Selective Listening in ELT Classroom: Some Observations

S. J. Nikam, M.A., B.Ed., SET., Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Arts, Commerce and Science College, Nashik
Maharashtra, India
sandipnikam59@rediffmail.com

==

Abstract

This research paper has explored the effectiveness of selective listening strategies challenges and their application. The paper also discusses the current issues which affect selective listening, listeners, and speakers. All the issues are examined through a discussion of existing literature on selective listening. Possible solutions are also presented in an attempt to solve the discussed problems in the future. Suggestions for further research in the future is also provided on the issues which have not been explored thoroughly.

Keywords: selective listening, language skills, ELT classroom, learners, listening skills, listening materials, and spoken form of the language.

Introduction

Selective listening for many years has received very little attention in the learning of the English language. However, selective listening remains one of the most important skills required in learning the language. It is often acknowledged the importance of the auditory approach in teaching and learning any foreign language. However, this is not a simple task in the classroom. The ordinary learners do not know where exactly he should start listening. Listening materials available around us is in a considerable number. So, there is always a possibility of confusion about how and which listening materials one should use for language learning. Even if we try to listen, we can get just a few words. This very process seems to be very slow initially; therefore, we come back to the exclusive use of the idea of making our ears in the target language. This results in the inability to learn the language, primarily the spoken form of the language.

The learners may not acquire command over the language and shift to learning textbooks and grammar. Another factor could sometimes be learners' disbeliefs and prejudices that visuals are more crucial than the auditory system. No doubt, the visuals are also very essential in language learning. Consequently, we should make use of a technique called 'selective listening' for language learning. On the part of the teachers also they should first try to provide listening practices.

Review of Literature

What is Selective Listening?

In selective listening, learners have introduced only certain features at a time. The learners should not try to listen to everything all the time; instead, we should try to listen to particular items initially, and it should get repeated for a certain period. Nida (1965:108) defines selective listening, '….means just what it implies, namely selecting certain features and listening concentrated for and to them.'

Nida (1965) further gives general principles of selective listening:

1.   Selective listening should begin from the very movement that one first hears a language.
2.   One should listen for only one feature (set of features) at a time.
3.   Learners shall listen properly to all the features of a language.
4.   The sequence of listening items and its listening priority shall be of different features should be systematically listened to.
5.   One should concentrate mainly on those features which cause the learners difficulty in understanding or speaking.

These principles, or we may call them suggestions, are not different or new altogether; instead, some of us may think that they may some time or the other use at one time or another. But the significance of selective listening as a technique may only prove a) its selectivity b) its systematic and comprehensive approach. The selective listening methods only successful when these principles/ suggestions are followed adequately and applying the systematic ordering of features to which one should listen.

There are no 'Hard Rules' as such to that the language should listen in a specific step as every language is different from each other. However, some common features of language should be attained logically. The expected order of features what Nida (108) mentions that the learners shall follow, are a) phonetic features (sounds), b) vocabulary c) grammar (morphology and syntax).

The students should be first introduced to the sounds of English, syllables sequence, words, and their accentual patterns and then shift into the national characteristics. This is how it should have listened at length to be practiced in listening.

Therefore, **selective listening** can be defined as an intelligence technique of gathering information, which depends on the individual's ability to access the information, monitor, and be able to report the oral messages appropriately.

It is often expected from our regular teaching practice that the students shall be given real-life listening practice. The listening texts and other activates should be such that they should enhance students listening skills, and they must become self-reliant in responding to real-life situations in English.

Penny Ur (1996:107) mentions that listening activities should give learners practice in familiar listening texts (audio-visual) of real-life situations. She further says that when learners face real life language situation, they shall be able to respond properly. The conventional listening task should not be given in exercises on the passages' loud reading, followed by comprehension questions. Rather, an activity-oriented listening exercises that involve learners in learners will get real-life listening situational practice.

Further, Rost (1994:141) also mentions that listening in the language classroom is very crucial and fundamental as it provides student input. And it is ofen proved that language acquisition cannot take place without understanding the correct amount of input. So listening is fundamental to speaking. Nagaraj (2010:106) says listening and speaking are two sides of the same coin-both are closely interlinked. Therefore, listening palys a very crucial role in learning the language.

Purpose of the Research Paper
This research paper aims to discuss the problems experienced in selective listening and analyze the possible ways that can be used to counter the problems. The paper also bases the argument on one of the main applications of the selective listening technique: listening to other people's conversations.

Discussion
The main problems experienced in selective listening, which will be discussed in this paper, are; accessing the required information, monitoring the information, and reporting the information. Accessing the required information briefly can be described as moving within earshot to get a targeted conversation. Getting certain information that one did not intend to follow can be difficult, resulting in poor conversations because of poor access to the conversation.

However, the accessibility to the information required can be improved if the listener creates interest in the conversation they intend to listen to. One should also be able to choose a

==

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 21:3 March 2021**
S. J. Nikam, M.A., B.Ed., SET., Ph.D.
Selective Listening in ELT Classroom: Some Observations   119

cover well basing the topic of his interest. If one decides to cover a story that he is also interested in, it will be easy for him to follow the whole process. Hence the information that he will report will be accurate. Otherwise, covering a topic that you are not interested in will only result in poor conversation reports (Driver, 123). Thus, selecting a cover is very important in selective listening. Some of the essential guidelines when choosing cover are;

When choosing a cover in selective listening, one should avoid activities that disturb his or her attention. To understand the conversation at hand, he needs intense concentration and pays maximum attention to the conversation. Otherwise, the listener will miss some crucial pieces of information in the conversation. When one is being disturbed by a particular activity, the conversation's concentration rate will be reduced. Hence, this will affect the understanding and interpretation of the conversation (Driver, 112).

