

Chapter II: The listening Skill

Introduction

Listening is the most critical communication skill. Students are involved in various listening situations 65% to 90% of the time, but most students have little or no listening instruction. Little listening instruction may be due to the lack of preparation, time or material. In addition, teachers may be uncertain whether they are good listeners themselves and may, therefore, hesitate to teach this skill

“Listening is a fundamental language skill, but it is often ignored by foreign and second language teachers “ (Rebeccal, 1993).

While the other three language skills receive direct instructional attention, teachers frequently expect students to develop their listening capability by osmosis and without help.

So, the listening skill should be a major area of concern to teachers and students of a second or foreign language, this is the concern of this chapter which tends to summarize what is essential to be known about the listening process as it relates to foreign language learning.

It is intended to provide an overview of the key concepts and issues involved in understanding listening, it discusses the nature and types of listening, some constraints or difficulties faced by EFL learners in developing their listening comprehension abilities, and some suggested guidelines to consider when teaching this skill.

A.II.1/ The difference between "Hearing and Listening ":

As a suitable starting point for dealing with the listening skill in foreign language teaching is to consider the following question: How is “Hearing” different from listening?

The two terms “hearing and listening are often used interchangeably, but there is an important difference between them.

According to Stephen, Lucas, listening doesn't mean we don't hear, and they come to explain the process of hearing to be a physiological one arguing that:

“It involves the vibration of sound wave on our eardrums and the firing of electro-chemical impulses from the inner ear to the central auditory system of the brain, but listening involves paying close attention to, and making sense of, what we hear.”

(Stephen, Lucas, 1998, 56)

“Although both hearing and listening involve sound perception, the difference in terms reflects a degree of intention”

(Rost, 2002,27).

So, the listening process is guided by our intention which is psychologically an excitation of nerve pathways in the brain to organise incoming stimuli in an efficient way with a psychological terms, (Rost, 2002) quoted that:

“Intention is the initiation of involvement ..., it is used for organizing what is heard and seen, to organize language in terms of topics (what the language is about) and information value (what the language signal is relevant to us?).”

So listening and hearing are not synonymous. Hearing occurs when your ears pick up sound waves being transmitted by a speaker, listening involves making sense out of what is being transmitted (Hamilton, 1999) as he quoted:

“Hearing is with the ears, listening is with the mind”

A.II.2) The definition of listening:

Listening is a vital component of the oral communication, or the interactive process in which the individual takes the roles of speaker and listener through a verbal and non verbal component.

When examining the state of listening in FLT, it is noticed the lack of an agreement on an exact definition (Witkin, 1990) as he agued

“No one theory about what listening is” (P7).

But, still this process can be defined variously and many definitions can be attributed to this skill.

Listening is an essential part of the communication process. Students spent the majority of each school day listening and much of what students know is acquired through listening.

It is a term daily used without giving it much thought. Yet, listening is a vital mental capacity one of the principal ways through which we understand and take part in the world around us (Rost, 1994) as he quoted:

“ Listening is considered to be a part of oracy, a capacity to formulate Thought verbally and to communicate with others,

so it is the skill that underlines all verbal communication”

(P7)

It is suggested that listening can be done in a narrow and limited way, or it can be done in a way that enriches communication (Goodith, 2001) , as it was said:

“Listening is not merely not talking...it means taking a vigorous human interest in what is being told us. You can listen like blank mall or like a splendid auditorium where every sounds comes back fuller and richer”

(Miller, Goodith, 2001, 48).

Listening is the ability to identify and understand what the speaker is saying through understanding his accent, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and grasping his meaning. Those sub components of listening are well explained by (Rost,1994) as he draws a particular list of components to master when dealing with this skill:

- Discriminating between sounds .
- Recognizing words.
- Identifying stressed words and grouping of words.
- Identifying functions(such as apologizing)in conversations
- Connecting linguistic cues to paralinguistic cues (intonation and stress) and to non linguistic cues (gestures and relevant objects in the situation) in order to construct meaning.
- Using background knowledge and context to predict and then to confirm meaning.
- Recalling important words, topics and ideas.
- Giving appropriate feed back to the speaker.
- Reformulate what the speaker has said.

