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## **ОБУЧЕНИЕ НАВЫКАМ ВОСПРИЯТИЯ**

### **TEACHING THE RECEPTIVE SKILLS**

**Summary:** After reading this article, you should be able to know what skills are called receptive skills, explain the importance of the teacher's role in creating expectations and enthusiasm for the text that is to be read or heard, distinguish between authentic and non-authentic texts, explain why a frequent diet of successful reading and listening is very good for learners of English, name and describe five stages of the basic methodological model for the teaching of receptive skills.

**Key phrases:** Content; expectations; receptive skills; authentic; predictive skills; disregard the information; detailed information; exposure to.

In our daily lives we read and listen to a great deal of language, and it is possible to divide this language into two broad categories: interest and usefulness.

Very often we read or listen to something because it interests us – or at least we think it will interest us. Magazine readers choose to read the article on page 35 rather than the story on page 66 because they think it will be interesting. Buyers in a bookshop often select books because they think they will like them. The radio listener tunes especially to programs that he or she expects will be stimulating. This category of interest also includes reading and listening for enjoyment, pleasure and intellectual stimulation.

No one would suggest that the instructions you read are interesting. Nevertheless we have a desire to read or listen to "useful" texts because they will tell us something we want or need to know.

The two categories are not always independent of each other anyway. We may read something that is useful and find that it is interesting as students reading for their studies often do.

In real life people generally read or listen to something because they want to and because they have a purpose in doing so. The purpose may be to know how to operate that washing machine or to find out what has happened recently in an election or to discover the latest trends in language teaching.

In real life, therefore, readers and listeners have a purpose which is more fundamental than that involved in some language learning tasks which seem only to be asking about details of language.

People read and listen to language because they have a desire to do so and a purpose to achieve. Usually, too, they will have expectations about the content of the text before they start.

Receptive skills: Readers or listeners use a number of skills when reading or listening. Their success at understanding the content of what they see or hear depends to a large extent on their expertise in these specialist skills. We will look at six of these skills.

Predictive skills: Efficient readers or listeners predict what they are going to hear and read; the process of understanding the text is the process of seeing how the content of the text matches up to these predictions.

First of all their predictions will be the result of the expectations they have – which we discussed above. As they continue to listen and read, however, their predictions will change as they receive more information from the text.

Extracting specific information; Very often we read something or listen to it because we want to extract specific bits of information – to find out a fact or two. We may quickly look through a film review just to find the name of the star. We may listen to the news, only concentrating when the particular item that interests us

comes up. In both cases we may largely disregard the other information. This skill when applied to reading is often called scanning.

Getting the general picture; we often read or listen to things because we want to "get general picture". We want to have an idea of the main points of the text – an overview – without being too concerned with the details.

When applied to reading this skill is often called skimming. It entails the reader's ability to pick out main points rapidly, discarding what is not essential or relevant to that general picture. Listeners often need the same skill too – listening for the main message and disregarding the repetition, false starts and irrelevances that are features of spoken language.

Extracting detailed information, a reader or listener often has to be able to access texts for detailed information. The information required can be of many kinds. Exactly what does the writer mean? What precisely is the speaker trying to say? Questions like "How many?" "Why?" "How often?" are often answered by reference to this kind of detail. In case of reading, a reader might want to reread some parts or to stop and reflect on the text. This type of reading is called close reading.

Recognizing functions and discourse patterns; Native speakers of English know that when they read or hear someone say "for example" this phrase is likely to be followed by an example. When they read "in other words" a concept will be explained in a different way. Recognizing such discourse markers is an important part of understanding how a text is constructed. We know which phrases are used by speakers to structure their discourse or give them "time to think". We need to make students aware of these features in order to help them to become more efficient readers and listeners.

Deducing meaning from context, the other important sub-skill is deducing meaning from the context. Teachers should help students to develop their ability to deduce meanings of unfamiliar words from the context in which they appear. All the skills mentioned here are largely subconscious in the minds of experienced and frequent readers. But reading or listening in a foreign language creates barriers for

the learner which may make these skills and sub-skills more difficult to use. Our job is to re-activate these skills which learners have in their own language. Receptive and productive skills; our discussions have important implications for the teaching of receptive skills which we can now consider. As it is known students can generally deal with a higher level of language in receptive skills than in productive skills. It should be remembered that being able to understand a piece of text does not necessarily mean that students have to be able to write or speak like that! Rather their job will be to interact with the text in order to understand it and this seems possible even where the text contains language which the students are not able to produce. All over the world there are students who can read English but who are unable to speak it very well.

Authentic and non-authentic text; One aspect of reading and listening that concerns many teachers and methodologists is the difference between authentic and non-authentic texts. The former are those which are designed for native speakers: they are "real" texts. Thus English-language newspapers are composed of what we would call authentic English, and so are radio programs for English speakers. A British advertisement is an example of English-speaking audience. A non-authentic text in language teaching terms is one that has been written especially for language-learning students.

All over the world language teaching materials use such devices. Their aim is to isolate bits of language so that students can concentrate on them. Such material should not be used, however, to help students become better listeners or readers. The obviously artificial nature of the language makes it very unlikely that they will encounter such texts in real life. While some may claim that it is useful for teaching structures, it cannot be used to teach reading or listening skills. Teachers of English should understand that obviously non-authentic material would not necessarily make their students better listeners or readers, especially since they would not be acquiring the real language. What we need, therefore, are texts which students can understand the general meaning of, whether they are truly authentic or not. But texts – whether authentic or not – must be realistic models of written or spoken English.

If teachers can find genuinely authentic material which their students can cope with that will be advantageous; if not they should be using material which simulates authentic English.

Purpose, desire and expectations; People usually read or listen to something because they have a desire to do so and some purpose to achieve. Furthermore, they generally have some expectations about what they are going to read or hear before they actually tackle the text.

The methodology for teaching receptive skills must reflect these facts about real life, and the tasks we ask students to perform must be realistic and motivating. We will not get students to interact properly with spoken and written material unless we ensure that their desire to read or listen has been awakened. The methodological model given below will reflect these points about creating a desire to read and allowing students to develop expectations, and the material will be designed to get students to read and listen for a purpose.

Receiving and doing; the purposes for which people read and listen are, of course, extremely varied. However, we can say that when people read or listen they do something with what they have just seen or heard.

As a general methodological principle, therefore, we would expect students to use what they have read or heard in order to perform some task. When they have done work on comprehension skills, in other words, we would expect them to react to, or do something with the text. This might take the form of giving opinions about what they have just read, following instructions, writing a postcard, summarizing the content of the text or having a conversation based on the text.

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