

Wearing Different Listening Hats: A Classroom Activity for Demonstrating the Effect of Listening Attitudes

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter reports two case studies done in a teacher training university (SRTTU) in Iran to find the effects of two technology-based learning environments on EFL pre-service teachers' learning and technology acceptance. In the first case, a learning management system (LMS) was used to support EFL learners' writing ability in a writing course. In the second case, the effect of an educational blog on increasing students' phonological awareness was probed into. Both studies adopted a pretest-posttest control and experimental group design. The results revealed that, while controlling for students' entry-level ability, the experimental group out-performed the control group in their final assessment. Perceptions of students who experienced technology-based environments were assessed by a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. It was found that most students enjoyed using both technologies for learning, accepted them as valuable educational sources, and preferred to extend using them into other university courses.

RATIONALE

Instructors who teach basic communication courses such as Interpersonal Communication or Business and Professional Communication often find it challenging to motivate students' interest in developing Listening Skills. Students' typical biases against formal classroom training in everyday communication behaviors are particularly activated by the topic of listening. Students tend to begin with the assumption that listening is a passive activity largely beyond one's control. Unlike presentation or interviewing skills that are overtly expressed and therefore easily available for demonstration and evaluation; listening is presumed to be an internal, cognitive process not as amenable for observation or assessment. The primary challenge for an instructor then is to create an opportunity for students to perceive the effects of different listening approaches.

To accomplish this goal, I prepared a simple classroom activity that relies on a YouTube video-clip and a few reflection/discussion questions. The activity permits students to experience and demonstrate the effects of different listening attitudes on their actual listening abilities.

ACTIVITY STEPS

Step 1: Students are informed that they will be watching the video recording of a short political speech. Each student selects one slip of paper from a bowl. Each slip of paper describes a kind of listening "hat" that the student will wear as s/he listens to the speech. The directions (see Appendix) on the slips of paper indicate specific attitudes that the student will assume while listening, as well as specific goals for the listening process. Ensure that students sitting adjacent to each other receive different listening directions and that the listening directions are more or less evenly distributed throughout the classroom.

Step 2: Students watch a 6 minute video clip of a local politician's speech. The politician Phil Davison was running for the position of County Treasurer at the time. The speech noticeably violates several conventions of non-verbal speech delivery, making it difficult to follow the speaker's content. Clip available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhV5RgcNJjE&feature=related>

Step 3: After the clip has been watched, students are instructed to write down three-four of the most important things they remember from Davison's speech in response to the listening prompts given to them on their slips of paper. It is important not to tell the students about this memory requirement before they watch the clip, so as to allow for maximum differential effect of the listening instructions.

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