Rost(1994) insists on the fact that students must deploy all these sub skills to realize a successful process when he states:

"Successful listening involves an integration of these component skills .In this sense, listening is a coordination of the component skills, not the individual skills themselves. This integration of these skills constitutes a person's listening ability"

(p ,142)

A.II.3) The active nature of listening comprehension:

Listening comprehension is a cognitive, or rather an interactive process of constructing meanings that the speaker intends, through the complete involvement of the hearer.

The active contribution of the listener's comprehension process comes not only through using his linguistic knowledge but also his non linguistic sources, and of course the communicative value of his involvement depends on the situation and the social relationship. (Little Wood, 2000).

The listener must realize that comprehending the message word for word is not essential, Since not every clue is equally important to the message. The listener has to seek the general meaning to compensate his misunderstanding by continuing being involved in the communication (Little Wood, 2000).

“More positive listening self concepts can be created by helping students realize that word-for-word comprehension is not necessary and that guessing and hypothesis testing are valuable”
(Rebecca L, 1993)

A.II.4.1. Bottom-up vs. top down processing

It is motioned before that in the listening comprehension process; listeners need two types of knowledge. Both linguistic and non- linguistic knowledge are involved; linguistic knowledge consists of "phonology, lexis, syntax and discourse structure" and the non-linguistic knowledge covers all comprehension features such as "topic, context, general knowledge about the world and how it works" (Buck, 2001).

Many researchers into teaching listening comprehension have given insights into how learners go through this process as well as how the two types of knowledge are applied in it. As a result , a frequent distinction is made between two views;(top -down and bottom-up processing) for the reason of understanding what our students are going through as they learn to listen.

A.II.4.1.1. Bottom up processing

It is agreed that the language process has a definite order, it means from the lowest level of detail to the highest level (Buck, 2001). The same view is directly applicated in listening, precisely in the Bottom –up processing ,to assume that in this process the

listener focuses and gives much importance to the smallest units of speech than the individual words and after to phrases to combine them in order to achieve understanding and build a whole (Harmer,2001).

He argues that:

"Without a good understanding of a reasonable proportion of the details gained through some Bottom-up processing, we will be unable to get any clear general picture of what the text is about"

(Harmer, 2001, 201)

Buck supports the above view quoting that:

"Listeners assume that acoustic input is first decoded into phonemes, then this is used to identify individual words, then processing continues on to the next higher stage, the syntactic level followed by an analysis of semantic content to arrive at a literal understanding of the basic linguistic meaning . Finally, the listener interprets that literal meaning in terms of communicative situation to understand what the speaker means"

(Buck, 2001, 2)

Helgesen , Brown (1995) come to explain this processing simply by noting that:

"With Bottom-up processing, students start with the component parts: words, grammar and the like"

(Helgeson,Brown,1995,x).

This process sees language comprehension to be a passage through consecutive stages; the out put of one stage becomes the input of the coming next high stage (Buck, 2001).

A.II.4.2. Top-down processing

Many perspectives appear to indicate that the processing of different types of knowledge doesn't occur in a fixed sequence and order. They come to reject the first view saying that it is possible to understand the meaning of a word without decoding its sounds .This is due to the interference of another type of knowledge (non linguistic one) including knowledge of the world around us and this is the concern of Top-down processing (Buck,2001).

"Top down process is the opposite of Bottom-up, students start from their background knowledge"

(Helgesen, Brown, 1995, x).

To explain this process more , (Harmer,2001) indicates that in this processing , the listener tends to get the message' general view and absorb the overall picture of the listening

passage .This is helped if the listener has the ability to have appropriate expectations of what is going to come across.

As a conclusion , to successfully realize the process of listening , it is better to suggest a combination between the two processing "Bottom-up, top -down", and many specialists argue that this interaction is the case almost immediately .

"Sometimes it is the individual details that help us to understand the whole; sometimes it is our overview that allows us to process the details"

(Harmer,2001, 18)

A.II.5. Types of listeners in L₂:

The listener differs from the speaker in terms of choice; it means that speakers have the opportunity to choose the language they speak or use, and they succeed in achieving a real communication through suitable strategies as using paraphrase or simplifying their messages.

The listener however can't have any control over the language being listened to, so he has to be able to construct meaning from any language directed at him (Little wood, 2000) as he added that:

“It is therefore not enough that he should merely be able to understand the same range of language that he can speak; receptive repertoire must be matched not against his own productive repertoire, but against the productive repertoire of the native speakers he will needed to understand”

(Littlewood, 2000) (P65)

In the stream of LittleWood(2000) distinction between both speaker and listener's readiness in the communication process, and Since we are dealing with the listening skill and tackling the different assessment scales in showing the degree of listening ability; (Rost, 1994) distinguishes between three types of listeners;

A.II.5.1) Competent listener:

As the first type of listeners, he is considered to have a high listening ability. The listener in this category is capable of:

- Understanding all the types of speech, concerning those easy to be understood by native listeners in the target community or the abstract.

