

# Developing Listening Strategies for Effective Communication

Juan Pablo Contreras

|                                                           |                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Type of productive skill:</b> Teaching Listening skill | <b>Topic:</b> Developing listening strategies through main idea, details, and metacognitive strategies. |
| <b>Curricular Thread:</b> Listening                       | <b>Sub Thread:</b> Listening understanding.                                                             |

## ***Strategy 1: Listening for main ideas and details.***

### **Description**

This strategy intends to develop the capacity to teach and direct students' attention to the main idea and details. The main idea can be identified in the introduction section of a story, text, song or any material, and can be found traditionally in the conclusion section too. On the other hand, details usually consist of key words or specific information asked by the teacher before listening; it is usually located at the body section.

Students always need to have a purpose for listening. Having a purpose helps students listen more efficiently. Students try to comprehend what is happening even if they are not able to understand every word, expression or sentence. All students need is to try to pick up key words, tone, or any clues which can help them to predict the meaning while listening

to the audio material. Here the role of the teacher is important because the students have to be motivated before developing the exercise.

The students have to envision the whole picture about what they are going to listen to. Students may be encouraged to imagine they are a superhero flying in the sky. From that height, it is possible to see what the entire area is like, how densely populated it is or the kind of houses in each area. When listening, it is also possible to get the ‘whole picture’ but with one crucial difference: information comes in a sequence. And in that sequence of information, there are content words (the nouns, adjectives and verbs) that can help you form that picture and this is a strategy that calls for active listening for details (Ahmed, 2015).

### **Implementation of the Teaching Strategy**

The following steps are necessary in order to develop listening comprehension in the EFL classroom. These steps can be adapted depending on the listening material that the teacher decides to use. This is a sample activity for Pre Basic Users. The topic is the animals in the zoo and the audio material is a song. The song is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwRmivbNgQk>. Any topic and any level can be adapted to this process.

First of all, the English teacher has to introduce some new vocabulary about animals. It is important to get students thinking about the topic. Then it is a good idea to review the title of the listening activity, in this case, “The Zoo”, in order to make sure learners identify the place and what they can see in this place; also, other places can be taught, like a farm so students can contrast the places. Later, the language teacher brainstorms with students about animals they know. Here students can use their first language in order to identify and contrast domestic to zoo animals.

Next, it is time to watch the video and listen to the song about the zoo. There are plenty of videos about animals on YouTube; however, there is a link of a video available above. After that, the language teacher asks

the following question: what kind of place is described? This question is oriented to practice listening for the main idea, because students just identify the place in general. They will notice the difference between farm and zoo animals. Then the students watch the video again and need to answer the following questions: what was the name of the animal that you first heard or saw? What was the name of the last animal that you heard? What was the second animal that showed up in the song? And the teacher keeps asking questions like these. From now on, students are practicing listening for details. They will need to identify just the details asked by the teacher. Besides, the language teacher can keep playing the song and asking more detailed questions like “What is your favorite animal in the song?” “What color is the elephant?” “What color is the kangaroo?” etc. Here learners keep practicing listening for details and reinforcing vocabulary about colors. Finally, it is time to sing the song aloud. As everyone has heard the song many times, it is easier to sing the song as everybody watches the video. There are some extra activities in order to reinforce vocabulary. For example, based on the song, teachers can ask students to draw, color, and say aloud the animals

## **Differentiation**

This activity can use Internet and videos accessible on YouTube or on the web, but if none are available and there is no video or audio, the teacher can bring some flashcards and sing the song as well. As this is an individual activity, the space needed is not a problem; however, this activity can be done in groups depending on the available space and the topic. The directions are the same. The teacher is the facilitator of the listening strategy. The role of the teacher is to give appropriate materials specific to students’ interests and needs, provide materials that would assist students in completing the task, and help develop learning in groups or individually. The class size is not a problem either; the activity can be developed in small classes or large ones. On the other hand, depending on the available material, some extra activities can be done such as coloring, painting and cutting. These extra activities can be also sent as homework.

## **Strategy 2: Metacognitive sequence listening**

### **Description**

This strategy intends to develop the capacity to teach, plan, monitor, and evaluate with a metacognitive sequence. The metacognitive sequence helps students to predict, talk, discuss, and work in pairs or groups on ideas about the listening activity as the teacher leads the discussion and sees if students have understood. While carrying out these pedagogical sequences, it is important to create an environment where students do not feel tested. Since students do this activity to learn how to listen, it is very important to encourage students to discuss.

### **Implementation of the Teaching Strategy**

The following steps constitute a sample activity for basic users of the language. It is necessary to develop listening comprehension in the EFL classroom. These steps can be adapted depending on the listening material the teacher decides to use. They were taken from the pedagogical sequence that promotes this kind of activity (Isaacs, 2012).

First, the teacher informs the topic and text type that the students are about to listen. Then, s/he asks the students to predict words and phrases that they might hear. For example, if the listening activity is about shopping, the learners have to predict words, verbs, adjectives, etc. referring to shopping. They are allowed to write some words in their first language too. Then the teacher plays the track (first verification stage) and asks students to verify their initial guesses including first-language equivalents.

