# SOME USEFUL ACTIVITIES IN TEACHING LISTENING SKILL

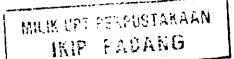


REFNALDI, S.Pd

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# SOME USEFUL ACTIVITIES IN TEACHING LISTENING SKILL Refnaldi, S.Pd.

#### A. Introduction

The 'four skills' of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are part of that "indivisable orange called communication" which are inter-related and inter-dependent, not segments that can be put aside while second language learners deal with discrete points of grammar and usage in their first language (Bott, 1982; 78). Though it might appear that this paper concerns only listening abilities because this skill tends to get neglected by English teachers. Moreover, many language teachers assume that this skill is automatically acquired by students when they learn to speak the language.

Our new curriculum for SMU/MA gives opportunity for the teachers to develop listening skill to their students. The teachers will have to work extra hard in order to prepare every thing related to listening activities, such as materials, equipment (cassetes and tape recorder), and the strategies to be applied in teaching. This paper trie to propose space hints about listening skill, such as the nature of litening, features of spoken language, problems in listening, and some useful activities that can be applied by the teacher in the classroom or in language laboratory.

### B. The Nature of Listening

Listening is the activity of paying attention to and trying to get meaning from something we hear. To listen successfully to spoken language, we need to be able to work out what speakers mean when they use particular words in

particular ways on particular occasions, and not simply to understand the words themselves. A speaker saying "You're late", for example, may be wishing to convey any one of a range of meanings: simply stating the fact that you have arrive late, or complaining because he/she did not expect you to arrive late. What the speaker means lies only partly in the words spoken, and you, as the listener, must recognize and interpret the other factors which are used to convey the message to you.

No one knows exactly how listening works or how people learn to listen and understand. It is a skill which seems to develop easily for mother-tongue listening, but requires considerable effort where listening in a foreign language is concerned.

Most teacher would agree that listening and speaking are the most difficult skills to teach to students in a country where English functions as a foreign language. Pierce (1988: 33) says that opportunity for practicing listening and speaking in English is an authentic communicative setting which does not abound in EFL situation, particularly because students do not generally hear English spoken outside the classroom. How can teacher remedy this situation?. Actually, there are two ways to overcome such problem. They are as follow:

First, the teacher should recognize that listening is an interactive and not a passive process, which requires much efforts and practices on students. One needs only to remember how difficult it is to learn to distinguish sound and extract meaning from any foreign language in the early stage of language learning in order to appriciate the difficulty of this task.

Second, teacher need to know how to select and design appropriate authentic language-learning materials, interest levels, and language ability of the students. The activities

of pre-listening, while listening, and post listening should be based on this selection.

### C. Some Features of Spoken English

It is important for the teacher to be aware of the special features of spoken English which make it different from the written language. Underwood (1989: 9) says that there are several features of spoken language to be considered in teaching listening. They include sections on sounds, stress and intonation, organization of speech, syntax and vocabulary, pauses and fillers, and formal/informal language.

#### 1. The sound

In English, just as in other languages, there are sounds which are unknown or unusual for foreign listeners, and which they may may therefore fail to distinguish from other similar sounds or even fail to hear at all. Learner may have difficulty with vowel sounds of English and need some practice in distinguishing between them; for example, sit/seat, foot/food. For some consonant clusters are worrying as some of the sounds seem to be lost; for example, the word "exactly", where /t/ sound is rarely heard in native speaker speech. And for others, it may be impossible at first to identify consonants which do not occur in their own language, such as /\$/, /\$/, of/, and /\$/.

Fortunately, understanding spoken language does not often depend on being able to distinguish between words which sound almost the same, because the context nearly always makes it obvious which two words is being spoken. The 'ship/sheep' distinction is the most frequently quoted example. When a speaker says, "I'm planning to travel by ship," it is easy for the listener to realise that the speaker is not saying, "I'm planning to travel by sheep."