- In case speech is unintelligible, the listener can seek clarification easily, he is able to depict whether his knowledge in a certain communication situations is enough to teach an acceptable level of understanding or not, as well as being able to note where the speaker is ambiguous and vague.
- In the different target culture's settings and social contexts, the listener understands and reacts appropriately.
- It is noted that competent listener is elected to perform well concerning any task demanding oral comprehension (Rost, 1994).

A.II.5.2. Listener of modest ability:

Concerning the second type of listeners in L2, the listener is described to be able to understand the majority of speech styles, some abstract, oral concepts but with need to some kinds of repetitions and explanations.

- The listener can note where the speaker is standard in his speech and where knowledge isn't enough to reach the level of comprehension, but with confusion about the source of difficulty in understanding (Rost, 1994).
- **“The listener can react to the different contexts and social situations in the target culture but often not appropriately. (Rost ,1994,138)**

A.II.5.3. Listener of limited ability:

-The listener in this last type can understand only limited styles of speech. He is unable to comprehend ambiguous concepts presented in the target language without being exposed to non linguistic components. He always requires re-explanation, repetition and clarifications.

-He fails to attempt clarifications when speech is unintelligible, unable to discover where the difficulty lies and he is confused about its source.

“The listener is unable to sustain understanding in an interaction, display limited range of listener responses”

(Rost,1994,138)

A.II.6. Types of listening

A.II.6.1. Extensive and intensive listening

Different situations require different types of listening. In the classroom situation, students can improve their listening abilities and gain valuable input by being engaged in the listening process through a combination of extensive and intensive listening.

(Harmer, 1998).

Most researchers like to make the difference between "extensive and intensive" listening .The two types are described by Harmer (1998) to have a special importance. They provide students with the perfect opportunity to listen to other speakers than their teacher's

"They help them to develop their pronunciation and acquire good speaking habits they absorb"

(Harmer, 1998,228).

A.II.6.1.1. Extensive listening

It occurs in a situation where the teacher encourages students to choose for themselves what they listen to, using their own materials for the purpose of pleasure and language improvement (Harmer, 1998).

It usually takes place outside the classroom and done for its own sake, this doesn't mean that the teacher is not interested in this type at all, but he is attributed the general guidance in the process.

Extensive listening materials differ, they can be found from different resources such as recordings of stories, passages taken from books, television, radio.... All the mentioned sources tend to treat spontaneous conversations, dialogues, interviews... ect

From what is clearly stated before , taped authentic materials can be considered as a good tool for learners when dealing with extensive listening .According to Harmer (1998) , foreign language teachers can enrich their classes with effective input carrying out extensive listening through a well chosen and appropriate tapes in different levels , genres and topics . Creative teachers can recommend certain tapes and ask students to talk about the ones they have enjoyed the most.

For the reason of encouraging this type of listening, students can be asked to perform a list of tasks such as:

- To record their responses to what they have heard.
- To assess the level of difficulty.
- To summarize the content of the used material such us a tape.
- To ask students to write their comments in a special comments' boxes to consult them and try to meet all the needs of the learners.

All these tasks aim

"To give students more and more reasons to listen, if they can share their information with colleagues, they will feel they have contributed to the progress of the whole group". (Harmer, 1998, 229).

Consequently, extensive listening is an appropriate way for learners to be provided by extra chances for the reason of constructing their linguistic bank.

A.II.6.1.2. Intensive listening

The other type of listening is the intensive one. It is practiced in every day situations the, ability to listen intensively is considered to be an essential part of listening proficiency. It refers to" **the process of listening for precise sounds words, phrases, grammatical units and pragmatic units**"(Rost, 2002, 138).

EFL teachers in dealing with the intensive listening according to Harmer (1998), prefer to use audio tapes as their favourite material in classroom since it gives students the opportunity to listen to a variety of voices with different accents, different topics with different genres, as well as it provides the learner with a significant source of language input.

