

The Stages and Aims of a Listening Lesson

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ABSTRACT: *The Article Identifies the three stages of listening and explains the three stages clearly. It also shows the aims of each stage and how each stage is significant. The author shows what students do at each stage of listening and how each stage is done in class. It also shows what are good features of a good English lesson. The author explains that the three stages of a listening lesson are pre-listening while listening, and post-listening. The teacher has a specific role in each of these three listening stages. The author vividly explains the duration of the pre-listening stage and the teacher's role in activating the schema at that stage. The stages differ in their length the pre-listening stage takes less time, while the other stages take longer time in class. Before entering the while listening stage the teachers equip the students by warming up and initiating the schema which is the background information of the content. Providing the students, the time needed to brainstorm and think before each stage. The Article shows the importance of listening and that it is as significant as reading and writing or speaking and even more important than the other skills.*

KEYWORDS: pre-listening, while-listening, post-listening, stages, teaching

INTRODUCTION

Listening is considered one of the hardest tasks a learner could do. L2 learners need to listen very carefully to words and phrases in order to understand the utterance. Listening is the core and source of learning a specific language. I have read a book by Brown lee in chapter two "A Century of Language Teaching" page 2 specifically under the subtitle Gouin's Series Method, it mentions Francois Gouin. He is French teacher of Latin, he was willing to learn German by staying in an accommodation locking himself and memorizing the grammar book. He did not interact with people but instead he kept memorizing for ten days. Unfortunately, he did not succeed in learning German. Gouin, saw his three-year-old nephew from saying nothing to talking in French. He kept observing him on how he did that. "Gouin spend a great deal of time observing his nephew and other children and came to the conclusion that language is a means of thinking and of representing reality... a Series Method was created, a method that taught learners directly (without translation) and conceptually (without grammatical rules and explanations) a 'series' of connected sentences

that are easy to perceive” Brown & Lee (2015) p.19,20 what comes first is to listen to a language, then a learner would be able to perceive then speak that language. In a matter of fact listening to the language comes in the first place in learning. There are different stages of listening that could be used in class for students in order to learn. There is the pre-listening stage, while listening and post-listening stage, each stage has a specific aim.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are studies that explain the significance of the three listening stages (Movva, Alapati, Veliventi, and Maithreyi, 2022) and show what activities are done during each stage of the listening stages. The study shows the role of the teacher during each stage and the importance of the listening skill. The authors of the study (Movva, Alapati, Veliventi, and Maithreyi, 2022) explained that,

“The pre-listening stage provides students with all they need to listen to and understand the listening text. This stage is critical because it directs students to the listening passage to which they will listen, piques their curiosity, and informs them about the goal of listening. Pre-listening is the step before while-listening. At this stage, the most important thing is to provide enough context to mirror what is accessible in real life and to inspire drive. It would be unfair to throw them right into the listening without first explaining the topic or the sort of task they would be working on. As a result, students should be provided extensive pre-listening assistance which enables them in becoming more self-assured and effective. Pre-listening exercises emphasize on - providing a proper general framework for the activity, as well as examples of well-structured texts - breaking the activity into simple, well-sequenced learning steps, briefing, activating previous knowledge, relating to previous task experience, relating to previous levels of achievement, sharing learning goals explaining listening behavior” (p.1501)

Another relevant study (Ždímalová and Anýžova, 2012) showed “how listening is taught in the adult language classroom” (p.24) The author answers questions like,

“How often do we teach listening specifically? And do we understand what we do? Do we know what exactly happens in each stage? What is the relative proportion of each of the stages? What do we do in the pre-listening stage? Is the pre-listening stage useful for all proficiency levels? Should we use the same pre-listening techniques for higher and lower proficiency levels? How many times do we repeat (replay) one listening text?” (p.23)

The results of the study show that students need to learn to speak first then listen and that the audio should be played twice or three times. The study also shows the results of the usefulness of the pre-listening stage. The results showed that the pre-listening stage came to be very significant to students. One of the relevant studies, (Supornsirisin, 2007) created a study that investigates the pre-listening and post-listening question techniques in “listening comprehension techniques to find out the effects of each technique... the results obtained are expected to be used as beneficial guideline for English teachers to use questions in teaching listening appropriately.” (p.6). Another study (Kumar,2021) made at Osmania University Engineering College shows the results that,