#### 2. The stress and intonation

The English language derives much of its rhythm from the use of stressed syllables. The purpose of stress is to highlight words which carry the main information the speaker wishes to convey. Changing the stress can alter the meaning of an utterance even the words remain the same.

Consider the question 'What are you doing?' in the examples below.

- (said from the door, with John not in the speaker's sight)
  - 'Hi John! I'm home. Where are you? What are you DGing?'
- (said as approaching Jane, who is insight and doing something extraordinary).
  - 'Jane', I've been looking for you. Oh my goodness! What ARE you doing?'
- (a conversation between two bank clerks who are about to go on holiday).

ALAN : What are planning, Martin? Anywhere nice?'

MARTIN: We haven't decided yet. What about you? What are YOU doing?

In (1), 'What are you doing?' is an open question, expecting a factual response about whatever activity John is engaged in. In (2), it is an exclamation of surprise or irritation of seeing Jane doing whatever she is doing. In (3), it is a question which Martin has asked to disacover what Alan, as opposed to anyone else, is going to do.

#### 3. The organization of speech

Speaking is a creative process. Speakers are almost always in the position of formulating what they are saying as they go along and adjusting what they are saying as a

result of the behaviour of their listeners or as a result of added thought of their own. The is no certain way of knowing how a speaker's speech will be organised.

There are a number of features which seem to occur in normal speech and which can be used by listeners to sort out what the speaker means. It is almost certain that the important words will be stressed. When giving instructions, a speaker will repeat the most important points. In most speech, a change of topic is indicated by a change of tone, and speakers may use significant pause to indicate the end of one point and the beginning of the next one. In a more formal situation, a speaker may use a movement of the hand or head to show a change from idea to another.

It is unfortunate for the non-native listener that spoken discourse is frequently not well organised. The speaker taking part in everyday interaction have generally not prepared and have to think and plan the next part of their utterance as they are speaking at thier thought. This process causes the speakers to hesitate, to go back to the beginning of an idea and start again, to repeat themselves, to contradict themselves, and to poduce ungrammatical utterances.

#### 4. The syntax and vocabulary of speech

Brown and Yule (1983) identify a number of differences between spoken discourse and written discourse which are important for students in learning to listen. They are as follow:

1. Most speakers of English produce spoken language which syntatically very much simpler than written language. A speaker may say 'The plant died. They've been away. Nobody watered it. They'd left in the sun, you see.' But in Written language, all these sentences would probably be lionked together by writing 'The plant, which they'd left in the sun, died because nobody watered it while they were away.'

- Speaker often use in complete sentences.
- 3. The vocabulary of spoken discourse is usually much less specific than that of written discourse. Speakers frequently use words like 'it', 'somebody', 'they', 'you', 'thing' which can only be understood by relating them to the immediate context in which they are used.
- Interactive expressions like 'well', 'oh', 'uhuh' are features in spoken language.
- 5. Information is 'packed very much densely' in spoken language than in written language.

#### 5. Pauses and fillers

The pauses which occur in speech give the listener time to think about what has just been said and to relate it to what has gone before. At the beginning of their courses, students will find it easier to listen to speakers who, whilst speaking at their normal speed (provided it is not particularly fast), make quite long pauses between the 'bits' of their utterances. The length of pause used will depend on the speaker's speech habits, on the behavior and reactions of those listening ( if the speaker can see them), and on the speaker's need to work out what to say next.

Long gaps in speech are often filled with sounds/expression such as "Er..., 'Erm..., siply to avoid long silences, which are generally thought to be rather embarrasing in English conversation. It is a good idea to explain the use of these fillers, particularly to speakers of languages in which long solences are normal feature of conversation,

so that they can recognize them and know that they are not part of the essential message.

#### 6. Formal/informal language

A distinction is sometimes made between the language spoken in 'formal' situation and the language used in 'informal' situation as, for example, a lecture and a chat between friends.

