# Teaching Receptive Skills

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***Rezumat***
*Articolul dat abordeaza problema citirii şi audierii şi importanţa acestora pentru vorbitorii de limba engleză. Sunt prezentate metode effective de formare a abilitaţilor de citire şi audiere a studenţilor în limba engleză.*

As language teachers we know that language skills cannot be taught separately, but are tackled simultaneously within the language teaching process. Judging from past experience, we find these two skills very demanding for students, but essential to master in their language acquisition.

Teaching Reading. Traditionally, the purpose of learning to read in a language has been to have access to the literature written in that language. In language teaching, reading materials have traditionally been chosen from literary texts that represent "higher" forms of culture. This approach assumes that students learn to read a language by studying its vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure, not by actually reading it. Lower level learners read only sentences and paragraphs generated by textbook writers and instructors. The reading of authentic materials is limited to the works of great authors and reserved for upper level students who have developed the language skills needed to read them. The communicative approach to language teaching has given teachers a different understanding of the role of reading in the language classroom and the types of texts that can be used in teaching. When the goal of teaching is communicative competence, everyday materials such as train schedules, newspaper articles, and travel and tourism Web sites become appropriate classroom materials. Training in reading and reading practice thus become essential parts of language teaching at every level. A person may read in order to gain information or verify existing knowledge, or in order to critique a writer's ideas or writing style. A person may also read for enjoyment, or to enhance knowledge of the language being read. The purpose(s) for reading guide the reader's selection of texts. The purpose for reading also determines the appropriate approach to reading comprehension. A person who needs to know whether she can afford to eat at a particular restaurant needs to comprehend the pricing information provided on the menu, but does not need to recognize the name of every appetizer listed. A person reading poetry for enjoyment needs to recognize the words the poet uses and the ways they are put together, but does not need to identify main idea and supporting details. However, a person using a scientific article to support an opinion needs to know the vocabulary that is used, understand the facts and cause-effect sequences that are presented, and recognize ideas that are presented as hypotheses and givens. Reading is an interactive process that goes on between the reader and the text, resulting in comprehension. The reader uses knowledge, skills, and strategies to determine what that meaning is. Reader knowledge, skills, and strategies include: Linguistic competence; Discourse competence; Sociolinguistic competence; Strategic competence. Language teachers are often frustrated by the fact that students do not automatically transfer the strategies they use when reading in their native language to reading in a language they are learning. Instead, they seem to think reading means starting at the beginning and going word by word, stopping to look up every unknown vocabulary item, until they reach the end. When they do this, students are relying exclusively on their linguistic knowledge, a bottom-up strategy. One of the most important functions of the language teacher, then, is to help students move past this idea and use top-down strategies as they do in their native language. Strategies that can help students read more quickly and effectively include: Previewing; Predicting;

Skimming and scanning; Guessing from context; Paraphrasing [1, p.10].

When reading to learn, students need to follow four basic steps:

1. Figure out the purpose for reading.

2. Attend to the parts of the text that are relevant to the identified purpose and ignore the rest.

3. Select strategies that are appropriate to the reading task and use them flexibly and interactively.

4. Check comprehension while reading and when the reading task is completed [2, p.20].

Teaching Listening. Listening is the language modality that is used most frequently. It has been estimated that adults spend almost half their communication time listening, and students may receive as much as 90% of their in-school information through listening to instructors and to one another. Often, however, language learners do not recognize the level of effort that goes into developing listening ability. Far from passively receiving and recording aural input, listeners actively involve themselves in the interpretation of what they hear, bringing their own background knowledge and linguistic knowledge to bear on the information contained in the aural text. Not all listening is the same; casual greetings, for example, require a different sort of listening capability than do academic lectures. Language learning requires intentional listening that employs strategies for identifying sounds and making meaning from them.

Listening involves a sender (a person, radio, television), a message, and a receiver (the listener). Listeners often must process messages as they come, even if they are still processing what they have just heard, without backtracking or looking ahead. Given the importance of listening in language learning and teaching it is essential for language teachers to help their students become effective listeners. In the communicative approach to language teaching, this means modeling listening strategies and providing listening practice in authentic situations: those that learners are likely to encounter when they use the language outside the classroom. Effective language teachers show students how they can adjust their listening behavior to deal with a variety of situations, types of input, and listening purposes. They help students develop a set of listening strategies and match appropriate strategies to each listening situation.

Listening strategies are techniques or activities that contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input. Listening strategies can be classified by how the listener processes the input.

*Top-down strategies* are listener based; Top-down strategies include: listening for the main idea, predicting, drawing inferences, summarizing.

*Bottom-up strategies* are text based. Bottom-up strategies include: listening for specific details, recognizing cognates, recognizing word-order patterns, Strategic listeners also use *metacognitive strategies* to plan, monitor, and evaluate their listening. To extract meaning from a listening text, students need to follow four basic steps:

• Figure out the purpose for listening.

• Attend to the parts of the listening input that are relevant to the identified purpose and ignore the rest.

• Select top-down and bottom-up strategies that are appropriate to the listening task and use them flexibly and interactively.

• Check comprehension while listening and when the listening task is over [3, p.120].

Asking a learner to "read and listen" a text requires that teachers specify a reading and listening goal. One minimal goal is to ask the learner to find particular grammatical constructions or to identify words that relate to particular features or topics of the reading and listening. But

such goals are always only partial.

**Bibliography**

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