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“is helpful to the students to conduct a mini discussion on the topic what the teacher wants to start while starting a lesson. On the basis of the foreign students’ opinions teacher explain the lesson slowly and he observes the students whether the students are following it or not. To develop the listening skills among students the teacher has to ask questions immediately after completion of the lesson to develop post listening activity.” (p.80)

A study (Nair, Koo, and Bakar, 2014) explores the listening process. The study aimed to prepare the pre-university students. The results of the study were that

“students should be encouraged to respond to listening tasks mindfully by developing their attentiveness to the listening event as it unfolds. Rather than focussing on the product of listening, teachers should interrupt the tasks and pose questions that allow the students to probe their own mental operations before they arrive at the answers.”(p.482)

A significant study (Liao, 2012) explains the roles of both the teacher and the student in listening classes. It also shows the listening strategies and applications of students. The study also focuses on what happens during the listening phase and it is where students take notes. In addition, to what happens in an after listening stage were students review their notes and read what they have written. As the study stated that “Students need to understand how to recognize the purpose of the listening message, and make connections about the topic or tone to tune in as preparation for processing the information in the pre-listening stage.” (p.8) the study also shows what teachers should do in class and what kind of activities to provide to students in several steps the study mentions respectively. The study also mentions that students should conceptualize and discern the main ideas of the speech they are hearing as (Liao, 2012) puts it, “Students should listen carefully once, and then concentrate on the main ideas while listening a second time. After a group discussion about the main ideas, students should write down a brief summary and reflection to help them organize their thoughts.” (p.16).

A Study was made on whether the pre-listening stage leaves an impact on students or it doesn’t. The participants were from Iran, they were 60 students and all of them were females. The students were divided into two groups. The first group was the experimental group consists of 30 students and the other group which was the control group also consists of 30 students. The tests consist of two parts one part was a multiple choice the other part was short conversations. “a posttest was designed to measure the impact of pre-listening activities on the EFL learner’s listening comprehension. Finally, the study employed a DVD player and a number of English movies in data collection” (Zohrabi 2015 p.49) one group received a pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening instructions. The other group received while-listening and post listening instructions only. The group who received a pre-listening were treated differently,

“a teacher-led activity in the classroom to make learners aware of the key words that help to prepare summary and comprehend the movie very easy. But before that, the teacher talked about the topic of the movie and asked some questions to activate the language learners L2 background knowledge... all new words and idiomatic expressions were explained. However, before providing the meaning of new words,

the participants were encouraged to guess their meaning from the context...with writing new examples on the board, participants got more attention to the taught points” (Zohrabi 2015 p.50)

Students who received the pre-listening stage at the beginning became more confident in their listening lessons they got a complete image of what they will listen to in advance. They were well prepared for the while-listening stage. “Thus, that is to say pre-listening techniques had an influence on learners” (Zohrabi 2015 p.53) in addition statistically, the mean score of the students who received the pre-listening stage was higher than the students who did not receive the pre-listening stage. The below table shows the control group (CG) post-test and the experimental group (EG) post-test.

Table3. Descriptive Statistics for the Posttest

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CGPOST	30				
EGPOST	30	3.50	16.50	11.2000	3.2632
Valid N (list wise)	30	6.50	19.50	12.1333	3.2295

Other relevant studies (Babenko, 2016.) mention the creative techniques for increasing listening comprehension skills. Other relevant study (Maulina, Ladjagang, Nasrullah, Esteban, Hastianah, and Herianah, 2022) is teaching listening skills by using technology media.

Pre-listening stage

The aim of a pre-listening stage is to understand the initial notion of the content. To conceptualize a clear image of what will be listened to before listening to it. To have an idea of what is the listening content about before getting involved into it.