As far as intensive listening is concerned, it invites the learners to meet different characters specially when real people are talking in real life situations, interact with speakers, interrupt them and why not asking for clarification this is what is named " live listening". "Live listening" is among the good ways to carry out intensive listening. It can take many forms; such as the teacher's reading aloud to a classroom. Students dealing with this task listen to a natural spoken language of a written passage. In addition to other enjoyable activities like storytelling, conversations and interviews. (Harmer, 1994)

Consequently, intensive and extensive listening are two important ways to ensure the realization of listening in general and they have to be used appropriately.

A.II.6.2. Listening and critical thinking:

One of the ways listening can serve us is by enhancing our skills as a critical thinkers. We can identify four kinds of listening (Stephen, Lucas, 1998).

A.II.6.2.1. Appreciative listening:

Appreciative listening includes listening to music for enjoyment to speakers because you like their styles, to your choices in theatre, television, radio, or films.

It is the response of the listener not the source of the message that defines appreciative listening. Generally speaking we use appreciative listening when we seek information which we will appreciate for example that which helps meet our need and goals.

(Stephen, Lucas, 1998) come to define this type of listening to be:

"Listening for pleasure or enjoyment, as when we listen to music, to a comedy, or to an entertaining speech"

(P57)

A.II.6.2.2. Empathetic listening:

Listening empathetically means that the listeners is seeking to understand beliefs, emotions of other people in order to get them to expose these deep parts of themselves to us, so we need to demonstrate our empathy in our demeanour towards them, by asking them sensitively to encourage self disclosure.

"Empathic listening provides emotional support for the speaker, as when a psychiatrist listens to a patient or when we lend a sympathetic ear to a friend in distress"

(Stephen, Lucas, 1998, 58)

A.II.6.2.3.Comprehensive listening:

After the stage of discriminating between the different sounds of a message, come this type of listening which is the comprehensive one; seeking to make sense of these sounds. To comprehend, the meaning requires first having a lexicon of words, all rules of grammar and syntax in addition to the visual components of communication.

According to Stephen and Lucas (1998):

"Comprehensive listening is devoted for understanding the message of a speaker, as when we attend a classroom lecture"

(P58)

A.II.6.2.4. Critical listening:

The ability to listen critically is essential everywhere, we use in different contexts; family, community... . There is practically no place you can go where critical listening is unimportant. This type of listening deserves much more attention; it is listening to evaluate a message for purposes of accepting or rejecting it (Stephen, Lucas, 1998).

Critical listening in classroom aims at:

- Separate facts from opinions and help students to prevent opinions from influencing their understanding of the facts.
- Evaluate speakers' qualifications, motives, biases and help students to understand how to weight fact and arguments.
- Test ideas for effectiveness and appropriateness and help students to test ideas they learn.
- Recognize the speaker's reasoning and help students to understand the speaker's logic or lack of logic.(Rost ,1994).

A.II.7. Stages in the listening tasks:

In order to help students and facilitating the improvement of their listening abilities in classroom, it is helpful to divide a listening activity into three distinct stages: the pre-listening, the while listening and the post listening.

A.II.7.1. The pre-listening stage:

It is vitally important if we want our students to get as much as possible out of listening. The choice of listening is the first thing. Teachers shouldn't inflict on their students topics they believe will be of little or no interest.

In this stage called " introductory or preparatory", students are required to bring their attitudes, previous knowledge about the topic... they are going to tackle. They should be given a reason to listen, a chance to discuss and predict what they are going to hear since the teacher can not let his student do a listening blind of information and without any point of reference, in addition to the pre-teaching of some vocabulary which may be problematic can also be a useful part of this pre-listening stage. All these activities related to this phase are well presented by Hedge (2000).

"Predicting content from the little of a talk, talking about a picture which relates to the listening text, discussing the topic, answering a set of questions about the topic and agreeing or disagreeing with opinions about the topic"

(P249)

- A.II.7.2. The while listening stage:

This phase refers to the time of listening in classroom. Most teachers use tape recorders for their classroom listening practice. During performing the listening activities, Students are

denied all the physical and visual clues that make face to face communication easier, and they are left with only disembodied voice on what may be a technically poor piece of equipment, sometimes video can cover these difficulties but still in other cases, teachers when using tape recorders must be encouraged to offer visual clues to help students (flashcards, white board...).

