

Raising Students' Awareness on Word Stress in Teaching Listening

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Abstract

Listening skill for English as Foreign Language learners is important to make the communication understood among the speakers and avoid misunderstanding. In teaching listening, teacher points that students find the difficulties to understand the words they hear because of lack of exposure to English words sounds and not familiar with the words sound (Cohen, 2007). To deal with this problem, teacher should starts to expose students to the new words in the intensive listening practice. Students learn to listen closely to the sounds, words and phrases. In this activity, teacher can introduce new vocabulary which is available in the text before the listening activity. In this activity, teacher raises student's awareness on word stress. Word stress is when we pronounce a word based on the number of syllable which receives stress. The sound it produces can make rhythm which makes students familiar with the word. Students can practice pronounce words; content words and function words before each listening activity. In pre-listening activity, word stress is introduced, students will be more aware of the words they will hear during listening process. The study emphasizes that integrating word stress in teaching listening can help students improve their listening ability and achieve comprehension.

Key words: Listening, word stress, vocabulary, awareness

Introduction

Listening is one of the required skills for second language learners in learning English. In teaching listening, teacher can help students to listen and produce sound. Sound system of English will be different from the mother tongue. It is necessary to make students be familiar with the words sound.

The spoken discourse; sounds, words, clauses, sentences produced by other speakers, need comprehension. The listener needs to listen to the utterances from other speakers in order to understand the spoken discourse, since it often lasts in a short period of time and cannot be repeated.

In many traditional listening classroom, teaching *bottom up strategy* is commonly used, teacher help learners to use stress and intonation to identify words and sentence function. Through intensive listening activities, such as, dictation, cloze listening, and activities which required detailed recognition, teacher helps learners to recognize key words in the spoken text and use stress and intonation to identify words (Richards, 2008). Teacher teaches counting syllables and teaches word stress. The activities, such as, circling stressed syllable, circle the most stressed word in a sentence and using noise maker (or a flute) so that students can understand the sound and stresses.

English learners will deal with words in listening activity. Thus, it is necessary to recognize the key words. When acquiring a new word, an English learner will try to recognize the stress. This habit is useful to make someone to be familiar with the stress pattern and to know the syllable which receives stress. The vocabulary often listed in the beginning of a text or in the glossary. The list of the words which will be found in the spoken text will be introduced to make learners familiar and to get the background knowledge of what they will hear. Then, students should identify the pattern of the stress in each word (Kenworthy, 1987). Renandya (2011) reported that student are unable to recognize words they knew which is one of the

listening problems experienced by students. Listening activity is useful for helping to raise student's awareness of word stress (Kelly, 2000). Students should be trained to be aware of the rhythm.

There are two features of pronunciation, Phonemes and suprasegmentals. Phonemes are related to the different sounds within a language and Suprasegmentals are related to features of speech related to segment, it is about stress and intonation (Kelly, 2000). There are more than one syllable in a word, one of them is stronger than the others

The aim of teaching pronunciation is to avoid misunderstanding among the speakers.

Suprasegmentals

Suprasegmentals features; intonation and stress. In an utterance, we can teach stress and intonation. Stress is used to make rhyme and intonation makes the pitch goes up and down in an utterance. Kelly (2000) described the example of word stressed.

- I'd like a cup of herbal TEA* (a simple request)
- I'd like a cup of HERbal tea* (not a sort of tea)
- I'd like a CUP of herbal tea* (not a mug)

In the examples above, a speaker has an intention to make request, in the first example. Moreover, on the second and the third are to clarify, to avoid misunderstanding between the speakers.

Word Stress

English words have more than one syllable, and one of the syllable will receives more stress than the others. If a speaker do not raise the stress, the listener will find difficulties to understand the speech, it can cause misunderstanding between speakers (Kenworthy, 1987). Studying word stress will make the sounds more natural (Cohen, 2007).

Stressed syllable are:

1. Its l-o-n-g-e-r - com p- u-ter
2. Its LOUDER-comPUTer
3. It has a change in pitch. The pitch of stressed syllable is higher.
4. It is said more clearly.
5. It uses larger facial movements.
6. You are using more energy to say certain syllable

If you find difficulties recognizing the sentence stress, try to make the word in question and practice saying it for a few times. Such as, *SYLLabus?* *BaNAna?* And you can also make a sentence and put it in the last sentence and say it for many times, such as, *it's in the SYLLabus.*

Wennerstorm (1999) describes that Content Words are principle words which express meaning, such as, noun, verb, and adverb, adjective. Moreover, Function Words are words which have little or no meaning but express grammatical relationship, such as, articles, prepositions, auxiliaries, Pronouns. In English, the stressed syllables of content words follow rhyme.

