listening for.

5. Put students into groups and tell them to make a list of comprehension questions to ask each other.

6. Tell students to make a list in their notebooks of any new vocabulary they feel is useful.
14. Look at the following illustrations of the 3 stages of teaching listening and make sure that you fully understand them all. Ask about any unclear point.

Pre-listening

Motivating students- creating a sense of interest and building up predictions through activating students’ existing knowledge: (Note: Avoid and adapt Wh- questions)

Example (Grade 7 p20):

You are going to listen to a poem called ‘My Pen Friend and me’. What do you think the poem will be about?

While listening

 Answering 1-2 guiding, factual & straight forward questions (purposeful listening to scan/skim):

- yes- no questions
- multiple choice
- completion
- Matching

Example:

Listen and complete the missing words in the poem.

Post-listening

More detailed questions, opinion questions or hypothetical questions.
15. General Tips for developing speaking skills

1. Increase listening time in class and at home using Internet, and CDs
2. Identify students’ weaknesses: causes & solutions
3. Identify students’ preferences in listening
4. Treat listening as a challenging mental and linguistic task
5. Focus on content, not delivery
6. Don't worry too much about students’ mistake
7. Use physical skills to ease listening tasks and nervousness: use eyes contacts, body language and gestures.

Teacher talk and classroom activities for teaching listening

Children can learn a lot of English from you as you organise the class. This can be a genuinely communicative use of language because you are using it for a reason. If you get into the habit of using the same 'chunks' of English with your class, the children will not understand immediately, but over time they will learn what you mean.

16. Here are some useful chunks you can use in class. Use the headings below to match the chunks in Column B. Try to add 2 more classroom language to every group.

1. Keeping order
2. Conducting the lesson
3. Giving feedback
4. Other language
5. Greetings
6. Storytelling language
7. Checking attendance
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Headings</th>
<th>Classroom expressions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello. How are you?</td>
<td>Fine thanks. / Not too well. I've got a cold/stomach ache/headache.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goodbye. See you tomorrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now, let’s see who’s absent today.</td>
<td>I’m going to call your names. (Basim?) Yes, Sir. / Absent, Sir.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is anyone absent? Yes, (Nadia)'s absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet, please!</td>
<td>Stand up, please! / Sit down, please!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listen, please!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t do that, please!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thank you, Samir. (to a child who is doing what he has been asked before the others)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand up, please.</td>
<td>Sit down, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Come to the front, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go back to your seat, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Draw a …. / Read page …. / Write what I say please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open your bags, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take out your exercise books/pencils, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turn to page …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good!</td>
<td>Well done!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>That's lovely / neat / careless / right / wrong / good / excellent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Say it again, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Say it in English, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do it again, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting phrases such as: “I’m going to read/tell you a story”, “We’re going to listen to a story now.”</td>
<td>Set phrases such as: “Once upon a time …”, “and they lived happily ever after”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questions to involve your audience and check the learners understand: “What do you think?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Happened next?”, “What did he say?”,”Why did he do that?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17. List the main points you learned and you would use in teaching listening skills.

a.
b.
c.
d.
e.

- Questions for learners to predict the story: “What will he do next?”, What will happen?” etc
- Open/Close the door/window, please.
- Clean the board, please.
- Where's my chalk/duster/pen?