Teachers have to teach students how to listen in classrooms. Teaching listening is not playing a recorder then providing students a specific task to complete while listening. Therefore, this is not teaching students how to listen. There are techniques that teachers could use to teach students how to listen. Techniques like “pre-teaching key words, free conversation on the topic of the listening text, picture description and discourse on the topic, story prediction based on pictures, brainstorming topical lexis” (Raudenska 2015 NP)

The learners at that stage could brainstorm their ideas on what they will listen to or they could predict what’s going to happen in that listening lesson. “Pre-listening activities as predicting, discussing, brainstorming, and questioning were highly appreciated by the students, and these activities were believed to generate interest and confidence, create input for listening, and change their role to become active listeners” (Khanh 2021 p.395) Teachers could start with the title of the listening and permit students to guess what the listening would be about. They could also bring an image related to that listening asking students to discuss it and predict what the listening is about.

The pre-listening stage gives a purpose to the listening and it motivates learners to listen. It makes students more comfortable and confident when exposed to 'the while listening stage'. It also prepares students for listening. "The pre-listening stage is a preliminary stage which prepares students to achieve the most from the listening passage. It activates the learner's schemata and sets a purpose for listening" (Zdimalova 2013 p.85) providing students a clue on what will be listened in class, will make them more confident in that lesson. "The teachers should provide the students with some hints at the pre-listening stage. To do so leads to the achievements of success in listening comprehension, because it makes the students motivated and gives them the confidence to try to listen" (Nakao 2000 p.13)

For students to be good listeners they are required to be strategic. In addition to teaching micro skills and techniques to students and developing these skills to become better listeners. In order for students to be strategic, they should be active listeners in class. To practice active listening students are required to ask for repetition and clearance in listening lessons. Students on one hand, they are supposed to employ listening strategies by predicting and guessing the given information in texts. Listening to key words and key ideas will develop students' strategies. Those key factors could develop students to become better listeners. "(Wood 1985:56) states that the essence of listening is the listener for meaning" (Lestari 2013 p.2)

In the process of listening there are two skills required macro skills and micro skills. The macro skills are listening for gist, listening for specific information, or listening for the general idea of the information. In micro skills "the listener has to interpret intonation pattern (e.g. recognize stress and rhythm) ...constituent e.g. subject, verb, object, preposition)" (Lestari 2013 p.2)

According to micro skills, teachers must teach micro skills to their students. Some micro skills that should be taught is the difference of sounds they are hearing, the intonation of the stress of a word and the boundaries of the word, for example where does the word end and where does it start. These skills may help students to become independent learners. when students listen it develop their knowledge, they will be exposed to new vocabulary knowledge or new grammatical knowledge. After teaching those skills, teachers may develop the student's micro skills by drilling technique. The drilling technique is interesting; students won't be bored from it. It renews the student's spirit in class. As Lestari claims in his research "increase of students' micro skills of listening after being taught through drills" (Lestari 2013 p. 4) he explains briefly the different kinds of drills used for students to develop their micro skills. One drill is the repetition drill the other drill is the transformation drill. In the repetition drill is a simple drill used at the beginning of the language class. Learners repeat the words after the teacher several times. In the transformation drill, the learners change the sentences from negative to positive or from present tense to past tense.

For students to become good listeners there are key factors to develop better listeners in classrooms. First of all, teachers must establish the correct schema, the correct general knowledge of the student should be connected to the content given in class. Some students have different

schema on different topics, students have different background knowledge. Teachers in that case should adjust that schema through a pre-listening stage. One of the most significant roles of a teacher in that stage is to activate the student's schema. In order for teachers to do that there are two ways to activate the schema, by recalling existing knowledge and providing new knowledge. Receiving new knowledge from the outside world will retain the information in the memory. This information that stayed in the memory it's the schema students go back to this information when needed. In addition, in case of the absence of some of the background information the student in that case builds up new information and then retains it in the memory. This is where new background knowledge occurs. "In word, background knowledge is activated in two ways of recalling existing knowledge, and providing new knowledge" (Khanh 2021 p.397).