A lecture or public address is expected to consist of relatively well organised speech, using more structured language than would be heard in informal conversation, because most lecturers and public speakers plan in advance what they intend to say, and may have notes, or even a complete text, to guide them through the speech. The language they use tends more towards written language than that used in ordinary everyday talk and is often described as 'formal' to contrast it with the 'informal' language of spontaneously produced speech.

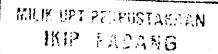
### D. Potential Problems in Listening

The evidence that shows why listening is difficult comes mainly from four sources: the message to be listened to, the speaker, the listener, and the physical setting.

#### 1. The message

Content. Many learners find it is more difficult to listen to a taped message than to read the same message on a piece of paper, since the listening passage comes into the ear in the twinkling of an eye, whereas reading material can be read as long as the reader likes.

the listening material may deal with almost any area of life. It might include street gossip, proverb, new products, and situation unfamiliar to the students. The content is



usually not well organized. In many cases listeners cannot predict what speakers are going to say, whether it is a new report on the radio, an interviewer's questions, and everyday conversation.

#### 2. The speaker

Redundant utterances may take the form of repetitions, false starts, re-phrasing, self-corrections, elaborations, and apparently meaningless additions such as I mean or you know. This redundancy is a natural feature of speech and may be either a help or a hindrance, depending on the students' level. It may make more difficult for beginners to understand what the speaker is saying; on the other hand, it may give advanced students more time to 'tune in' to the speaker's voice and speech style.

Learner tend to be used to their teacher's accent or to the standard variety of British or American English. They find difficulties in understanding speakers with other accents.

#### 3. The listener

Foreign language learners are not familiar enough with collocations in English to predict a missing word or phrase. They cannot, for example, be expected to know that rosy often collocates with cheeks nor to predict the last word will be something like rage when they hear the prase he was in a towering.... This is the major problem for students.

Lack of sociocultural, factual, and contextual knowledge of the target language can present an obstacle to comprehension because language is used to express its culture (Anderson and Lynch 1988).

#### 4. Physical setting

Noise, including both background noises on the recording and environmental noises, can take the listener's mind off the content of the listening passage. Listening materials on tape or radio lacks visual and aural environmental clues. Not seeing the speaker's body language and facial expressions makes it more difficult for the listener to understand the speaker's meaning. Unclear sound resulting from poor quality equipment can interfere with the listener's comprehension.

#### E. Some Activities in Listening

#### Pre-listening activities

Pre-listening work can be done in a variety of ways and often occurs quite naturally when listening form part of an integrated skills course. When planning lessons, time must be allocated for pre-listening activities and these activities should not be rushed.

Pre-listening work can consist of a whole range of activities, including:

- \* the teacher giving background information;
- \* the sudents reading something relevant;
- \* the students looking at the pictures;
- \* discussion of the topic/situation;
- \* a question and answer session;
- \* written exercises;
- \* following the instruction for the while-listening activity;
- \* consideration of how the whule-listening activity will be done.

Each of these activities helps to focus the students' mind on the topic by narrowing down the things that the students expect to hear and activating relevant prior knowledge and already known language. For those without suffi-

cient prior knowledge of the topic, such activities provide an opportunity to gain some knowledge which will help them to follow the listening text.

Looking at pictures before listening is an activity that can be used when students are not able to read English, but does not, of course, have to be limited to that situation. Students are asked to look at the picture. The teacher may want to assist by checking that the students can the items which will feature in the listening text. This can be done by question and answer or by general or by discussion. Giving long lists of unknown words and long explanation should be avoided as this does not help the students to listen naturally (see appendix two).

Labelling a picture is another activity which can be used to revise already known language. It si suitable for pairwork and can generate a lot of discussion. The prelistening part consists of endeavouring to label a picture or diagram. If the teacher thinks that there are some words needed for the labelling which are really too difficult for the students, he/she can expalin them before the lesson (See appendix two).

