

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in Listening Instruction

FERIT KILIÇKAYA

Framing the Issue

Listening to a foreign or second language has been regarded as a widely used language skill in both academic and daily life contexts. Moreover, in many learning contexts, listening is of the utmost importance, as it enables people to access information and carry out daily activities, business work, or academic duties. Therefore, contrary to the traditional view, according to which listening is a passive ability or activity, listening is a complex and active process during which listeners are engaged in a variety of tasks such as discriminating sounds, recognizing lexical items, and understanding the meanings of grammatical structures (Vandergrift, 1999). Listening has been handled differently in different foreign and second language teaching and learning approaches. Krashen's (1982) natural approach stressed the importance of "comprehensible input" and proposed that, in class, learners should be presented with plenty of listening opportunities, because listening provides them with input and without sufficient comprehensible input learning cannot occur. In a natural-approach classroom learners are not forced to speak, because it is believed that they will do so when they are ready. Extending Krashen's input hypothesis, Long (1980) proposed the interaction hypothesis, which stressed the pivotal role of negotiation of meaning and the use of strategies such as clarification requests in the language acquisition process. Also in reaction to Krashen's input hypothesis, Swain (1985) argued, through her output hypothesis, that learners should speak and write too; and she suggested that both input and output play a crucial role in second language learning and teaching. In addition to these hypotheses, Schmidt (1990) argued that noticing is another required condition for language acquisition since, when attention is focused on relevant features of the input, these features can be processed by the learner and integrated into his or her own language system.

The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching, First Edition.

Edited by John I. Liantas (Project Editor: Margo DelliCarpini).

© 2018 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Published 2018 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

DOI: 10.1002/9781118784235.eelt0601

Empirical research inspired by the aforementioned hypotheses indicates that learners need extensive input, output, and opportunities to interact in the target language in order to acquire it. Thus, as an important channel for providing input, listening has gained much importance in English as foreign language (EFL) classrooms. In English as second language (ESL) contexts learners have ample opportunity to practice listening outside the classroom, as English is spoken in their environment. However, in EFL contexts, English is not normally used outside the classroom. As teachers know well, the amount of exposure to English is very limited in the classroom. In Turkey, for instance, second graders have just four hours of English instruction per week in their primary school curriculum. In these contexts of limited exposure to English, it is crucial that opportunities are created for learners to listen to the language as much as possible; and this is where technology will play a pivotal role.

Making the Case

Several studies have examined the use of technology and of information and communications technology (ICT)-based resources in listening instruction. Brett (1997), for instance, found that, when listeners were provided with multimedia listening activities, their comprehension and recall were more effective than in the listening tasks completed through other formats such as audio materials. In another study, conducted by Wagner (2007), the participants found video materials more useful than materials based only on audio recordings, as video materials included nonverbal information, which helped them understand the material. This finding indicates that nonverbal components of communication (i.e., paralinguistic information) in video-based listening activities can facilitate learners' processing of spoken input. In a more recent study, Sun, Chang, and Yang (2011) investigated the effects of extended online thematic listening tasks on learners' listening comprehension. The participants completed several extended listening tasks that were based on materials offered by several websites, such as ELLLO and ESL-Lab. The findings revealed that the supplementary online listening tasks led to significant gains in the participants' listening comprehension and test performance, together with positive attitudes toward online resources. Several other studies also investigated the use of electronic and online dictionaries (e.g., Dashtestani, 2013; Nesi, 2014), finding that the teachers and students involved benefited more from these dictionaries than from printed ones, as the former provided not only definitions but also pronunciations of words and examples of how particular words are used. Due to space constraints, it is not possible to review all the related studies; however, it can be stated that the general consensus that emerges from these studies is that ICT can be used in listening instruction to enhance learners' performance, comprehension, and recall in listening activities, especially when the activities conducted in the classroom are supplemented by online resources.

Pedagogical Implications

Since providing students with input is vital, teachers need to be aware of and able to use various software and online resources that can give students additional input and help improve their listening skills. The Internet offers rich resources for practicing and improving listening skills, and most of these resources are free of charge. The following section will briefly introduce several of these online resources and touch upon how they can be used effectively.

Online and Electronic Dictionaries

Online and electronic dictionaries, compared to thick dictionaries in print, are no doubt of great help to language teachers and learners. The introduction of electronic pocket dictionaries, followed by dictionaries on CD/DVD and now on smart phones, has changed the way we use this instrument. The Collins Dictionaries (www.collinsdictionary.com), the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (www.ldoceonline.com), and the Cambridge Dictionaries (dictionary.cambridge.org) are just a few examples of dictionaries available on the Internet. Teachers can introduce them to their students, so that the latter may listen to the pronunciation of words and study the accompanying examples in sentences. More importantly, teachers can create worksheets on previously learned or new words that lead students to dictionary websites where they learn the pronunciation of these words, compare examples from different dictionaries or historical periods, identify synonyms and antonyms, learn collocations, and so on.

