

# The Role of Technology in Teaching Listening

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## Abstract

It cannot be denied that the development of technology has made the great impact to teaching listening. Every language teacher has realized that teaching listening needs materials and media that cannot be separated from technology. Teaching listening needs audio materials of native speakers for learning activities inside the classroom or for students' practices outside the classroom. Over the years English teachers have used tape recorder and cassettes in teaching listening, even though these media can be categorized as the simple media and technology. Later as technology developed, language laboratories are widely used for teaching listening. The audio materials are also improved into audio visual materials which are interesting. This technology is followed by the widely used of computers. It causes language laboratory completed with computer assisted language learning (CALL) which is more interesting that makes students not only listen to the audio but also watch and interact with materials. Nowadays it is believed that with personal computer where both teachers and students can access internet, listening materials and activities will be various and more interesting, because they can download video and other listening materials from you tube in addition they can also watch and listen to English news from International TV channels. Those are the reason why technology has the important role in teaching listening. It can ease and facilitate teachers and students in listening. Listening activities are not only done in the classroom but also at home where students can practice many kinds of listening activities in order to develop their experience and skills in listening.

Key words: teaching listening, technology, audio, video, listening activities.

## Introduction

Technology is needed as the media and sources to teach listening skill. The aim of teaching listening is to provide students with listening skill in order to enable them to understand what the people are saying, (Yagang, in Adnan 2013). Underwood (1989) states the listening situation for which the teachers should prepare their students: (a) Listening to live conversation in which one takes no part, (b) Listening to announcements (at airports, railway stations, etc), (c) Listening to the news, the weather forecast, etc on the radio, (d) Watching the news, the weather forecast, etc on television, (e) Listening to the radio for entertainment, (f) Watching television for entertainment, (g) Watching a live performance or play, (h) Watching a film in a cinema, (i) Listening to records, (j) Following a lesson, (k) Attending a lecture, (l) Listening on the telephone, (m) Following instructions, (n) Listening to someone giving a public address.

In this digital era the tradition in teaching English has changed drastically to the remarkable use of technology since our life is affected by information and technology in which technology is no longer a novelty. Actually technology has occurred in the past times, but the development was not as fast as today. Although technology is not panacea that can replace language teachers and face-to face classroom, it is something that can be

used to enhance language learning, (Sharma and Barrett, 2007) in Peterson (2010). Nowadays technology provides many choices and eases in teaching that make teaching and learning process more interesting and easier in term of improving students' ability. Graddol (1997) in Shyamlee (2012) states that technology lye at the heart of the globalization process, affecting education work and culture. With the rapid development of science and technology, the emerging and developing of multimedia technology and its application to teaching, featuring audio, visual, animation effects comes into full play in English class teaching and sets a favorable platform for reform and exploration on English teaching model in the new era. So that technology plays an important role in supporting the materials, sources and media for teaching of English very much especially in teaching listening skill. Since listening is not a "Cinderella" any more in teaching English the English teachers have realized that teaching listening skill is a must, therefore technology is needed to support it. In the context of teaching listening as one of the language skills teaching listening without using technology is almost impossible.

## **Discussion**

### **Historical Background**

It cannot be denied that teaching listening needs technology and they are both related each other. In the earlier period listening was taught by using simple technology (if it can be said) tape recorder and cassette. Whenever teacher wanted to teach listening, s/he brought tape recorder and cassette into the classroom. The teacher played the cassette (listening material /audio) and the students listened to the cassette and then repeated or did exercises. The teachers played the audio as many as needed. When the students did not understand the listening texts, the teachers could play the cassette. Even though it looked simple many schools could not provide that technology to present listening activities in the classroom. Many reasons and arguments were stated for not teaching listening such as lack of media (tape recorder and electricity), listening materials (cassettes). What the teachers did was drilling by asking students to listen and repeat the dialogs and monolog texts.

According to Nomass (2013) during the sixties and seventies of the last century English language laboratory was being used in various educational institutions. It consisted of a number of small cabinets, provided with cassette deck, a microphone and a headphone for each one. Teacher used a central control panel to monitor their students' interaction (console desk). It was also completed with the room speakers, which can be used by teacher to communicate with all students when the students' headphone did not work. In the universities which have language departments, the language laboratories were completed with video players and TV sets and of course these media can be used when the teaching materials were available on video cassettes. The main advantage of that type of technology was that verbal behavior of students would help them to quickly learn the second language. The students' skill can be enhanced by encountering more practical drill problems. Although the language technology was a positive step in linking technology and language education, this technique was actually tedious and boring for learners (Singhal, 1997) in Nomass (2013). There were minimal interaction between teacher and his students. The teacher could interact with all students for example in giving instruction or explaining something related to the lesson in one way communication, or the teacher may set the students to work in pairs or groups by pressing pairs or conference in control panel

but there was only a pair or a group could be listened by teacher and other students. Therefore teachers should pay attention to give turns to all students.