The teacher's role in activating the schema is to prepare activities that could remind them of that particular schema. "teachers have to design pre-listening activities to activate students background while teaching listening" (Khanh 2021p.397) for example, teachers may use brainstorming activities to recall the background knowledge and could use pre-teaching vocabulary to build up a new background knowledge. The goal is to equip students to listen and to remember what have they heard and to be able to respond appropriately. The Process approach could also teach students how to listen, "the metacognitive strategies underlying this approach help listeners become more aware of how they can use what they already know to fill gaps in their understanding" (Vandergift 2004 p. 11) the process approach is like a cycle, student concentrate on different things in each stage, it teaches students how to listen. It starts with. planning/predicting first then goes through a first, second and final verifications stages. "Vandergift argues that this approach helps listeners develop metacognitive knowledge, critical to the development of self-regulated listening." (Vandergift 2004 p.12) Using pre-listening techniques and teaching them to students is very useful there is a study made by Petra Raudenska, on the usefulness of the inclusion of pre-listening techniques in the pre-listening stage. she gave out a questionnaire survey to the department of language studies and found out that "a large majority (89%) of the learners approve of the inclusion of pre-listening techniques, with (58%) considering the pre-listening techniques definitely useful... conclusion: based on the data, the inclusion of pre-listening techniques proved to be highly relevant to our students at all proficiency levels" (Raudenska 2012 P.33)

The features of a good listening lesson

A good listening lesson contains a good lesson plan. A lesson plan that takes into consideration the time interval of the three stages in a listening lesson. Teachers must divide their lessons into different parts bearing in mind that some stages have to be slightly longer than others and other stages could be shorter. When teachers adjust the correct schema making sure students are on the right track then this lesson will start up as a good lesson. Focusing on students' micro skills, developing these skills is a result of teaching them how to listen will wind up having a good lesson. The features of a good lesson are fixing the time between the stages and giving each stage the enough time needed in order to complete that stage. Teachers should use the interactive processing

of both bottom up and Top down. A combination of ideas from bottom up and top down is significant in class, but it depends on the level the teacher is teaching and the purpose. If the students were beginners then the focus will be on bottom up would be a better choice. It is a good choice because it starts with decoding and word recognition. If the students were intermediate the teacher could start with top down. In top down it starts with the background knowledge activation. Combining both processes in a lesson will lead to a good listening lesson, there should be a balance of both. "listening comprehension involves two types of processes that interact freely with each other to help listeners construct a meaningful interpretation of what they hear. Teaching listeners how to use these processes in efficient and effective ways will need to balance a top-down, strategies-based approach with remedial, bottom up training." (Vandergift 2004 p.14)

The Duration of a pre-listening stage

The duration of a pre-listening stage should not take that much time. It is supposed to be a five to ten minutes' warm-up or a short exercise that could introduce the listening. "However, it's important to keep the pre-listening stage fairly brief. McCaughey has noted that some teachers spend ten to fifteen minutes on a pre-listening task that is followed by a one-minute listening text." (Houston 2016). In a matter of fact teachers should not spend too much time on pre-listening stage in order to give space for the other stages to take place in a listening lesson. "a few writers warn us against overusing the pre-listening stage. Field (2008: 83-85) even suggests cutting down the pre-listening stage in order to save time for multiple replays in the while-listening stage, and this suggestion he applies to all proficiency levels" (Raudenska 2015 p.18).

When teachers write down a lesson plan they should bear in mind the length of the lesson. It is very significant to divide the lesson plan into the three listening stages pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening. "To start with availability of time, the teacher must consider carefully the whole lesson plan. There should be enough time for the whole listening process including pre-, while-, and post-listening phases. It is absolutely unprofessional and unacceptable for the bell to start ringing sometimes during the listening process" (Vavrincova 2007 p.31)