Audio and Video Files

The Internet and video repositories such as YouTube archive a huge variety of video and audio resources, putting an end to the shortage of such resources for language teaching and learning in EFL contexts. YouTube (www.youtube.com) is the most popular repository where teachers and learners can access (a) authentic audio and video resources in order to experience how the target language is put to real use, as well as (b) the ones created for language learning purposes. Therefore it will not be an exaggeration to state that YouTube leads the world in providing authentic materials particularly useful for improving listening skills. Duffy (2008) draws a very comprehensive list of suggestions on how to use YouTube in educational contexts. Other websites are English Language Listening Lab Online (www.elllo.org), ESL-Lab (www.esl-lab.com), ESL-bits (www.esl-bits.net), Teacher Tube (www.teachertube.com), Breaking News English (www.breakingnewsenglish.com), and Real English (www.real-english.com). These websites offer excellent materials for practicing intensive and, especially, extensive listening. The video and audio resources can be used outside the classroom, virtually at any time and in any place, whenever learners have Internet access through a variety of

technological devices such as tablets and smart phones. The video materials are especially helpful, as the information provided in them is presented in both aural and visual channels, creating rich opportunities for learners to improve their listening and other communication skills on the basis of different contexts and speakers.

The websites listed above give teachers authentic multimodal materials such as interviews, newscast, and dialogues. The visual information offered by these materials helps learners benefit from paralinguistic information such as body language and facial expressions. Therefore teachers can choose any suitable video or audio material from these websites and integrate it into other classes, where the focus may be on the reading, writing, or even grammar skill.

Voscreen (www.voscreen.com) is another website worth mentioning. It is a free website where learners can practice listening skills in English by listening to video clips taken from a variety of sources, for example movies and speeches. Since this website provides short clips with dialogues or speech used in real-life contexts, teachers can encourage students to do listening practice outside the classroom using this website in order to ensure constant exposure to input in the target language. Students can listen to the short sentences and dialogues and then select the ones that have the same meaning but are paraphrased in their mother tongue or in the target language; alternatively, they may get exposed to sentence-repetition activities for achieving fluency.

Apart from these websites, there are others that give learners the opportunity to listen to native speakers and to accents of English as spoken around the world. Audio-lingua (www.accent.gmu.edu), for instance, has audio resources recorded collaboratively by native speakers of French, English, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Portuguese, Occitan, and Arabic. The speech accent archive (www.audio-lingua.eu), on the other hand, hosts audio files recorded by native and non-native speakers of English. It is important to expose L2 listeners to different accents and varieties of English, as non-native speakers (NNS) outnumber native speakers (NS) and NNS will, in many situations, communicate with other NNS.

Audio Recording

There are several audio-recording platforms where learners can record their voices and listen to messages given by their teachers and classmates. Audioboo (<http://audioboo.fm>), Vocaroo (www.vocaroo.com), and Voxopop (<http://www.voxopop.com>) are just a few examples of such platforms. Teachers can assign weekly topics on which students are asked to express their own opinions in a five-minute talk posted to one of these platforms. Then they may also be asked to respond to at least one message left by other students. In this way listening and speaking can be linked to each other in a meaningful way, especially outside the classroom. Shy students in particular may prefer this or similar activities, since they will have time to prepare their talk in advance and they will

not have to talk in front of the class, thus avoiding the feeling of being put on the spot.

Text-to-Speech Technology

Text-to-speech technology is the use of computers to produce human-like voices. With this technology, any text (be it a word or a very long text) can be converted into digital audio material featuring several voices and can be used for practicing both pronunciation and listening comprehension. Here are some suggestions on the use of text-to-speech technology (González, 2007; Kılıçkaya, 2011):

- Language learners can practice the pronunciation of vocabulary, especially frequently mispronounced items. They can also create their own list of words, which they would use in parallel with the one supplied by the teacher.
- Language learners can produce short sentences for pronunciation and repetition practice.
- The audio files previously created by different voices can be turned into mini dialogues. Using Audacity (<http://sourceforge.net/projects/audacity>), different audio files created in this way can be combined into one audio file, which would lead to new dialogues.

The software and the voices used are commercial and are not free of charge. However, AT&T Natural Voices (<http://www.wizzardsoftware.com/text-to-voice.php>) and Acapela (<http://www.acapela-group.com/voices/demo>) provide demo Web pages where this technology can be used to create audio materials with voices in languages such as English, Spanish, and French. However, there are some restrictions to the use of this technology, such as limited characters and voices.

