

Developing Integrated Speaking and Listening Skills through Silent Viewing and Dubbing – An Experiment



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ABSTRACT

Listening is often ignored in the language classrooms with the assumption that students acquire the organised skill automatically while listening to the teachers' use of the target language. Listening is a complex process that requires phonological, semantic, syntactical discourse, and pragmatic knowledge of the language as well as understanding the context and nonverbal communication. The aim of this paper is to show how speaking and listening skills could be imparted to learners through silent viewing of videos and dubbing activities. The steps followed in the integration of listening and speaking are motivation, mute video watching, delivering ideas, input for right delivery of ideas, if necessary, and integrating listening and speaking skills. The experiments throw a challenge for the learners to improve their guess work and to come out with language production.

Key Words: Silent viewing; Dubbing; Mute Video Watching, Integrating listening and speaking.

Introduction

The ability to listen effectively is a vital skill since most of the learning proceeds from it. It is interesting to note that people discuss many facets of communication but inadvertently overlook the listening skill. Research studies have proved that listening is the most important link in the process of communication. Morley (1999) observes that “we listen twice as much as we speak, four times as much as we read, and five times as much as we write” (p.16). It is evident that listening plays a crucial role in first language communication and it is also

“at the heart of L2 (Second Language) learning” (Vandergrift, 2007, p. 191).

Listening is often ignored in the language classrooms with the assumption that students acquire the organised skill automatically while listening to the teachers' use of the target language. Listening is a complex process that requires phonological, semantic, syntactical discourse, and pragmatic knowledge of the language as well as understanding the context and nonverbal communication. Learners have to apply this knowledge in a range of contexts, both unidirectional (e.g. lectures, radio

broadcasts) and bidirectional (e.g. classroom discussions and conversations, listening situations and while using computers, digital audio players). Language teachers would do well to make conscious and systematic efforts to develop the listening skill in learners. The aim of this paper is to show how speaking and listening skills could be imparted in learners through silent viewing of videos and dubbing activities.

Teaching of Listening and Speaking Skills

Several trends prevail in listening pedagogy. These trends include the continuing integration of listening with other language skills. Approaches to language teaching such as task-based instruction and content-based instruction have helped promote the integration. Listening is rarely taught in isolation. It is more often taught in conjunction with speaking, reading and writing activities. Recently, digital materials have probably exerted increasing impact in the teaching of listening skill. Today, technology allows teachers to use a variety of listening types into the classroom and to provide access to students to texts at will. With video streaming on the internet, students can watch and listen to programmes whenever they like, and as many times as they prefer. Learners' interest in viewing video programmes could be exploited for teaching the language skills.

In English language teaching, videos play a significant role in creating successful language learning environment. A resourceful teacher plays a pivotal role in using the video aid in the teaching-learning

process. A recorded video makes foreign language learning attractive but the role of the teacher cannot be ignored. It is only the teacher who enables learners to comprehend what they watch and hear using some of the communication techniques. In a visual learning environment, a teacher needs to take on different roles – controller, prompter, evaluator and participant.

During the video session, there is a possibility for distraction among the language learners. A teacher needs to control the class emphasising the importance of maintaining silence during the video viewing programme. Whenever the learners' attention digresses, the teacher needs to speak and involve the learners in focussed listening. Here, the teacher becomes a prompter. By the end of every session, the teacher assumes the role of an evaluator to assess learners' performance. The teachers' active participation and involvement in the activity is supposed to quicken the language learning process. An imaginative teacher is supposed to draw up a list of ways for effective use of video materials in English language learning atmosphere. Canning-Wilson (2000) suggests that videos may be a popular tool in education, especially in the language classroom, and that they can yield encouraging results for students of a foreign/second language.

Silent Viewing

Sound and vision are separate components in the audiovisual medium. Silent viewing

arouses students' interest, stimulates thought, and develops skills of anticipation. In silent viewing, the video segment is played with the sound off. This activity can also be a prediction technique when students watch a video for the first time. The teacher plays the video segment without the sound and asks the students to observe the behaviour of the characters using their power of deduction. The teacher presses the pause button at intervals to stop the picture on the screen and makes students guess. The teacher may ask probing questions such as: 1) What is seen on the screen? 2) What might the characters be saying? And 3) What has happened till now?

Dubbing

In this activity, students are asked to fill in missing dialogues after watching the sound-off video episode. It is interesting and enjoyable for the students to complete a scene on the video by dubbing. Students get interested and they produce language, imagining situations. Finally, the video segment is replayed with the sound on so that learners can compare their impressions with what actually happens on the video. Learners make self-assessment about their own predictions. Unconsciously, they acquire integrated speaking and listening skills.

The Experiment

An integration of silent viewing and dubbing has resulted in developing speaking and focused listening skills among the learners. The following steps were followed in the experimental study conducted by the author

at an engineering college, in an Audio-Visual Room with enhanced Public Address (PA) system.

The students were seated and they were ready for silent viewing of a mute video programme on the screen.

Step 1: Motivation

The teacher motivated the learners to listen to the mute video. The learners were prepared mentally for focusing their attention for the acquisition of integrated listening and speaking skills.

Step 2: Watching the Mute Video

The learners were allowed to watch the video closely. The teacher instructed the learners to guess and speak as they were watching the video. A hand mike was passed on to the students. If silence prevailed, the teacher prompted the learners to take roles.

Step 3: Delivering Ideas

Making a close observation of the background on the video, the learners commenced the speaking activity. The learners could be prompted to speak in accordance with the movement on the screen. If the learners elaborated their talk, the teacher would channelize them for prompt delivery of the matter.

Step 4: Input for Right Delivery of Ideas, if necessary

The learners were allowed to speak fixing an eye on the mute video show. The teacher needed to maintain the coherence and continuity of the content chosen for delivery.

Whenever the idea was not delivered properly, the video was paused and additional input given for the right delivery of ideas.

Step 5: Integrating Listening and Speaking Skills

The learners were now familiar with the background of the video. Next, the video was played along with the audio at this stage. The learners were allowed to watch the video and to listen to the audio simultaneously. The listening was now focused as the learners wanted to know whether their guess and the delivery of ideas were in consonance with the video and the audio.

Conclusion

The teacher could repeat the experiment with different audio programmes at different sessions. It is expected that learners are able to listen to the audio in a focused manner. The experiments throw a challenge for the learners to improve their guess work and to come out with language production. The learners simultaneously view, speak and listen. This kind of integrated activity quickens delivery of ideas in speech and enhances focused listening. Learners who perform satisfactorily in such experiments

with different video and audio tracks are expected to make quick improvement in integrated listening and speaking skills. They could also prepare themselves for different competitive examinations which test speaking and listening skills in an integrated manner.

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