While- listening, activities guide the students to collect or catch the necessary information for an overall listening comprehension, those activities ensure the active nature of the process in the fact that grasping every word when listening is not necessary, as well as involving the students to develop good listening habits, which consists in getting the information and immediately performing something with it. Many activities are suggested for teachers to use in this phase:

- Comparing the listening passage with the pre-listening stage.
- Filling in gaps while listening to a conversation where students are given the utterances of one part of the conversation and asked to complete the missing one of the other. Or filling the blanks of a passage with the appropriate missing words like in a song's lyrics.
- Depicting the irrelevant information from a listening passage.
- Sequencing, where students are asked to give the right order of events like in a story for example.
- Listening for specific information or item (information search).

A.II.7.3. The post listening stage:

The feed back to a listening activity in general is important. It is good for students to realise they have been doing something useful and interesting. For that reason, post listening activities refer to all activities which can be practiced after the second phase. Those listening activities are used as a springboard onto other language skills such as reading, speaking and writing.

Post listening activities are considered to be a source of motivating. Students are given the opportunity to get more information about the topic (this interest is not confined only to the original passage but it tends to include student's impressions, opinions, attitudes...) (Hedge, 2000).

This phase of post listening may include:

- Multiple choices or true false questions to be done by students to reflect their comprehension of the passage.

- Summarizing the passage depending on student's notes which had been taken during the while listening stage.
- Check answers to any comprehension tasks in pairs or groups which are less motivating for many students who find listening difficult, or push different groups to listen to different passages might be linked together after which they exchange information to complete the whole original text or passage (a story for example).
- Using debates, discussions, role plays...as means for practicing speaking as well as writing messages and letters to practice the writing skill.

A.II.8. Listening problems

A.II.8.1. Problems related to the listeners

A.II.8.1.1. Lack of concentration and attention

The brain is incredibly efficient. As it is proved scientifically, any person talks at a rate of 120 to 150 words a minute and the brain can process about 400 to 800 words a minute. From these statistics it may seem that listening should be very easy, but it is the opposite .So, in the listening process, the learners can take in all the speaker's words and still have plenty of spare .that's why the learners or listeners interrupt their listening with thinking about other things (Stephen, Lucas,1998).in the classroom context, the same problem has been stated by Rost (1994):

"Many pupils have difficulties following instructions owing to apparent deficits in attention and concentration .Such pupils may not be adapting well to the numerous distractions in a typical classroom"

(p 119)

Anderson and Lynch (1988) come to present the role of attention in the listening performance arguing that, a well listening performance is affected by the degree of students' attention towards the input. They express that the learners in almost cases **"switch off consciously or unconsciously"** (p 6). They explain that students when experiencing listening they attempt to perceive speech word by word instead of focusing their attention on the meaning.

Consequently, the two psychological factors can effect listening negatively whether on perception or on interpretation.

(Yagang.F, 1993).

A.II.8.1.2. Lack of prior knowledge and proficiency

The concerned knowledge in this context is the socio-cultural, factual or the contextual knowledge of the target language. These types of knowledge can present an obstacle to comprehension because according to Anderson and Lynch (1988), this background of non linguistic clues are very essential in helping students to understand the target language and this latter which is the mean to express its culture.

"Gaps in our knowledge of the L₂ culture, of the associations and references available to native users, can present obstacles to comprehension"

(Anderson, Lynch, 1988, 35)

The second kind of knowledge which its lack presents a problem in the listening comprehension is the linguistic knowledge. In this case listeners can clearly hear but unable to understand, this is due to their low proficiency and their bad level in grammar, syntax, phonology and the semantic features in the target language (Anderson and Lynch, 1988).

In the same sense Anderson and Lynch (1988) maintain that, the students having gaps in their linguistic knowledge result to abandon the listening process. They insist on the great impact the linguistic competence has on enabling students to recognize the formatives of the heard utterances and to find out morphemes, words and the meaning.

Many other problems can be clearly noticed:

- Lack of exposure to listening materials since students prefer to read than to listen foreign language (Yagan F, 1993).
- The acuity of hearing; students with some physical problems which prevent them from participating, are unable to hear what is said. They can also be affected by environmental problems such as noise (Rost, 1994).

A.II.8.2. Problems related to the message:

A.II.8.2.1. The content:

The content structure or the information organization in an oral passage plays a noticeable role in learner's understanding. So a well organized passage should be characterized by the chronological and logical order of event to aid students in their listening comprehension, and

any disruption or flash back seen to make the information more difficult to be understood. (Anderson and Lynch, 1988).