Creating Video Quizzes

Teachers can create quizzes based on a video. One way of doing it is to select a video from YouTube or any other website that posts videos and then create a worksheet that contains comprehension questions based on the video, make enough copies for the students, and have the students watch the video in the classroom; this is followed by worksheet activity. However, there is an easy way of creating video quizzes at ESLvideo.com (www.eslvideo.com). This website allows language teachers to create educational quizzes that are based on videos available on YouTube and many other websites. Creating a quiz is completed in three steps. After registering for the website for free, teachers can give a title to their quiz and then copy and paste the video embed code from a short video on YouTube or on any other video-hosting website. The second step will be to add questions for the video and then save the questions. The last step is to share the link with the learners. An example of a quiz created through ESLvideo can be found at http://www.eslvideo.com/eslvideo_quiz_highint.php?id=23438.

This video quiz is based on a job interview and includes six multiple-choice questions.

Practicing Listening While Getting Feedback

Language teachers can utilize Jing, a tool developed by TechSmith (www.techsmith.com/jing.html), in order to make their students practice listening even when the focus is on writing. Using this screencasting and video editing tool, teachers can give individualized audio comments and suggestions on students' work through images and videos in any electronic format. In this way the recorded audio can also help students practice their listening skills.

Listening is a complex and active process. Therefore, like other language skills, listening needs to be incorporated into class activities on a regular basis. The use of English as medium of communication in the classroom and the incorporation of various listening-practice activities in the classroom may increase the amount of input provided to learners; however, it may not be possible to secure enough input in each and every classroom. Moreover, time limitations and the pressure to teach to the test may diminish the amount of time allocated to listening practice. One solution, then, is to encourage learners to listen to English outside the classroom, in self-access centers or other places, through websites that offer a variety of video and audio materials. In this way learners can engage in extensive listening. Teachers can help learners who do not know what to listen to by making suggestions or by collaboratively deciding on what they should listen to on a regular basis. In this way more classroom hours will be allocated to interactive and intensive listening activities.

SEE ALSO: Extensive Listening; Listening Activities; Video in Listening

References

- Brett, P. (1997). A comparative study of the effects of the use of multimedia on listening comprehension. *System*, 25, 39–53. doi:10.1016/S0346–251X(96)00059–0
- Dashtestani, R. (2013). EFL teachers' and students' perspectives on the use of electronic dictionaries for learning English. *CALL-EJ*, 14(2), 51–65. Retrieved from http://calleg.org/journal/14-2/Dashtestani_2013.pdf
- Duffy, P. (2008). Engaging the YouTube Google-eyed generation: Strategies for using Web 2.0 in teaching and learning. *Electronic Journal of eLearning*, 6(2), 119–31. Retrieved from <http://www.ejel.org/issue/download.html?idArticle=64>
- González, D. (2007). On the Internet: Text-to-speech applications used in EFL contexts to enhance pronunciation. *TESL-EJ*, 11(2). Retrieved from <http://tesl-ej.org/ej42/int.pdf>

- Kılıçkaya, F. (2011). Improving pronunciation via accent reduction and text-to-speech software. In M. Levy, F. Blin, C. B. Siskin, & O. Takeuchi (Eds.), *WorldCALL: International perspectives on computer-assisted language learning* (pp. 85–96). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford, England: Pergamon.
- Long, M. H. (1980). *Input, interaction and second language acquisition* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of California, Los Angeles.
- Nesi, H. (2014). Dictionary use by English language learners. *Language Teaching*, 47, 38–55. doi:10.1017/S0261444813000402
- Schmidt, R. W. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning. *Applied linguistics*, 11, 129–58. doi:10.1093/applin/11.2.129
- Sun, Y. C., Chang, W. L., & Yang, F. Y. (2011). An exploratory study of the effects of extended online thematic listening tasks on the development of listening comprehension. *International Journal of Computer-Assisted Language Learning and Teaching*, 1(3), 37–53.
- Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 235–53). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Vandergrift, L. (1999). Facilitating second language listening comprehension: Acquiring successful strategies. *ELT Journal*, 53, 168–76. doi:10.1093/elt/53.3.168
- Wagner, E. (2007). Are they watching? Test-taker viewing behavior during an L2 video listening test. *Language Learning & Technology*, 11(1), 67–86. Retrieved from <http://llt.msu.edu/vol11num1/pdf/wagner.pdf>

Suggested Readings

- Chapelle, C. A., & Jamieson, J. (2008). *Tips for teaching with CALL: Practical approaches to computer-assisted language learning*. New York, NY: Pearson Education.
- Dudeny, G., & Hockly, N. (2007). *How to teach English with technology*. Harlow, England: Pearson Education.
- Stanley, G. (2013). *Language learning with technology: Ideas for integrating technology in the classroom*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Walker, G., & White, G. (2013). *Technology enhanced language learning: Connecting theory and practice*. Oxford, England: Cambridge University Press.