After that, the students are divided into different groups (4 or 5) and asked to discuss and compare their initial guesses; here the teacher can help translating some words. Next, the language teacher plays the track again (second verification stage) and asks the groups to verify points of disagreement and write down new information; the class is set in a discussion where all members contribute to the reconstruction of the

text. For instance, if they hear words like “wear”, “put on”, or articles of clothing; the students will write a new list of words and delete the ones that are not in the track. The track is played one more time (final verification stage) and the students are asked to listen specifically for information they have not heard yet. Commonly these are new words. For example, the track can include words like “take off”, or “high heels”. Then, the teacher has to write the words on the board and ask his/her students to listen again and check if they can hear this new vocabulary; If possible, the listening may be accompanied by a transcript in this stage. The teacher leads the discussion to confirm comprehension before discussing the strategies that they reported using with students.

Finally, students have to write goals for the next listening activity based on earlier discussions. With this, they will try to identify places, prices, people, ages, colors, etc. according to the listening material.

## **Differentiation**

This activity can be done in groups depending on the available space and groups of four or five students can be form. The directions are the same. The teacher is the facilitator of the listening strategy. The role of the teacher is to give appropriate materials specific to students’ interests and needs, give materials that would assist students in completing the task, and aid in developing learning in groups or individually according to the level. If the students are using a book, any listening exercise from the book can follow the instructions.

### ***Strategy 3: Listening strategy with kinesthetic activities.***

#### **Description**

Flashcards and posters are very effective tools for listening skills. Young children find flashcards and posters interesting and they pay special attention to what they see and hear. Also, flashcards and posters can be

useful at every stage of the class; they can help children at reading age because word cards can be introduced after pictorial cards. Also, children always find kinesthetic activities fun. They love going around the classroom, pointing, saying words, etc. while learning.

Teachers must encourage students to be interested in listening by using flashcards and posters and they must reinforce vocabulary by having students look at pictures. Also, teachers help students to improve their listening comprehension through visual objects.

### **Implementation of the Teaching Strategy**

This is a sample activity for the pre-basic user. These steps are necessary to develop listening comprehension in the EFL classroom. These steps can be adapted depending on the listening material the teacher decides to use.

If there are some posters or flashcards available, the language teacher has to put up a poster of the topic around the class as s/he pronounces the new vocabulary. The teacher asks the students to repeat the new words as s/he points at the pictures. The teacher asks for volunteers and explains that they will hear a word and will have to run and point at the word that they hear. The winner will take the place of the teacher. Therefore, the student now asks for more volunteers and says a word while his classmates run and point to the picture that they heard, and the winner will take the leader's place and so on. Some students will not point to the correct picture, so the teacher will help to reinforce the vocabulary asking them to repeat the vocabulary again.

Depending on the topic, the teacher may stick posters on the wall of everything from numbers to phrasal verbs. Below, one can see an example dealing with animal names. The teacher must be sure that all students participate in the activity by taking turns. Also, the students can form groups of four or five and have a competition following the same steps. All the members of the group have to participate. After this activity, the teacher can add another similar activity. Working in the same groups,

students will have a competition called “Simon says”, which is very popular. For example, Simon says to touch the tiger. If they hear the word “Simon says”, they have to race but if the teacher says only “touch the tiger”, they cannot move because the teacher did not say “Simon says”. In this situation, the one that runs loses. The teacher gives points every time a group reaches the correct flashcard.

A final kinesthetic activity can be done with the students. In this activity, the teacher places new flashcards of extra vocabulary on the floor in a circle and pronounces the words at least three times or as needed. The students are asked to repeat the animals in order to memorize the cards. Then, when the students hear a word, they must stand in a line behind the correct flashcard. Finally, the flashcards are collected and covered with a piece of another card and the teacher slowly reveals it. The students have to guess which animal it is as fast as possible. Once the animal is shown, chorally, the teacher drills the word with the students varying the volume, whispering, or shouting the name of the animals. Students will copy the teacher’s voice and have fun. The teacher can flip the card over very quickly, so the students just get a quick glimpse of the picture.

## **Differentiation**

The role of the teacher is to give appropriate materials specific to students’ interests and needs, provide materials that would assist students in completing the task, and help develop learning in groups or individually. The class size is not a problem; the activity can be developed in small classes or large ones and the students can take turns when participating. The different activities can be done in any order. For instance, the teacher can start by putting the flashcards on the floor or on the wall, but the teacher has to be sure students practice the vocabulary first before playing “Simon says” or doing the competitions.

## References

- Ahmed, R. (18 de 06 de 2015). *British Council*. Retrieved from <https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/five-essential-listening-skills-english-learners>
- Isaacs, T. (2012). Teaching and Learning Second Language Listening: Metacognition in Action (review). *Canadian Modern Language Review-revue Canadienne Des Langues Vivantes*, 1-10.