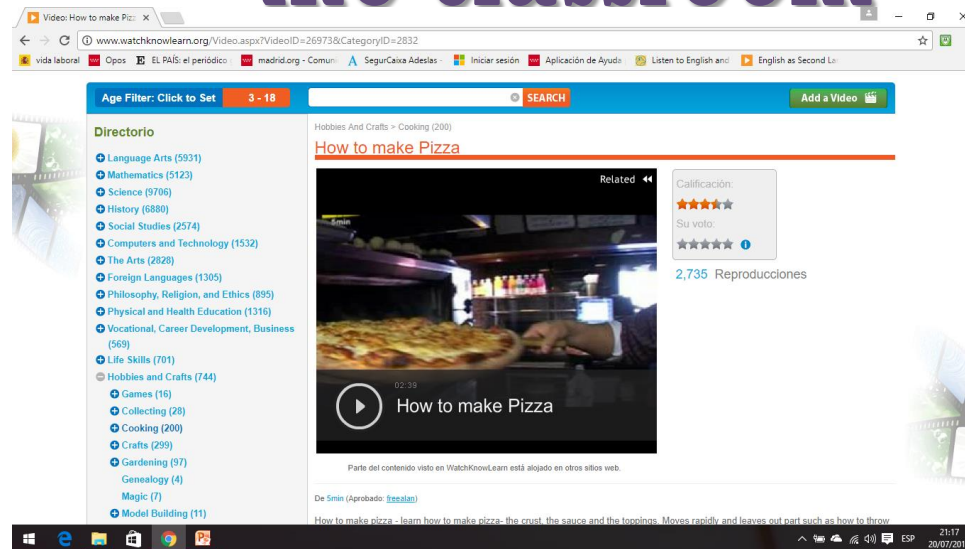


How to foster listening activities in the classroom



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IN-22 Supporting Effective Learning

Why working on doing better listening activities?

During my teaching experience I have found that listening activities cause anxiety in my students and they feel unconfident when dealing with the audios and exercises.

After working on the different problems students usually find, ways to approach the texts and how to make the best of the exercises we ask them to do, I have developed new activities to put into practice with my students and see if they feel less anxious and more confident when learning through these following listening activities. I am going to focus on vocabulary exercises too as students learn new vocabulary all the time.

Problems Ss find when listening in L2

External to the listener

- They do not choose the topic
- Possibility of poor sound quality
- Background noise many times
- No visual/contextual clues to help understanding
- No facial gestures or body language
- No speaker accommodation for the listener

Internal to the listener

- Limited topic or cultural knowledge
- Poor use of previous knowledge
- Poor Ss anticipation skills
- Poor negotiation skills

And some other problems Ss find are: Different accents, speed, information content or understanding of the required questions/tasks.

How to prepare activities

When we are choosing, approaching or preparing listening activities for our Ss we should take into account the following things:

1. Length of the recording
2. Difficulty of the recording
3. Supporting the listening process:
 - How many times we play it
 - Do we stop the recording if Sss need it?
 - Individual/pair or group work
 - Show them the script or not
 - Pre-teach vocabulary
4. Types of activities:
 - Pre listening activities
 - While listening activities
 - Post listening activities

Pre-teaching vocabulary is crucial as students are less anxious when we work on the key vocabulary before dealing with the audio, video or text.

Which listening do I choose?

I have decided to choose a video instead of a common audio track from a textbook as students may find easier to see the face gestures, body language and context while listening. As I have mention before, all these things may help our Ss in the listening process.

In this specific case the video is about how to make pizza, as food is one of the usual topics in our textbooks. Moreover, kids usually like pizza so they may find interesting how to prepare it. And it is just a 02.39 minutes video. The appropriate level of the students I was thinking of when looking for the video is a 1ºESO Sección.

<http://www.watchknowlearn.org/Video.aspx?VideoID=26973&CategoryID=2832>

Pre-listening activities

The video contains instructions so it is going to be an intensive reading and Ss will look for specific information too.

It is vital to start the lesson with the pre-listening activities as they will lead them to the task.

