

## **Investigation on the Listening Activities Which Middle School Students Are Most Interested in--Action Research**

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### **Abstract**

*In the early years of English language teaching, listening comprehension was a rather neglected aspect in foreign language teaching. Listening was regarded as an ability that will develop automatically, in consequence, listening was viewed as a relatively passive activity. But nowadays, the significance of listening has been recognized, and it is generally and widely accepted that listening is a basic skill in language learning, so the boosting of interesting in listening activities will make great contributions to second language learning.*

*This paper mainly discuss about two activities in listening teaching, they are “match the words” and “draw pictures”. Compared with traditional activity just “listen to the tape recorder”, these two listening activity are more interesting and inspiring,. The research will explore the answer to “what kind of listening activities are students most interested in?.*

**Key words:** listening activity; interesting; middle school students

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

For L2 learners, they may be all faced with difficulties and obstacles in the process of listening and speaking, especially for us Chinese L2 learners, listening and speaking are really difficult to master, compared with the other two basic skills--reading and writing. It is because of the traditional language learning method, we put students in a rigid model of listening teaching, it seems that there is no other better listening activities to adopt, so many students think listening is difficult and boring. Recently, however, some listening methodologists have started to advocate a shift away from previously accepted listening pedagogy and toward listening activities that aim to improve students' bottom-up processing and decoding skills.

### **1.2 Significance of the Research**

Many of us have acknowledged that listening is our "weak point", and it is also a "weak point" of many L2 learners, so improving the current situation about listening teaching is a necessary and important work. The research of "what kind of listening activities are students most interested in?" not only has significance for foreign language teaching, but also good for developing students' practical and comprehensive skills, letting them know "learning by doing" and "learning for doing". Meanwhile, students can get so much fun from the process of completing these interesting activities, and get motivated and encouraged to learn English better, and this good belief may influence the process of learning other subjects.

### **1.3 Organization of the Thesis**

This paper falls into five parts. The first chapter is the introduction part of the thesis which presents the purpose of the thesis, significance of the study as well as the organization of the thesis. Chapter Two is the literature review. Three major parts are included in this chapter: the study of definition, classification of listening, and some related theories about listening activities. Chapter Three mainly talks about the action research which falls into three parts: research questions, subjects and procedures. Chapter Four presents the results and analysis of the thesis, which addresses the results by analyzing the collected data, and figured out what kind of listening activities that students most interested is. Chapter Five is the conclusion of the whole research, in which some major findings and general implications for teachers and students are put forward. Meanwhile, it also points out the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research in this chapter.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Definition of Listening**

Listening is to give one's attention to sound. Listening involves complex affective, cognitive, and behavioral processes. Affective processes include the motivation to attend to others; cognitive processes include attending to, understanding, receiving, and interpreting content and relational

messages; and behavioral processes include responding with verbal and nonverbal feedback.

## **2.2 The Classification of Listening**

A distinction is often made between "intensive listening", in which learners attempt to listen with maximum accuracy to a relatively brief sequence of speech, and "extensive listening", in which learners listen to lengthy passages for general comprehension. While intensive listening may be more effective in terms of developing specific aspects of listening ability, extensive listening is more effective in building fluency and maintaining learner motivation.

## **2.3 Home and Abroad Research about Listening Activities**

In the early years of English language teaching literature, listening comprehension was a rather neglected aspect in foreign language teaching. Many English language teaching method in early days looked at listening as an ability that will develop automatically. In consequence, listening was viewed as a very passive activity. For example, Anderson(1988:9) point out that there was once a time a view of listening that considering listeners as only "tape recorders". Anderson provided this as a good demonstrating of how surprisingly listening was neglected and under valued. The reason for the neglecting is maybe as the following one noted by Morley(972) that listening is assumed as a "relax, a little like 'breathing' process". So this is why listening is easy to be taken for granted at that time.