Completing part of a chart is an activity that can get the students involved in apersonal way if they are invited to fill in their own views, judgements or preferences. It is a popular type of activity, perhaps because it is a challenge and an opportunity for students to compare their views and judgements with other people. How far it assists students in matching the printed word with the heard word depends on the quantity and relevance of the writing used in the chart (See appendix two)

#### While-listening activities

While-listening activities are what students are asked to do during the time that they are listening to the text. As far as listening comprehension is concerned, the purpose of these activities is to develop the skill of eliciting messages from the spoken language (Underwood 1989 : 45). When developing the skills of listening for comprehension is the aim, while-listening activities must be chosen careful-

ly. Activities which do no more than test whether or not the listener has understood and which simply produce right/wrong answers will discourage all the enthusiastic learner. There is a place for the testing of listening comprehension, but this should not be the purpose of every listening practice session.

Which picture? is one example of a good activity on this stage. Students hear a description or a conversation and have to decide, from the selection offered, which picture is the right one. The most common pictures used are drawings/photos of people or scenes, indoor or out of doors. This is an activity where the level of difficulty can be changed both by the degree of similarity or contrast between the pictures and by the level of sophistication of the description/conversation (See appendix three).

Putting pictures in order is another activity that can be done in while-listening stage. A number of pictures are presented to the students, the aim is to arrange the pictures in the correct order according to the listening text. Generally the ordering can only be done by numbering because most exercises of this kind are done books. It is important not to have too many pictures (up five or six) and to have a series which cannot be putin order easily without listening at all. However, there is no reason why pre-listening work cannot revolve around speculating on the likely order and then if by chance some dents get the pictures sorted out before they listen, actual while-listening stage becomes a matching exercise (See appendix three).

Completing pictures can also be applied in this stage. This activity is popular with younger students and is particularly useful at the very early stages of learning when the level of difficulty can be kept very low. It is one of a vast range of activities which entail carrying out instruductions. Having looked at the basic uptline of the picture, the student is required to follow the instruction and draw in (or color) various items.

It is important for the students to realise that the drawing/colouring is not a test of their artistic skills, but an indication that they have understood. Children often

want to make a good job of their drawings, so the teacher might need to tell them to draw just the outlines of the items while they are listening and then they can do the rest later, otherwise the continuity of the listening will be broken (See appendix three).

Game for numbers is another good actitity. This kind of strategy begins with the familiar children's activity in connecting dots to form an outlined picture of some animals or objects. However, it is not as easy as it is. It requires careful listening and aural comprehension of number from 1 (one) to 100 (one hundred) as spoken in English in unexpected order.

This listening exercise requires the students to listen to the numbers as they are read, and relate them correctly to the numerals on the paper (See appendix three). There are several ways which can be done, perhaps the most useful is to have the teacher call out the numbers in order which appear in the following list:

77	6.4	25	14
12	12	21	<b>Ø</b> 5
29	75	42	55
25	27	<b>ଅ</b> ଟ	20
33	28	19	40
15	72	11	26
53	46	37	23
60	48	<b>Ø</b> 4	<b>Ø</b> 3
24	Ø9	39	<b>Ø</b> 2
51	62	79	18
31	· Ø6	35	88
44	73	59	91
13	66	80	
16	82	17	

It is important to have a number of extraneous dots, which acts as distractor. So, the students cannot simply guess which dots to connect. He must listen to the numbers (See appendix three).

#### Post-listening Activities

Post-listening activities embrace all the work related to a particular listening text which are done after the listening is completed. Some post-listening activities are extensions of the work done at the pre-listening and whilelistening stages and some relate only to the listening text itself.

The most common from the post-listening activities has, in the past, been answering of multiple-choice questions or 'open' questions based on the spoken text. But nowadays, there are several activities can be applied on this stage. There are problem-solving and decision making, Interpreting, role-play, form/chart completion, jigsaw listening, identifying relationships between speakers, and matching with a reading text.

