Listening comprehension activities in a business context

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Abstract

The article describes that listening comprehension in a business context is particularly suited to individualized arrangements, with students working at their own level and their own pace and teachers should assemble all the materials they can find in developmental listening tasks, each containing micro-training exercises for particular purposes, but culminating in a macro-activity.

Key words: Business English, active listening, micro, macro, teaching content, an activity

Introduction

Business English means different things to different people. For some, it focuses on vocabulary and topics used in the worlds of business, trade, finance, and international relations. For others it refers to the communication skills used in the workplace, and focuses on the language and skills needed for typical business communication such as presentations, negotiations, meetings, small talk, socializing, correspondence, report writing, and a systematic approach. [1] Of course, teaching listening in a business context is a lot more complex, and a lot more challenging, than teaching other language skills. Firstly, spoken language is different from written language, and we know listening is very different from reading. One specific approach to improve listening is called active listening. Active listening involves asking and answering questions, using nonverbal cues, giving feedback, and using reflective listening to more successfully understand the speaker. A speaker may not give full information or speak in a way that the listener cannot understand. To find out what the speaker tells about, the listener may need to ask questions to elicit the information that has not been received. This can involve the use of closed questions, which require only a yes or no answer, and open questions, which require the speaker to detail. There are different times in which each is appropriate. For instance, assume an employee comes to a manager's office to discuss a project and says, "There are some problems at work "This would best be followed by an open question, such as, "What are some of the things that have been going on that are leading to these issues?" A closed question, such as, "Is your team leader causing problems?" is unlikely to detail the necessary information. Listening is a critical business skill, and it can be improved by avoiding distractions, recognizing the speaker's emotions, understanding gender differences in communication style, and using active listening. By improving listening, problems associated with miscommunication in the workplace may be minimized.

According to the research on 2012 teachers have made a survey on analysis people spend time on communicating. Luckily there are 70% people out of 100% who communicate with the society but only 30% out of 100% are not communicating. It has also spread in to the small section of listening has 45%, writing has 9%, reading has 16% and speaking has 30%. Figure 1. Speaking , of course , is important. The listening process involves five stages: receiving, understanding, evaluating, remembering, and responding. Active listening is a particular communication technique that requires the listener to provide feedback on what he or she hears to the speaker. Three main degrees of active listening are repeating, paraphrasing, and reflecting. [2] There are a lot of ways to improve listening in a business context. These ways include avoiding distractions, listening for the speaker's conversations and controlling one's own emotions, recognizing differences connected to
gender in communication style, and engaging in active listening. By using techniques for improved listening, our students can learn to better communicate with others in business environment. With listening, as with all other aspects of language learning, we, English teachers must keep in view the final goal of language use (the ability to use language holistically for normal business purposes). Micro-language learning (the learning of elements of language and their potential combinations) is only a means leading to this end. In the macro context, listening can be evaluated only by response:

How do listeners react? How do they respond? Verbally or by action? Do they do what they have been asked or told? Do they use the information offered in a business context? Do they fill the supportive role of the listener? Are they absorbed by what they are hearing? Because micro-language learning is more easily assessed than macro-language use, there is a tendency to think of the evaluation of listening comprehension in terms of multiple-choice and true-false items. Certainly these can play a useful part in directing the students’ efforts in listening and helping them assess the accuracy of their comprehension. The importance of the understanding of fine detail at crucial points in some aural tasks cannot be ignored, since puzzlement can cause an emotional or cognitive block, which overloads channel capacity so that the student loses the thread. On the other hand, there are students who tackle aural comprehension almost heuristically with considerable success. Students who can cope with macro-language use practically from the start may be wasting their time on micro-tests of detail. Other students need the developmental, step-by-step approach and their needs should not be neglected. Even for the latter, however, functional comprehension in real situations must be the ultimate criterion.

For these reasons, listening comprehension in a business context is particularly suited to individualized arrangements, with students working at their own level and their own pace. Teachers should assemble all the materials they can find in developmental listening tasks, each containing micro-training exercises for particular purposes, but culminating in a macro-activity. Students should be encouraged to work their way through a series of these kits in their own manner and at their own pace. Taking one’s own time is important in listening, where individuals require differing lengths of time jump from students who are capable of doing so should be encouraged to jump from macro activity to macro activity, until listening to the new language becomes for them nature and effortless. Eventually most students will reach the stage where their listening is completely integrated with communication activities.

Assessment of macro-language use

We must place students in situations where listening comprehension in a business context plays an essential role, and then see how they cope. Macro-language evaluation should be related to the normal uses of listening in life-situations:

1. As part of a purposeful communicative interchange in a business context;
2. For receiving direction or instructions;
3. For obtaining information in a business context;
4. For the pleasure of an activity
5. For participating in social gatherings (listening to small talk, listening to others conversing, and so on).

Assessment of micro-language use

Many aspects of micro-language learning have already been discussed (discrimination of sounds and stress which change meaning; recognition of intonation patterns, syntactic segments, and word groups with high frequency of occurrence; aural vocabulary recognition). One of the commonest forms of assessment of this developmental phase of listening comprehension is the use of multiple-choice questions, yet the preparation of this type of test holds many pitfalls for the inexperienced.