As Houston claimed ten to fifteen minutes spent on a pre-listening stage would be enough. The reason behind where teachers have to condense the pre-listening stage, it is because in that stage teacher's need to check if students are on the right track in terms of schema and to give student a brief idea on their listening topic. In a matter of fact, teachers will be able to notice what is going on in the student's mind after students providing the answers of the pre-listening activities. "the teacher might begin to have a clearer picture of what is actually happening in their student's minds when they listen to a text in a foreign language." (Pinillos 2012 P.23) students' minds do not need a huge amount of time to understand a pre-listening stage. students could figure things out easily by going back to their background information. Information to be retained from the schema or even built inside the schema is a process that doesn't take a long time. "the process to understand

aural messages may begin in the auditory signal and finish in the listener's mind or the other way around, in an overlapping and iterative sequence that might take milliseconds" (Pinillos 2012 p.28) The goal in using these ten to fifteen minutes is to equip the learners with the skills they needed prepare them to enter the while-listening stage. It is like using the pre-listening exercises to train students in these ten to fifteen minutes before listening to the core text. "The exercises fulfill three different purposes: equipped learners with the subskills that a competent native listener could be expected to possess; familiarize learners with the features of natural conversational speech; and training learners in some smaller-scale strategy techniques" (Field 1997 p.117).

If the duration of the pre-listening stage became longer than usual then students may not have time to go through the other stages of a listening lesson, which is unacceptable in a listening lesson as mentioned before. A good listening lesson should be divided through three different stages where each stage must be practiced appropriately. Spending a lot of time on pre-listening will lead to lack of concentration, students could not concentrate for a long period of time. Therefore, it is highly recommended for teachers to shorten the pre-listening in classes.

While-listening stage

The while-listening stage is a vital stage in listening, it is considered the core of the listening. The purpose of the while-listening stage is that students listen for specific information. As Underwood claimed

“While-listening activities are what students are asked to do during the time that they are listening to text. As far as listening comprehension (i.e. listening for meaning) is concerned the purpose of while listening activities is to help learners develop the skill of eliciting messages from spoken language.” (Underwood 1989 P.45)

Students in this stage listen for meaning. They could listen for several times each time they listen is a purpose of something, it could be for gist or detailed information depending on what the teacher is looking for. While listening stage is a harsh task for students because they are required to listen carefully and intensely. To find answers in a listening stage the audio should be played twice or three times. The while-listening stage takes longer time than the pre-listening stage because teachers are providing the required time for the students to read the questions first and then play the audio at least twice.

In addition, Win and Maung, 2019 mentioned that “the purpose of while-listening activities is to assist students develop the skill of eliciting messages from spoken language. It is the moment where students are actually exposed to the recorded text. In some cases, students will need to listen more than once to complete the activity.” (p.2285) This stage is considered the most significant stage in the listening stage because it shows how competent the student is. It is the stage where the

student thinks and activities his language skills to complete the given task in class. During the while-listening stage it is significant for learners to take notes while listening. Taking notes help students to remember what they have heard and it helps them answering the questions perfectly well. "During Listening Activities: While students are listening to the tape the teacher asks them to take some notes." (Saricoban, A., 1999. NP) When learners take notes it strengthens their memory and permits them to come back to what they have written when needed. Win and Maung, 2019 also explained that the aim of the while listening stage is to understand the provided audio and to list for gist as they puts it,

"The aim of the while-listening stage for students is to understand the message of the text, not catching every word. Therefore, during this stage, most of the while-listening activities focus on listening for the gist, listening for specific information, and listening for speaker's attitude or opinion related to language knowledge and cultural information students had in pre-listening activities to get listening comprehension."(2285)

During the listening stage students are not supposed to catch and understand every word they are not expected to know the meaning of every word, they are listening for a specific purpose. They are listening to complete a specific task. Questions on the text should be given to students before the audio is played to prepare students for the listening. Afterwards, students must read these questions to have an idea of what they are going to listen. It is significant to exhibit and provide a clear view to what the learners are listening in class. as (Saricoban, 1999 NP) puts it, "We should give a clear lead in what they are going to hear; use some kind of visual back up for them to understand; give questions and tasks in order to clarify the things in their minds; and be sure that these tasks help in learning, not confusing." Students are required to listen as much as they speak and they are also requiring to listen more than they read or write. As Morley J. (1991) puts it, "We can expect to listen twice as much as we speak, four times more than we read, and five times more than we write." (p.82)