#### F. Conclusion

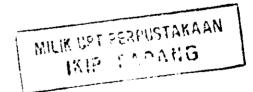
Because the real communication practice in second or foreign language should be the major goal in language teaching, it is necessary for the students to have ability in listening comprehension. Listening and speaking are active processes that should be practiced in a manner that will induce students to take an active role in learning. Students have to learn how to listen, just as they have to learn how to speak, how to read and how to write. They should be exposed from the earliest stage of language learning to listening comprehension based on natural, authentic speech.

The most important things to be considered are to prepare students psychologically for the listening activities, to tell them if they will be able to understand everything they hear and they should not be panic because of this. They should be invited to guess the meaning of the words and phrases they do not understand. Listening activities should encourage them to develop tolerance for a certain ambiguity while listening to the spoken language. At last, we can say that the students at all levels need listening practices.

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TAG		EXPLANATION/DEMONSTRATION
ENING	warm-up exercises:  1. elicitation/discussion about the topic (perhaps based on visuals, title)	a. to elicit something associated with the topic b. to encourage students to exchange ideas/opinions about the topic
PRE-LISTENING	2. brainstorming	<ul> <li>a. word-star: ask students to predict the words and expressions likely to appear in the passage. Teacher writes them on the blackboard.</li> <li>b. expressing hypotheses about the content of the passage, based on previous knowledge, by writing notes down</li> </ul>
ď	3. games	a. for warming-up relaxation b. for training in basic listening skills, e.g., miming words and expressions heard; minimal-pair distinctions
	4. guiding questions	teacher asks/writes questions that help students exploit passages
WHILE-LISTENING	1. comparing	to compare passage with prediction in pre-listening
	2. obeying instructions	students are given instructions and show comprehension by physical movement, finishing a task, etc.
	3. filling in gaps	e.g., students hear the utterances of only one of the participants and are asked to reconstruct those of the others
	<ol><li>repetition</li></ol>	students are asked to repeat short phrases or complete utterances recorded
	<ol><li>detecting differences or mistakes</li></ol>	students listen to passages, responding only when they come across something different or wrong
	<ol><li>ticking off items (bingo)</li></ol>	students listen to a list of words and tick off or categorize them as they hear them
Щ	<ol><li>information transfer</li></ol>	maps/plans/grids/forms/lists/pictures, etc.
Ĭ.	8. paraphrase	students are asked to focus on certain sentences and paraphrase them
	9. sequencing	e.g., students are asked to give the right order for a series of pictures
	10. information search	students listen to a passage and take notes on the segments that answer a particular question
	11. filling in blanks	students are given the transcript of a passage with some words missing and must fill in the blanks while listening
	12. matching	e.g., students are asked to match items that have the same meaning as those they hear
FOST-LISTENING	answering to show comprehension of messages	e.g., multiple-choice or true/false questions
	2. problem solving	students hear all the information relevant to a particular problem and then set themselves to solve it
	3. summarizing	students are given several possible summary-sentences and asked to say which of them fits a recorded text
	4. jigsaw listening	different groups of students listen to different but connected passages, each of which supplies some part of what they need to know. Then they come together to exchange information in order to complete a story or perform a task.
	<ol><li>writing as follow-up to listening activities</li></ol>	e.g., letters/telegrams/postcards/messages, etc., related to passages
	speaking as follow-up to listening activities	e.g., debate/interview/discussion/roleplay/dramatization, etc., associated with the passages heard

### Looking at pictures before listening

1 People at work Work

#### EXAMPLE

# Activity 2 A Label as many parts of the car as you can without using your dictionary. B Now listen to Mr Webster giving instructions about cleaning a car and try to finish the labelling.

