

المحاضرة الثالثة

المادة: مقدمة في اللغويات التطبيقية

الفرقة الثالثة – لغة انجليزية

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Listening

What is listening?

- **Listening involves making sense of spoken language with the help of our relevant prior knowledge and the context in which we are listening.**
- **It is more accurate to think of it as the recognition of sounds uttered by the speaker, perception of intonation patterns showing information focus, interpretation of what is being said to the current topic and so on.**

- Usually we are unaware of these processes; achieving comprehension seems relatively effortless unless we encounter unhelpful conditions such as poor acoustics or an unfamiliar accent.

- **Traditionally listening was viewed as a passive process, in which our ears were receivers into which information was poured, and all the listener had to do is to register the message passively.**
- **Today, we recognize that listening is an active process, and good listeners are as active when listening as speakers are when speaking.**

Listening has some unique features such as:

- Its ephemeral nature
- The presence of rich prosody (stress, intonation, rhythm, loudness, and more).
- The presence of characteristics of natural fast speech, such as assimilation, making it markedly different from written language.
- The frequent need to process and respond almost immediately.

What are the main types of listening?

- One-way listening
- Two-way (interactional) listening

One-way listening

- This type of listening is related to the transactional function of language; the main function of language is to transfer information.
- This perspective influenced the teaching of language; monologue was used for listening practice.

- This type of listening could be found in pedagogic discourse such as lectures and school lessons. It is called listening in order to learn. Listening in such situations is characterized by: density of cognitive content, often decontextualized, depend on formal language, requires note-taking strategies.
- Other situations in which one-way listening takes place are watching films, or listening to radio. But here, the language being listened to is likely to be of spoken variety, and the purpose of listening is different.

Two-way listening

- This type depends on the interactional function of language; language interactional function is to maintain social relations.
- It could be termed “listening and speaking”, because it involves dialogue or discussion.
- The factors that make two-way communication easier involve: lower density of cognitive content and the opportunity to request clarification or repetition.

Factors that make two-way listening harder involve:

- ❑ The intensity of time processing of what is being heard, and
- ❑ the risk of misinterpreting the listener's intent

Resources for listening

- The main resources available to the listener can be grouped under bottom-up and top-down processes. A competent listener uses both of these kinds of processes in order to fully comprehend spoken language.

Bottom-up processing

- It involves piecing together the parts of what is being heard in a linear fashion, one by one, in sequence.
- This was described as listener as a tape recorder.
- This resource is of significance hence listeners have to some bottom-up processing of what they hear at the acoustic level, e.g. discriminating similar sounds.

Top-down processing

- It is the converse of bottom-up; it is holistic, going from whole to part, and focused on the interpretation of meaning rather than recognition of sounds, words and sentences.
- Listeners actively formulate hypotheses to speaker's meaning, and confirm or modify when necessary.
- It is called “listener as active model-builder”

What are listening sub-skills?

There are different classifications of these sub-skills. One of the famous classifications makes clear distinction between

➔ **Enabling skills**: those employed in order to perceive what the speaker is saying and to interpret what they intend to mean.

➔ **Enacting skills**: those employed to respond appropriately to the message.

Enabling skills

1. Perception

Recognizing prominence within utterances, including:

- Discriminating sounds in words
- Discriminating strong and weak forms, phonetic change of word boundaries
- Identifying use of stress and pitch (information units, emphasis, etc).

2. Interpretation

Formulating content sense of an utterance, including:

- Deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words
- Inferring implicit information
- Inferring links between propositions

3. Formulating a conceptual framework linking utterances, including:

- Recognizing discourse markers (clarifying, contrasting)
- Constructing a theme over a stretch of discourse
- Predicting content
- Maintaining and updating the context

4. Interpreting speaker's intentions, including:

- Identifying an 'interpersonal frame' speaker-to-hearer
- Monitoring changes in prosody and establishing (in)consistencies
- Noting contradictions, inadequate information, ambiguities
- Differentiating between fact and opinion

Enacting skills

Making an appropriate response (based on the above sub-skills), including:

- Selecting key points for the current task
- Transcoding information into written form (e.g. notes)
- Identifying which points need clarification
- Integrating information with that from other resources
- Providing an appropriate feedback.