One Example for a while listening task adapted from (Raza, 2016) is as follows,

1. Play the recording and ask the students to tell the main idea, i.e., listening for the gist.
2. Now replay the recording and ask some general questions about the recording. For example, asking about the relationship between speakers, mood of speakers, the place where the speakers are, etc.
3. Now ask some direct and simple questions to answer. For example, listening for some number, time, date or some (p.87)

Post-listening stage

In this stage as Underwood identified it "some post-listening activities are extensions of the work done at the pre-listening and while listening stages" Underwood 1989 p.74 in the post listening stages the work is much more and it is extended from the while-listening stage. This stage which contains the follow up activity is important; it shows if the student successfully understood the given activity. "there are a number of purposes why to incorporate follow-up activities into the

lesson plans. One of them, can be checking if the learners understood the listening passage or whether they finished the task successfully” (Prace 2009 p.28) post-listening stage is more likely to be the outcome of the while-listening stage. This stage shows the results of the while-listening stage. In addition, it exhibits how each student did because it is the final stage from the three stages. “EFL students need to act upon what they have heard to expand their thinking, and a well-planned post-listening activity is a useful device for them to speak and think about links between the lecture and their life experiences. The following are some post-listening activities for the teachers to take as a reference.... After the listener has understood the message, it’s important for them to think aloud by telling someone what they have heard. Therefore, giving an oral summary is necessary for students in EFL classroom.” (Liao, 2012, p.18)

This stage is also considered as the discussion stage where students discuss their answers in pairs or as a group in class. The students are also assessed during this stage and the skills of this stage could be integrated with other skills as Win and Maung, 2019 puts it,

“students in post-listening activities have chance to assess how much they have understood in a listening task. On the other hand, teachers can integrate listening skills with other skills, for example, communicative skill. They can allow students to make discussion on an issue about the listening task. Students in the discussion try to use the words and structures they have learnt in the listening task and they promote their communicative competence to their listening” (2285)

Integrating skills is significant in class teachers could integrate for example post-listening with speaking communication skills. After listening to the audio, taking notes, and completing the listening tasks students can discuss or speak about their results. Speaking and communicating help students in increasing their speaking skills in class. Therefore, students not only listened for gist to develop their listening skills, they also discussed their results and shared answers in class to develop their speaking skills. Expanding the topic in this stage is significant as Jones, 2008 puts it, “One reason for ‘after listening’ tasks is to expand on the topic heard in the listening text even though it should be recognized that such tasks are often not listening activities themselves. Examples include extending notes into a full written text, summarizing what has been heard, and role-play.” (p.21) It is significant for teachers to go over the three stages of listening and never miss any stage or skip any stage because these stages provide directions for students on when and how to listen as Dovronovich, 2023 puts it,

“The sequencing of pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening is to ensure learners develop more control over the listening process. Clear given directions as to “what to listen for, where to listen, when to listen, and how to listen” are required as the listening task progresses. Instructors must clearly know the purpose of each listening task” (p.50)

Every stage is essential for the learner, learners ought to go through every stage to achieve the provided listening class successfully.

CONCLUSION

Listening is not like reading. In reading learners could go back to the text and reread what they misunderstood, but in listening they cannot go back to people and make them repeat what they said. Listening is extremely fast, learners listen to phrases and they are demanded to reply immediately. In order for learners to learn the English language they must listen first. In class in order to understand instructions of reading or writing they must listen to the instructions first. The pre-listening stage is significant for learners because in that stage students could activate the schema before going on into the next listening stage. It is important for teachers to teach students the techniques and the skills of listening before allowing them to listen. Getting the students ready and equipped for that stage is the teacher's goal in the lesson. In a while listening stage it is significant for students to take notes to link what they have listen to the questions in front of them. Students link what they have listened to the questions by reading their notes. They have to take good notes while listening because this phase is the core of all the listening stages. Last but not least, the post-listening stage is where students achieve the given work. it is the stage where they conduct a good answer sheet according to what they have heard. All three stages are significant but they all differ from each other in their tasks and outcomes. The outcome of the pre-listening is activating the schema whereas the task for the while-listening stage is to take good notes and listen well to the audio. Finally, the post-listening stage is the results stage that shows the how savvy that student became.

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