### Labeling a picture

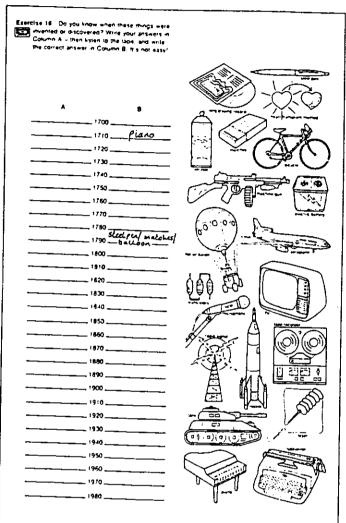
#### TRANSCRIPT

MR WEBSTER. Right, when I tell you to clean the car i mean all of the car.

I want the roof cleaned right to the want the root cleaned right to the middle, I want the bonnet cleaned so that I can see my face in it./ All the windows must be washed and dried including the windowser of and the rear window./ And be careful not to break the windscreen wipers./ Every door,/ every door handle,/ every wheel must be cleaned./ including the hub-caps of course./ And don't forget the bumpers, front and back/ and the number-plates./

Right. Off you go. I want those cars finished in twenty minutes.//

## Completing part of a chart



#### TRANSCRIPT

... an Italian, Bartolomeo
Christolori, invented the piano in
1709, and seventy years later, in
1780, the steel pen replaced the
traditional quill pen. The 1780s saw
the introduction of matches into
Britain; these were well known in
China, but this was the first time
they had been seen in the West.

The Montgolfier brothers flew the first air balloon in 1783, and the early 1800s saw the invention of the electric battery. A form of machinegun was invented in the early 1860s. and the first efficient typewriter was produced in the late sixties. An important invention, the microphone, appeared in 1877. This was to have a great effect on modern communications, as was Sturley's safety bicycle, built in the early 1880s. Marconi sent the first radio signal in 1897 and the tape recorder, which wasn't really a tape recorder, because it used wire, not tape, appeared two years later in

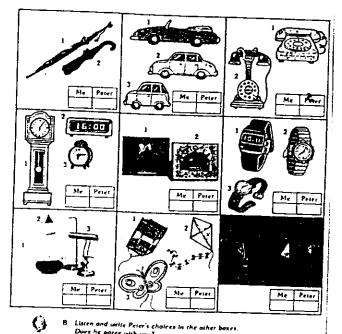
The Wright brothers became famous with their newly-developed aeroplane, which first flew in 1903, and during the First World War, the tank was produced in 1914. Television made its appearance in 1926, although the technology used in television had been known for the previous forty years. The rocket appeared six years later, in 1932. The zerosol was invented in 1941, and the transistor in the mid-forties, just before the first long-playing record, which appeared in 1948. Scharlow and Townes produced the first laser in 1950, and in 1967 Dr Christian Barnard made medical history by transplanting the first human heart.



#### Which one? **2**0

Activity 1

Which do you prefer? For each choice, write the number of the one you like best in the box marked 'Me'.



grandparents have got one and I think H's

digital one. So I suppose I prefer digital ones, at present. Of those three, I prefer the black one, with the black strap,/ PETER: I've just got a new watch. And I chose a What about watches? Do you like big watches? NAC:

JANE. What about kites? Have you got a kite? PETER. Oh, yes. I've got a kite, just an ordinary one.

the phones? Do you prefer the modern one or the old-fashioned one?

JANE. I thought you'd choose that one! What about PETER: Oh, that's easy, I like the long, low sports

5

JANE. And the cars? Which one do you prefer?

PETER: I profer the long one, with the straight JANE. Which umbrells do you prefer, Peter?

handle./

But I prefer box-kites, so I'd choose the, um, the red box-kite, I think./

JANE. Do you like wind surfing? Which sail do you like best? PETER: I'm not very keen on wind-surfing, but !

JANE. Do you like simple pictures, 100? What about

the pictures?