But nowadays, from time to time, the role of listening in everyday life has been recognized. It is now a common and widely accepted knowledge that when an individual is engaged in communication, listening will occupy approximately 45-50% of the whole communication time (Hedge,2000:229). Listening now is considered as a basic skill in language learning and listening comprehension is anything but a passive activity. This boost of interesting in listening is great due to the development in the area of second language acquisition research (Nunan,1998; Hedge,2000; Rost, 2000).

## **3. Action Research**

### **3.1 Research Question**

The research aims to answer this following question: What kind of listening activities are students most interested in?

### **3.2 Research Subject**

Students in class xxx

### **3.3 Research Procedure**

#### **3.3.1 Plan**

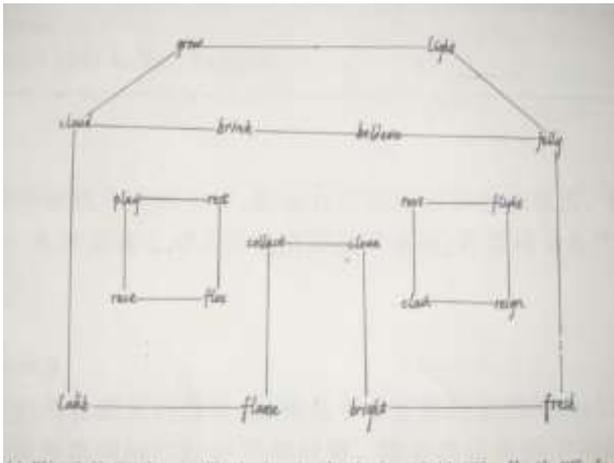
**Finding focus:** Listening has been commonly seen as a difficult problem for us non native speakers, and in my learning and teaching experience, it confused me so much. For example, we always see

there is just “listening” in listening class and no other relative activities, and just students involved in the listening process, teachers play a least part in the whole class. It seems that there is no better way of teaching listening. So I want to focus on listening part in this action research and figure out what kind of listening activities are students most interested in?

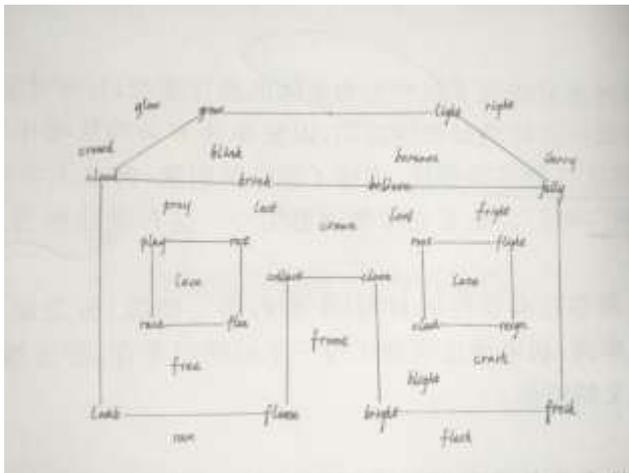
**Refining questions:** What kind of listening activities are students most interested in?

**Preparing resources and materials:**

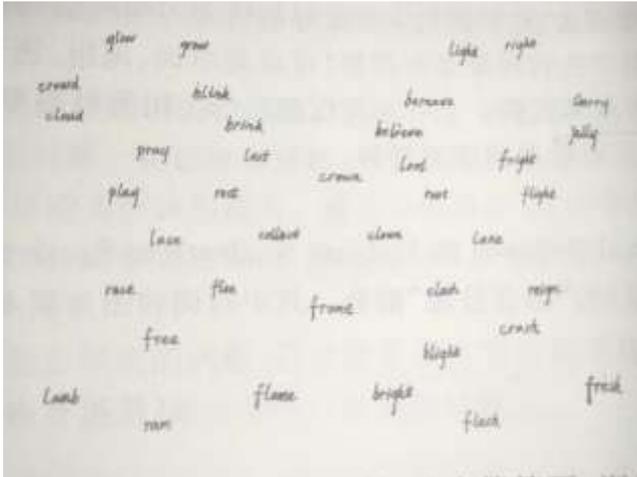
**Activity 1:**



(According to the current level of the students, these words are put in the stick figure at random, as above)



(Some similar words are put around the original words as interference words, as above)



**(Wipe off the stick figure, and just leave the words on the paper, as above. This is what teachers used in class, and the stick figure should be copied more for students' use)**

### Activity 2: Draw picture

The teacher broadcast a piece of listening material about appearance of persons, and let students draw a picture on a blank sheet according to what they hear.

