

Listening Comprehension Difficulties and the Remedial Steps

When we listen to something or read something, we try to understand the message. But we realize listening comprehension is more difficult than reading comprehension. When the message is in the written form, we may read it at our own speed; we may read it again and again; we may take the help of a dictionary for the meanings of words. But these facilities are not available when we listen to a spoken message.

Comprehension Difficulties:

According to Rixon, these difficulties of listening comprehension may be summarized under four heads:

1. Sound Difficulties: Different people speak in different ways. The same sound may be produced by different people differently. Intonations and stresses may be different. The speaking-speed of a speaker may be very fast. The listener has no control on the speed of the speech. As such, some of the message may go unheard. He may ask the speaker to slow down but the speaker cannot change his habit at such a demand. Sometimes, the listener, for various reasons, does not receive the word correctly. Words like ship and sheep, bird and bud, girl and gull may not be pronounced clearly, and may create confusion.

2. Words and Grammar Difficulties:

Sometimes, the vocabulary of the listener is not good enough to understand the full message.

Some words have special meanings. The listener may not understand them. In the written language, we use the grammar rules very strictly. But in conversation, we pay more attention to the communication of the message. We usually ignore the rules. The listener keeps trying to understand the rules and cannot keep pace with the speech which is being delivered. He cannot ask the speaker to repeat.

3. Experience Difficulties: Sometimes, the topic of the speech is unfamiliar to the listener. He listens but cannot understand the terms and the themes. This happens in the class room when the teacher starts a lesson without any introduction to the topic of the lesson. As a result, the students cannot respond to his questions.

Remedial Steps:

In tackling with these difficulties, the teacher should adopt some remedial (intended to improve) steps in the class room:

1. The teacher should make the students familiar with the correct production of sounds, proper accent and intonation. He should present a good model before them. He should be clear and slow in his speech. With the passage of time, he may be more fluent.
2. The teacher should make the students aware of the grammatical 'rules' in conversation. He should tell them while listening, they should pay more attention to the comprehension of the message. He

should ask them to consult a dictionary to find that a word may have more than one meaning. He should instruct them to interpret the meanings of words in their context.

3. The teacher should see that the room is not noisy when he is trying to teach a lesson or when he is talking. In a noisy room, the students can miss many points of his speech.
4. The teacher should ensure that his speech may be about the topic within the experience of the students. His speech should not be packed with information. It should be simple so that the response of the listeners may be sure and positive.
5. Body movements may be used by the teacher while speaking. They will attract the attention of the students and as a result, they will listen more carefully. They will supplement their listening with the interpretation of the teacher's movements.