PETER. I prefer the tall, simple one, I like a lamp that's useful, not just made to look pretty./

PETER I think I prefer the old-fashloned one./

middle./ What about you, Jane? Which sail do JANE. I don't like any of them. I'm not keen on windsurfling either.// you like?

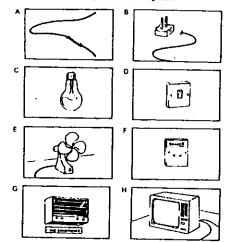
think I like the white sail best. The one in the

PETER: Oh, I love the big, old grandfather clock. My PETER: I don't like modern art much. I'd choose the country scene, with all those lovely trees and JAHE: What about the clocks? Which clock do you

### Which picture?



What electrical fault are these guests complaining about?



#### TRANSCRIPT

- 1. I can't get my shaver to work. I think it's the
- 1. I can't pet my snaver to work. I think it is the socket.
  2. Could you have someone replace the light bulb in my room?
  3. The plug's come off the bedside lamp. Could you have a fact the socket lamp.
- get someone to fix it?

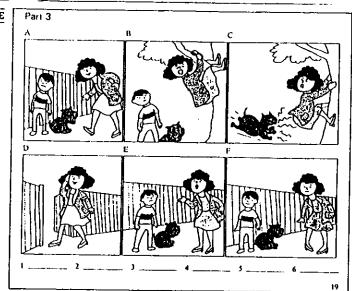
  Look I'm absolutely swaltering in that room.

  When are you going to do something about the AC?
- 5. Id love to look at the telly, but I'm not getting any
- it is some or picture.
   it can't turn the light off. The switch is faulty.
   That fan is supposed to rotate, limit it? Well, it
- That can example...

  The lamp flex is worn and you can see the bare wires. That's very dangerous.

## Putting pictures in order

#### EXAMPLE



#### TRANSCRIPT

Jamy was out for a walk one day when she came to a gate in a fence. I wonder, the said to herself, where this leads to? She went through it and immediately came face to face with a very fierce-looking dog. It made her nervous.

Does your dog bite? she asked the boy who was standing beside the dog. No, it doesn't, he replied. Jemny leaned forward to put the dog on the head.

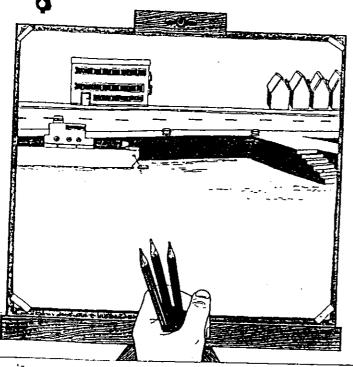
"Rice doggie," she said. But the dog immediately jumped at her and, as she ran for safety towards a tree, it ran after her, growling, and tore a piece of cloth from her coat. If thought you said your dog didn't bits," she said to the boy as she hung from a branch of the tree. That's right," he replied. "Il doesn't But this Isn't my dog."

## Completing pietures

#### Activity 1

Look at this unfinished picture of a harbour. It is not Hony Kong harbour, but it is quite a busy harbour which Peter knows well.

Help to finish the picture, please, by drawing all the things Peter tells you to add.



TRANSCRIPT

PETER. There are a lot of things to add to the picture. First, there should be one or two more ships,//

And, of course, there are always two or three jukes in the water.//
I'd tike you to draw a car in the street// and a bicycle, too.//
Oh, look, the tower on top of the big building has been forgottent Please put a tower at the left-hand end of the big

building.//
And I think there should be a flag on top of the tower// - and a clock on the front of It, too.//
Can you put some windows in the small houses on the right of the picture, please?//
I think that's all. Oh no, sorry, I forgot people. There are always tots of people around the harbour. Please draw some people as well.//

MILIK UPT PERPUSTAKAAN IKIP PADANG

Game for numbers 97\* .33 .29 13 44 96. .92 36. **5**3 23. •24 .4/3 \*32. 76 • 89 102

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