Secondly, when choosing a cover for selective listening, one should significantly avoid the circumstances required to participate in verbal participation actively. In situations where the listening is of little or no importance, it is possible to listen as he speaks simultaneously. However, in our case, the most important thing is listening, which makes it difficult for one to listen as he speaks possibly. This will limit access to the conversation. In some cases, during selective listening, speaking cannot be entirely avoided. However, speaking can be minimized by the following ways; communicating using a confederate as it will be possible for them to switch the listener's roles and the speaker (Goh, 23).

Another way in which one can minimize talking during selective listening is through engaging in group discussions. Here, when one is involved in a group discussion, it will lower the speaking to load relative and concentrate on one-on-one speaking. This also helps in sharing the attention of the listeners. One can also use specific phrases to represent replies to certain questions that prompt you to speak during selective listening.

This paper also seeks to discuss the monitoring of targeted conversations as another problem experienced in selective listening. For a selective listening session to be considered effective, it is a must that the target information should be accurately collected and stored. However, there is a challenge that this information might be degraded during the input process (Goh, 45). This may be caused by unbearable conditions like the presence of background noise during the process of input. Another problem experienced under monitoring target conversations is that performing successive monitoring is usually a challenge, especially when the listener is also required to participate verbally actively. This affects the listener's concentration, which, in return, disrupts the monitoring process more so in cases where the listener cannot handle both listening and speaking simultaneously (Goh, 345).

Besides, this paper also discusses how one can effectively do selective listening even under noise situations in the background during input and in situations where the listener's attention is divided. One of how this can be achieved is through training. Training can help in reducing the effect of background noises during the input. Training can also be used to improve the listener's concentration during periods of selective listening. The listeners can be trained on the phrases to answer questions posed doing an elective listening session. This also will help in maintaining the listener's attention. One of the best ways to train listeners on listening through background noise is through radios and televisions. Furthermore, selective listening in divided attention situations can be improved through the use of conversant pairs, that is, the listener and the speaker (Kinoshita,19).

The third main problem affecting selective listening is the reporting of the targeted information. For effective selective listening, the listener must have the skills to recount the conversations they heard to enable them to do more than just overhearing (Puspasari, 312). The major problems experienced in selective listening under this concern of recounting the conversation that the listener has already heard are; reducing forgetting and creating the credibility of the conversation that has already been collected (Kinoshita, 445).

Minimizing forgetting in selective listening can be achieved. However, it is not always easy to do so because, during selective listening, there are no proper ways of recording the target information. This means that the listener must master the targeted conversation. If the listener cannot recount the previous information of a conversation that they were listening to, then that means that the listener's report is likely to be false (Puspasari, 22). Hence it might lead to the publication of inaccurate reports.

However, there are several ways in which a listener can improve his or her ability to retain information collected during a conversation in selective listening; one of these ways is by paying more attention to some parts of the conversation that you think are important be remembered. The retention duration of certain information in the listener's memory depends majorly on the attention paid to the information during selective listening (Puschmann, 291).

Another way of enhancing the retention rate is through organizing the incoming information. Once a listener organizes the incoming conversations, it is more likely that he will remember the information. It will be easy to remember because arranging the information system helps you recall the next or previous information provided you have any part of the information.

Converting the information to a form that is easy to store is another way of improving the listeners' memories' retention rate. During a selective listening session, the listeners should

==

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 21:3 March 2021**
S. J. Nikam, M.A., B.Ed., SET., Ph.D.
Selective Listening in ELT Classroom: Some Observations   121

be converting the vital information that should be remembered in presenting the conversation report to a form that they can easily relate to and understand independently. To avoid forgetting the information, the listener should also minimize storing the new information in the memory. The longer the information is stored, the higher the chances of forgetting the information. To solve this issue, the listener should minimize the time that new information stays in memory (Puschmann, 304).

Conclusion

For the last few decades, selective listening has been used as one of the main ways of getting a target conversation. Selective listening has greatly helped in improving the kind of information that is reported from the crucial conversations. It has also been used as a tool for learning the English language. Selective listening should be considered when implementing the skills in collecting and representing information and learning the English language as it is a significant tool for both.

==

Works Cited

Driver, Jon. "Enhancement of selective listening by illusory mislocation of speech sounds due to lip-reading." *Nature* 381.6577 (1996): 66-68.

Goh, Christine CM. "A cognitive perspective on language learners' listening comprehension problems." *System* 28.1 (2000): 55-75.

Kinoshita, Keisuke, et al. "Listening to each speaker one by one with recurrent selective hearing networks." *2018 IEEE International Conference on Acoustics, Speech, and Signal Processing (ICASSP)*. IEEE, 2018.

Nagaraj, G. 2010. English Language Teaching: Approaches, Methods and Techniques. Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan.

Nida, Eugene A. "Selective Listening" in *'Teaching English as Second Language'* edited by Harold B Allen. (1965): 107-115

Puschmann, Sebastian, et al. "The right temporoparietal junction supports speech tracking during selective listening: Evidence from concurrent EEG-fMRI." *Journal of Neuroscience* 37.47 (2017): 11505-11516.

Puspasari, Desi, Ikhsanudin Ikhsanudin, and Yanti Sri Rezeki. "USING ANIMATION VIDEO TO TEACH SELECTIVE LISTENING." *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Khatulistiwa* 7.2.

Rost, M.1994. Introducing listening. London: Penguin.

Ur, P. 1996. A Course in Listening.Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

==

==

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 21:3 March 2021**
S. J. Nikam, M.A., B.Ed., SET., Ph.D.
Selective Listening in ELT Classroom: Some Observations   122