The next generation of language laboratory was computer assisted language learning (CALL). It was first introduced by Levy (1997) in Motteram (2013). She says that CALL is the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning. Its software has provided another teaching tool for second language education. The use of computers in English classroom is useful for both teachers and students. Furthermore there is an interaction between teachers and students using this multi media. The listening materials used are also various which can be chosen by students. The most important thing of CALL is this media is more interesting because it has audio and visual as well. CALL provides each student with a set of computer where they can choose and practice listening in various activities such as listening to audio, video and language games.

In this digital era portable devices such as tablet computers, smart and feature phones and MP3 players have particular resonance for English teaching in situation where practitioners move between different locations where learning occurs in areas. These technologies have the potential to deliver high quality multimedia. This can be done because internet is widely used both by teachers and students. Internet is the largest sources of listening materials. Teachers can find various materials, media for teaching listening in internet. Meanwhile students can practice listening skill inside and outside the classroom through internet. They can listen to many kinds of dialog, monologs, music, news, watch movie even they can have a test through internet. Internet has provided the authentic listening materials for students.

### **The Role of Technology in Teaching Listening**

Listening is the language skill that is used most frequently. It has been estimated that adults spend almost half their communication time listening, and students may receive as much as 90 % of their in-school information through listening to teachers/lecturers, and to one another. However most of language learners do not recognize how to develop listening ability.

Listening is defined as the process of identifying and understanding the speech of the speakers. It involves understanding the speaker's accent or pronunciation, speaker's grammar and vocabulary and comprehension of meaning (Saricoban, 1999). That is the reason why many experts say that listening is not a passive activity in contrast it is an active one. In listening activity the listeners actively involve themselves in interpretation of what they hear, bringing their own background knowledge and linguistics knowledge to bear on the information contained in the aural text.

Listening involves a sender (a person, radio, television) a message and a receiver (the listener). Listener must process messages as they come, even if they are still processing what they have just heard, without backtracking or looking ahead. They also have incomplete control of the language used by the speaker (sender). In this context the listeners must cope with the sender's choice of vocabulary, structure, and rate of delivery. Having such kind of complexity in listening become the reason why listening skill is needed to be taught as a part of learning English. In addition it is important for English teachers to help their students become effective listeners.

Ludmilla (2011) categorizes listening into three categories namely Passive listening (listening for pleasure or entertainment), active listening (listening to learn and to retain information, and critical/analytical listening (listening to critique or make judgments about what one has said. Furthermore she says modern computer-based technology fosters listening skills by providing a multitude of opportunities for listening to spoken language. The language teachers will be aware of these current and emerging technologies to immerse their students in the spoken language experience.

Related to listening competency Richard (1985) in Ludmilla (2011) describes it as being comprised of a set of micro skills. According to him these are the skills effective listeners employ when trying to make sense of aural input, where we can examine potential correspondence between multi modal processing opportunities for language learners in a multimedia environment and how these can interact to complement listening skill acquisition.

1. Retention of information in short term memory.

Most current multimedia application allows students some control over the rate of language presentation. Students (users) can start, stop, and review pieces of information to better understand and remember the aural text. The addition of video provides a clear, logical flow of events so that linking (remembering) new and old information is facilitated.

2. Discriminate the sound of the target language.

Students can control over language presented in more than one modality supports a student's ability to discriminate where words begin and end. The synchronized display of text along with the aural text assists the learner in distinguishing phonetics grouping and boundaries. When the learners can see the faces of those speaking in the video, moreover, they can additionally make use of facial movements to understand the sound-meaning correspondence in the target language.

3. Recognize pattern of stress, rhythm, and intonation and how they signal information and intent. Stress, rhythm and intonation are automatically highlighted when aural language is divided into syntactic units. When we speak, the logical breaks in our discourse (the places where we pause ever so slightly) occur at syntactically predictable junctures. When specific words are stressed and patterns of intonation used, learners can be cue to closely examine the visual and spoken reactions of interlocutors in the video presentation.

4. Understand reduced speech. Multimedia is particularly well suited to assist learners in their understanding of reduced forms of target language speech. Having the written version of fast, naturally-paced aural text on the computer screen allows the learner access to both the written and spoken forms simultaneously. That is the learner may hear "wadjagonado?" but will read "What are you going to do?" in this way, learners can come to understand the two different forms of the target language-spoken-written-as well as learn to decode these reduced forms.

5. Recognize core vocabulary and the rules and patterns of words used to communicate. Coordinated aural, visual and textual information on the computer screen at the same time makes up an ideal laboratory for students problem-solving at the level of individual words and sentence structures. The learner has at her disposal rich visual and contextual clues that assist in breaking the code of the written and aural text. The

multi modal cues can be cross-referenced for word, sentence-level and broader understanding.