In the light of the same view, Yagan, F(1993) comes to maintain that:

"The listening material may deal with almost any area of life. It might include street gossip, proverbs and situations unfamiliar to the students, also in a spontaneous conversation speakers change topics".

(P 16)

-The relationship between the topic and the learner; on practice it is very important, students should be familiar with topics they use in their listening comprehension practices. The good familiarity with the topic reduces the level of difficulty.

A.II.8.3. Problems related to the speaker

Among the difficulties related to the speaker we notice that our learners who are familiar to conduct their learning in slowly and deliberately spoken English find a considerable difficulty in understanding native speakers talk and conversations, and they claim always that they are unable to comprehend this fast and spontaneous speech.

The level of difficulty in comprehension is also noticeable when the process is characterized by the non-visibility of the speaker. A visible speaker with the existence of many paralinguistic features such as facial expressions, hand and body gestures... can enhance positively student's comprehension. Whereas those learners may face many constraints in their comprehension when dealing with audio recordings, since the visual clues are important for the realization of the process had been removed.

Generally speaking , foreign language learners prefer being participants in the process , like in the class discussion and conversations since in this case many visual clues or paralinguistic features may be taken into consideration .

A.II.8.4. Problems related to physical setting:

Difficulties related to this factor can be found in the classroom or the laboratory noises whether noises on the recording or environmental ones. This may prevent the learner to listen well.

In addition to the unclear sounds resulting from poor quality equipment. (Yagan, F, 1993, 16).

A.II.9. Laboratory based teaching

In dealing with Listening , and among the teaching aids teachers tend to use for developing this skill is" the language Laboratory" .It is categorized among the materials which express the use of educational technology in language learning .According to Stone and Lee (1991) , they state that:

"Technically, a language laboratory is an instructional technology tool consisting of a source unit that can disseminate audio materials to any number of students at individual seats or carrels".

Laboratory based teaching is recently organized in such a way to be considered as a big opportunity for learners to work on their own , or with other classmates .It consists of about ten to twenty booths , each on is equipped with: a tape deck , headphones, microphone , and now computers .(Harmer,2001).

A.II.9.1. Characteristics of Laboratory based teaching

Language laboratory has some characteristics which make it different from other learning sources. These characteristics according to Harmer (2001) can be described to cover autonomy, privacy and individualization. They can be summarized to include the following features:

- Double tract

In the sense that students in language laboratory are given the chance to listen to one track on their tapes and record on the other. Students with this feature are permitted to listen back to the original recordings as well as to what they recorded themselves in the microphone. (Harmer, 2001)

.- Teacher access

the teacher or the controller in language laboratory is given plenty of opportunities to be used during his lectures in the lab ; language laboratory has a console or a computer terminal which tends to be controlled by the teacher who can't only listen to individual students , but can also contact , talk with them through microphones.(Harmer,2001).

With language laboratory, the teacher has the same chance to create pairs and groups in his laboratory as in his classroom. This will be through joining booths in pairs or groups by selecting them on the screen, irrespective of their places in the lab (Harmer, 2001).

Since each booth is equipped with a computer, the teacher can access to each booth to read what the student is writing, and correct his mistakes individually by talking to him directly or indirectly through **"editing facility attached to the processing package"** (Harmer, 2001, 142).

- **Different modes**

The teacher is permitted to decide whether or not to have all students working together in the same time; with the same speed from the console. They can also watch a video from their individual monitors, in case of computer equipped laboratories (Harmer, 2001).

A.II.9.2. Advantages of language laboratories

It is noticed that language laboratory provides students and teachers with so many facilities they need in their ordinary courses in classroom. So, this modern language teaching material has different advantages:

- With language laboratory, each student may have the opportunity to hear native speech clearly and distinctly (Rivers, M, 1968), he can listen to this authentic native speech as frequently as he or his teacher desires.
- Students can evaluate their oral performance by making the difference between what they say and the correct pronunciation of the source tape, through the double track (Harmer, 2001).

"The student is in a position to compare objectively a specimen of his own speech in the foreign language with that of native model"

(River, M, 1968, 321).

- The student with language laboratory has a total autonomy; it is described by Harmer (2001) as privacy, since this latter is free to talk with his classmates through microphones, record on tapes, wind, rewind or type on keyboard without disturbing other colleagues.
- The laboratory booths provide the students with psychological isolation

"It releases him from some of his inhibitions about making embarrassing foreign - language sounds in front of his fellows"

(Rivers, M, 1968,321).