Some of the main important activities are :

- Establishing the topic and activating prior knowledge: Do you like typical food from other countries? Do you know which is one of the most famous things to try in Italy apart from pasta? Have you ever eaten home made pizza? What are your favourite ingredients? Would you like to have a recipe so you can do it at home?

Pre-listening activities

- Pre-teaching key vocabulary and predicting: as they are going to see and listen to a recipe it will be interesting to work on some key words as ingredients or measurement. Matching or classifying exercises at this point is an good idea.

❖ A tool that help us a lot to prepare these exercises is the following one:

<http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/code/BuildWordSearch.asp>

I have created an exercise with the words which appear in the listening so we have the chance to introduce it before listening to it for the first time. It is an identifying exercise.

Pre-listening activities

Cooking is great fun!

V W P A P V W D M E I T A U M
L F U O Y V E U V D Z A B M D
A I C D T G S E K A B B M R Y
S F O A R H Y Q R M F L I E N
A L L E R A Z O M E Z E A O Y
U W E O V C O K L M D S O T Y
C S O G Z I H M F O T P F A L
E M S S O G L O O H S O C M P
S O R E G A N O P A Q O H O P
D Y H C N U R C E P R N I T A
R E C R U S T T O K E Q C S Y
N E C H E E S E I N A D K L H
U E T N V H S E R F I R E I C
J K V A I J J U N Y V O N C C
Z X I O W M O O F G K P N E R

APPLY
BAKE
CHEESE
CHICKEN
CHOPPED
CRUNCHY
CRUST
CUP
DEGREES
DRIED
FRESH
HOMEMADE
MINCED
MOZARELLA
MUSHROOMS
OLIVE OIL
ONION
OREGANO
OVEN
SAUCE
SLICE
TABLESPOON
TEASPOON
TOMATO
WATER
YEAST

Learning vocabulary

When Ss learn new vocabulary we must be aware of the process of it so we can help them to do it better and more efficiently.

Students find easier to learn vocabulary when they label the new words, categorising them, or through networking building. When they can make associations their brains start compiling the information better. To learn the new words they need to see the object itself, the written word and know the spoken word so their memory starts working.

As teachers, we have plenty of possibilities to create appropriate exercises so the learning process is better and taking into account these following techniques we help the long-term memory.

- Repetition exercises
- Retrieval exercises
- Use or loose exercises: identifying, matching, classifying, selecting,
- Cognitive and affective depth exercises
- Mnemonics
- Imaging

While listening activities

The activities we ask our Ss to do while listening are very important to be thought in advance. Now, retrieval, repetition or cognitive depth exercises are helpful for our Ss.

- Are we going to stop the recording? Why not, if students need time to cover the exercises or need time to write down some key words it is very useful for them if we give them a few seconds. This is the only way we have to negotiate with the speaker.

While listening activities

- Stop and ask to predict: It will be very useful for Ss to be able to anticipate what comes next and as a group we will help slow finishers to have more context before hand.
- Stop and clarify: of course depending on the level of our Ss, but it will help them to be relaxed if we can solve any pronunciation problem or vocabulary question.

Post-listening activities

As some strategies to check answers and measure comprehension we can use these ideas:

- Check in pairs and then as a class.
- Put answers on the screen/board.
- Teacher reads or shows the script.
- Listen again at home.

Conclusions

After a week working with Robin Walker and my teacher colleagues, my vision on how to teach listening activities has changed a lot. I wanted to give other teachers my own vision trying to choose an appropriate listening, working on the problems students have to make them the process easier and working on the pre-listening activities deeply as those are the ones I did not use to do very well before this course. I have also tried to guide or help teachers who think, as I do, that learning vocabulary is a never ending process and we need to try to do it the best way possible when dealing with these words in class.

Some of the statement which are clue to me now are the following ones, they will probably make you think twice before start planning your lessons.

- **When we make public the external difficulties the Ss may have when doing the listening, it makes them relax.**
- **Ss are better listeners if they know about the process of listening ‘metacognitive knowledge’**
- **Ss always tend to do intensive listening but they can just do it for a few seconds and then they disconnect.**
- **Do not correct every single mistake if it is not crucial to understanding.**

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