6. Understand communicative functions of utterances according to the context. Video can be a very rich source of context for language processing. In a multimedia format, learners are provided control over the rate and order of video presentation and can therefore take advantage of starting and stopping the action in order to study the language in a well represented context. Video also typically boasts tight correspondence between what is seen and what is heard. That is in only very rare cases is the audio portion of video temporally disconnected to what is being viewed. By studying target language communication in a multimedia format, learners can experience and come to understand the connection between utterances and how they function within a visually depicted context.
7. Process different speech styles, different rates, and performance errors. Rate and styles of audio naturally vary according to the genre of the video selection. Many situation comedies, for example, exemplify slowed speech. Interlocutors speak slowly and deliberately so the joke can be processed and understood. There are other kinds of programming, talk shows, for example, that are very fast –paced and difficult for non-native speakers to comprehend. Multimedia that includes varied genres permit a broad experience of different voices with differing rates and speech styles. Students can control the aural text so they have sufficient time for their individual processing needs.
8. Recognize the meanings can be expressed in different grammatical forms. Redundancy in video presentations is common. That is interlocutors and narrators frequently repeat the same information in different ways so that meaning and intention is made clear to the viewer. In a multimedia format, phrases and sentences that carry the same or similar meaning can be highlighted for users or learner that they can be prompted to highlight those phrases and sentences she feels express like meanings.
9. Infer meaning and make predictions using personal knowledge, experiences, and strategies. Video is a medium to which language learners come well equipped. Students are very accustomed to inferring meaning and making predictions from what they see and hear on the screen. In a multimedia format, these viewing/comprehension strategies can be cue and guided by for example posing pre-viewing questions on top of the stilled frame of the sequence they are about to watch. Inference, predication and calling our prior knowledge and experience can thus be activated.

By using technology the skills needed in listening can be learned or acquired by language learners. It helps them to recognize the sound, stress pattern, intonation, reduced forms, words combined, vocabulary, grammar, dialects, of the language learned. For these reasons technology has much role in helping teachers and students in teaching and learning listening skill because it offers listening experiences for students.

Nowadays the internet is widely used for language teaching and learning because it is rich in resources, especially audio and video. According to Dang (2012) the teachers extensively used audiovisual materials from YouTube and news websites such as British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Voice of America (VOA), and Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) etc. In line with Dang's idea there are few more news website used by English teachers and students like Google.com and other news webs such as Cable News Network (CNN), Al Jazeera, and Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai (NHK). The authentic materials from these sources are very helpful for students to practice listening and speaking skills.

Internet with the webs it has, offers the possibility with the sophisticated software of using images and audio at the same time. By combining sound and images as in real communication situation in the world it will make students feel enjoyable, more understand and interested in learning the target language. In addition it also provides students with a highly appealing and innovative format which they can interact like having conversations. With this format the students can practice the language skill (listening and speaking) where ever they are since it provides various kinds of language activities.

Other equipment that internet-based is Skype application. This application allows students to communicate inter face because it has a useful user-interface. By having such kind of device it enable students to use it easily and effectively in interface communication. It will allow students to communicate as if they are having conversation face to face, even though they are not in the same place. Other applications that have similar online application are MSN messenger and Google Talk. These applications have been used by millions of users worldwide to improve their listening and speaking skills by L2 students (Ludmila: 2011). The latest device with internet-based is IndiHome fiber or High Speed Internet. Having this device will allow user to access internet very fast. Furthermore it can also access many TV and radio stations all over the world and use other communication devices as well. This software can transmit video quickly.

In the areas where internet cannot be accessed, TVs and radios can be used as sources of listening materials and the media as well. Since both of these sources have their own schedules of their own programs, so the teachers and students have to consider the programs and the schedules of each TV and radio stations. They may record the programs and replay them in the classroom by using tape recorder or video player.

## **Conclusion**

Technology in teaching listening presents the listening activities whether in the classroom or outside the classroom. The most important role of technology in teaching listening is it gives listening experiences to students. Furthermore it provides many choices for the teachers to teach listening, choices in media, sources and teaching materials whether in audio or video formats. By accessing internet and webs available for example, teachers are able to choose various kinds of teaching materials like dialogs, and monologs. By using the materials taken from internet means the technology allows teachers and students to use authentic materials that can be used as many times as they want.

Related to teaching media, technology provides teachers with kinds of media from the simple ones to the sophisticated. Pictures, texts, sounds, video, animation, movies, provided will ease teachers to choose the media needed based on the topic learned. These media will help teachers to teach effectively and efficiently, and the students as well in comprehending the lessons. In turn it can make the teaching-learning process of listening become more interesting and effective.

Even though technology presents many advantages especially in providing the teaching materials for both the teachers and the students, the teachers need to select the materials they are going to use carefully.

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