- The teacher and his students can contact each other without disturbing the others from the console and hold a private conversation.
- The lab provides the teacher and the learner with a ready means of improving their articulation and intonation where this is desirable.

(Rivers, M, 1968).

According to Harmer (2001) , a language laboratory is a bridge to link between the teacher's control and the learner's autonomy through different activities :repetition , drills, speaking , listening, reading, writing and correcting writing.

It brings a significant innovation to the teaching learning environment; it is a useful tool to develop language skills if it is used appropriately by the teacher.

A.II.10. The use of tapes for listening comprehension:

Listening is vital in language classroom because it provides input for the learner, so no person can deny the role of listening for the good management of classroom communication. To reach the good communication, all effective listening activities are also needed to target one or more useful listening skills with clear outcome and language input. This latter may live in the form of the teacher or learners themselves pre- recorded on audio or video tapes as an authentic material to be introduced to put FL learners in a natural context of the targeted culture with the natural language of native speakers, as Rost notes:

“Authentic spoken language presents a challenge for the learner to attempt to understand language as it is actually used by native speakers” (P.141)

Among the major principles or materials to consider when teaching listening comprehension is the tape recorder that the teacher uses through his activities to fulfil the task . the tape should have a good speaker , clear voice and good motor speed in order not to go faster or slower and it can be heard by all learners all around the classroom.

The tape as it provides an ideal listening material should be selected according to learner's level, topic and genre. So teacher's selection as well as preparation is very important when using tapes (Harmer, 1998) says that:

“Teachers need to listen to the tape all the way through before they take it into the class .That way they will be prepared for any problems, noises, accents...etc, that come up. That way, they can judge whether students will be able to cope with the tape and with the tasks that go with” (P100)

A.II.11. Benefits of tapes or cassette recorder in language classroom

To practice listening skill, teachers use taped materials such as cassette and **“rely on them to provide a significant source of language input ”**(Harmer, 2001,).

They believe it to be very useful to develop student’s ability to listen. Even though, when listening to a cassette recording may be difficult than listening to the teacher since this later occurs face to face with the existence of many visual clues (gestures, lip movements...).Those clues help students to listen and even in case of listening to a passage which is not clear; this listening can be just as source of frustration.

Still this material leads to a good practice of listening and has several benefits in classroom (Doff, 1995).

To realize a successful listening the student must be able to catch the words and phrases that he hears. Students having no chance to listen to English often fail to recognize words they often know, a tape recording is useful for such practice, since it can be stopped at any moment and sentences can be played over and over again (Doff, 1995).

A tape in language classroom can provide students with an opportunity to listen to other voices apart from the teacher’s.

It is a path of bringing natives voices to the class. Students with tapes listen to dialogues, interviews, discussions, stories and expose more than one speaker; otherwise, it depends on the teacher to act the majority of roles in classroom (Doff, 1995).

This benefit is supported by Harmer when he quoted:

“Taped material allows students to hear a variety of different voices apart from just their own teachers; it gives them an opportunity to meet a range of characters and offers them a wide variety of situations and voices”.

(Harmer,2001 ,229)

At last, tapes are available for students and even tape recorders are relatively inexpensive (Harmer, 2001).

For all the reasons mentioned above, most students show an increased level of interest when they have a chance to hear the language used by native speakers, since they get information not only about grammar and vocabulary but also about pronunciation, rhythm, stress and pitch (Harmer, 1998).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have set out an overall presentation of some theoretical and practical aspects of second or foreign language listening skill and listening comprehension. Throughout the topic covering, we tried to show that listening is an active process and a very important skill to master in foreign or second language classroom in order to gain valuable language input, but still it seems so difficult for students to deal with.

So, we tended to tackle this topic by giving it so much care about the various features that effect listeners' listening ability as well as their level of comprehension. We aimed to clarify that the needs, levels and interest of the students will determine the kind of listening tasks that teachers use, it should be always realistic and authentic to provide the learner with more autonomy in his listening.

We favour the use of tapes through language laboratories and mentioning some techniques we use in it, since the lab based teaching is considered to be very fruitful. Listening materials ' preparation is vital and students should be encouraged to respond to the content of the listening, not just the language. Different listening stages (pre- while -post listening) demand different listening tasks. The good teacher exploits all these factors to realize a successful listening and guide his learners towards a real productive phase