The test items often consist of short questions or comments in isolation for which students choose appropriate rejoinders (sometimes completions) from multiple-choice options.
Designing multiple-choice items for listening comprehension in a business context

There must be no ambiguity in the choices. The correct choice should not repeat word for word some sentence in the listening text. The correct choice should not depend on comprehension or non-comprehension of one unusual vocabulary item. Where there is a series of questions on one passage, the correct choices should not form an obvious sequence which students can detect without understanding the passage. Care must be taken to see that the items do not test powers of logical deduction, or ability to recognize exact paraphrases, rather than actual comprehension of the passage. Apart from the general problems of preparing multiple-choice questions, items for listening comprehension present problems peculiar to this modality. The items have to be prepared in such a way that they give a clear indication of what the student "heard" that is, constructed personally from the sound signal. Item-writers must be able to imagine themselves in the place of the neophyte and reconstruct what the latter may be "hearing." It is useful to analyze what types of confusions one is anticipating on the part of the listeners by the choices one proposes.

Chart of listening comprehension activities in a business context

Organizing teaching content

A. Identification

Macro-activities

1. Listening to tapes to detect the language one is learning.
2. Listening to the business text for the pleasure of the sounds (in classroom, listening room, or listening corner).
3. Dialogues played over loudspeakers in the language laboratory for business atmosphere.
4. Hearing original sound tracks of documentary films connected to a business context before being able to understand them.

Micro-activities

5. Aural discrimination exercises in a business context.

Here the listening comprehension activities that we, teachers can use at lessons are divided into four learning stages:

A. Identification: perception of sounds and phrases; identifying these directly and holistically with their meaning.
B. Identification and selection without retention: listening for the pleasure of comprehension extracting sequential meanings, without being expected to demonstrate comprehension through active use of language.
C. Identification and guided selection with short-term retention: students are given some prior indication of what they are to listen for; they demonstrate their comprehension immediately in some active action.
D. Identification and selection with long-term retention: students demonstrate their comprehension, or use the material they comprehended, after the listening experience has been completed; or they engage in an activity which requires recall of material learned some time previously.

For elementary level we can organize following activities.

6. Short-phrase discrimination with pictures.
7. Listening to segments of dialogue to be learned.
8. Responding with miming actions to segments from dialogue learned or from classroom conversation.
9. Responding with flashcards to names of letters of the alphabet.
10. Backward buildup in imitation of a model
B. Identification and selection without retention
11. Games involving words and phrases learned.
12. Listening to conversation-facilitation dialogues already learned.
13. Listening to retelling of texts already read, reacting in some way to variations from the original.
14. Listening to conversation which a variant of a dialogue studied.
15. Listening to an dialogue based on reading material studied.
16. Teacher gives some background information on a topic, and then describes an experience.

With visual activities

17. Listening to a description of pictures
18. Listening to a text or a dialogue illustrated
19. Listening to a Show and Tell oral report.

With action activities

20. Total physical response activity or Simon Says

22. Listening to simple narration, raising hands whenever a word is mentioned.

23. Letter Bingo: Letters of the alphabet are called randomly; each student checks these to see if they are in the word he has in front of him; the first student who has checked all the letters of his word wins.

24. Number Bingo: Numbers are called randomly; students check these numbers against numbers on cards they have been given; the first student with all of his numbers correctly checked wins.

25. Discrimination of numbers, dates, and times of day by pairing ones they hear with multiple-choice items, clock faces, lists of famous events, or flight schedules.

26. With speaking

27. Answering questions orally on a passage just heard.

28. Responding to others in spontaneous role-playing.

29. Listening to and discussing oral reports of other students.

30. Chain dialogue

31. Rubbishing the dialogue

32. Acting out learned dialogue with others (paraphrasing the sense rather than repeating by rote).

33. Learning and acting a part with others in a skit or original dialogue.

34. Students answer questions in writing after they have listened to a text or a conversation.

35. Students write down what they have learned from another student’s report.

36. Cloze tests on content of what has been heard

Conclusion

Teaching listening, especially in business context, is exciting. We, teachers always try to find ways of excellent teaching that can innovate. Listening comprehension in business context is particularly suited to individualized arrangements, with students working at their own level and their own pace. Teachers should assemble all the materials they can find in developmental listening tasks, each containing micro-training exercises for particular purposes, but culminating in a macro-activity. Students should be encouraged to work their way through a series of these tasks in their own manner and at their own pace. Taking one’s own time is important in listening, where individuals require differing lengths of time jump from students who are capable of doing so should be encouraged to jump from macro activity to macro activity, until listening to the
new language becomes for them nature and effortless.

Appendix1
Figure 1.

References

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ДЭЭД БОЛОВСРОЛЫН УДИРДЛАГА,
САНХУУЖИЛТ, МАГАДЛАН ИТГЭМЖЛЭЛИЙН
АСУУДАЛД САЛБАР ХУРАЛДААН