#### 3.3.2 Act

Teacher carried out the above two activities, for example, activity 1:

T: Would you please look at these words and expressions on the screen? We are going to draw a picture according to these words. If you can pronounce them correctly, you are sure to draw a beautiful picture of something. And you have only one minute to practice reading these words in group of four. Ready? Go.

.....(one minute has passed)

T: Ok, now let's check your work. I would like to ask one of you to help me. Tom, could you?

S: With pleasure.

T: Listen carefully, if Tom pronounces the word correctly, the whole class read after him. If he is wrong, say "no" loudly and then correct him. Clear?

S: Yes.

### Observing and describing Observation notes

Not all observation data are counted, listening task is a silent classroom activity itself, it is better to use a descriptive and narrative way to record. So in this action research, observation note is used.

| <b>Task 1: match the words</b>                             | <b>Date: week 1</b>  |
|--|--|
| 1. When Tom reads words                                    | Students.....(whether actively take part in reading after him or correcting him)     |
| 2. When teacher hands out the pictures previously prepared | Students.....(whether interested in figuring out what the final picture is)          |
| 3. When listen to the tape                                 | Students.....(whether concentrate on the listening task or distract and gaze around) |

| <b>Task 2: draw pictures</b>  | <b>Date: week 2</b>   |
|---|---|
| 1. When teacher asks the students to draw a picture according to what they hear | Students.....(whether expect to begin this activity)                                    |
| 2. When listen to the tape  | Students.....(whether actively take part in listening task or distract and gaze around) |

### Asking and discussing—Questionnaires & Interview

#### Questionnaire

After experiencing two different listening activities in two weeks, teacher hands out questionnaires to all students and ask them to fill in in 3 minutes.

**The questionnaire is anonymous, please fill it out truly and objectively, your answer would be important to English listening teaching.**

**1. Between the two activities and traditional listening activity, which one do you like best?**

**A. match the words                      B. draw pictures                      C. traditional listening activities**

**2. Have you ever experienced any one of these two kinds of activities?**

**A. match the words                      B. draw pictures                      C. no**

**3. Which listening activity is easier for you?**

**A. match the words                      B. draw pictures                      C. traditional listening activities**

**4. Which listening activity do you expect to take part in next time?**

**A. match the words                      B. draw pictures                      C. traditional listening activities**

**5. What have you gained through this listening activity?**

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### **Semi-structured Interview**

**Semi-structured interview enables one to make comparison across the participants' response, meanwhile allow for individual diversity and flexibility. In order to make clear what students' of different stages of achievement think about the two activities, semi-structured interview is adopted by the teacher to get deeper and richer information.**

#### **Questions list**

- 1. Do you think if you are good at listening?**
- 2. What are your problems in listening task?**
- 3. What do you think of the two new activities compared with traditional listening way? Which one do you like best?**
- 4. Which activity do you think can improve your study?**
- 5. Do you have any other problems about your favorite listening activity?**

### **3.3.3 Observe**

**Analysing quantitative data from questionnaire**

**Analysing qualitative data from interview and observation note**

### **3.3.4 Reflect**

#### **Reflecting in the AR cycle**

What the degree of students' taking part in these two listening activities?

Which listening activity results in better result?

Which activity do students like best?

#### **Planning the next steps**

Action research is a process of cycling, and the way of teaching listening is various and varied, the teacher should explore more listening teaching method and compare the advantages and disadvantages to improve English teaching.

#### **Sharing with others**

Sharing the action research findings with the researcher's colleagues or higher-level researcher for advice or recommend to them, so that they can make further improvement in their teaching activities as well as their teaching career.

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