For example, *I'd like a CHICKen salad sandwich*

This sentence contains of content words: *like, chicken, salad, sandwich?* These words have rhythm.

Rules of word stress

Summary of English word stress rules:

1. Core vocabulary, nouns and adjectives of two syllable length are stressed on the first syllable, example, *SISter, Brother*, etc
2. Prefixes and suffixes, they are not stressed.

Prefixes, such as, un,in,dis,ex,un ,the stress is always on the second and third syllable. Example, *rePEAT*, *underSTAND*.

Suffixes, such as, ly, al,ive,ent, the stressed syllable is in the middle of the word. Example, *QUIetly*, *oRIGinally*.

3. Compound words, the combination of two words, the stressed is on the first element, example, *POSTman*, *NEWSpaper*.
4. Words having dual role: Words which can be functioned as noun or verb. Noun is stressed on the first syllable and verb is on the last syllable. Examples, *IMport(n)*, *imPORT(v)*; *REbel(n)*, *reBEL(v)*.

Exercises on word stress

Some of the activities below can be used to practice word stress.

1. Matching Exercises. Match the words with the stress patterns

<i>Paper</i>		Oooo
<i>Excellent</i>		Ooo
<i>Mandatory</i>		Oo

2. Different stress, different type

<i>Column 1</i>	<i>Column 2</i>
Oo	oO
A. <i>Record</i> (n)	<i>Record</i> (v)
B. <i>Present</i> (n)	<i>Present</i> (v)

In sentences,

Sentence 1 (n)	Sentence 2 (v)
<i>I want to buy a new REcord</i>	<i>I never reCORD my voice</i>
<i>She got a PREsent</i>	<i>I proudly preSENT the class of 2012</i>

3. Same or different?

- a. *Carpet* *Cleaner* same/different
- b. *Singing* *Police* same/different

4. Odd one out

Please choose the word which has different stress pattern from the other two

Ooo	oOo	oOo
<i>Broccoli</i>	<i>Potato</i>	<i>Banana</i>

Raising awareness

English learner should understand that English has a certain stress pattern; words can be pronounced in slightly different ways (Kenworthy, 1987). The correct pronunciation is used to convey meaning; students will be able to understand what are the things that they need to pay attention to on their speeches or when they hear other speakers.

According to the study of Renandya (2011), students are unable to recognize words they knew and unfamiliar pronunciation, these are two from ten listed sources of listening problems by English learners. He recommends to raise student's awareness in these areas.

Sample Lesson

In this study, I will discuss a sample lesson to introduce word stress in teaching listening. This activity is a pre-listening activity which is used to introduce vocabularies. In the following section, I provide a sample of activity to integrate teaching word stress in a listening activity.

Brief description of the lesson:

Course Subject : *Listening Comprehension*

Topic : *who is you hero?*

Level of students : *pre- Intermediate/ Intermediate*

A text about Nelson Mandela is taken as an example of the listening activity about hero in this decade. He is a South Africa's first black president and anti-apartheid. Icon Nelson Mandela has died at the age of 95. Mr Mandela led South Africa's transition from white-minority rule in the 1990s, after 27 years in prison for his political activities. in class we will do the following:

1. SS are introduced to the topic about Nelson Mandela
2. SS are introduced to new vocabulary as given
3. SS practice to recognize stress in each word
4. SS listen from a video and try to recognize the words they hear
5. Work with partner to compare the answers
6. The following activity is to answer some questions

Vocabulary	Definitions	Word Stress
well-wishers	people who express their desire for happiness and success for other people	Ooo
reminder	something that makes you remember	oOo
coalesce	join and grow together	Ooo
eradication	elimination	oooOo
cherished	loved and cared for	Oo
unprecedented	never happened before	oooOo
surfacing	appearing	oOo
legacy	past achievements that continue to have effects into the future	Ooo
fend off	defend (itself) against an attack	Oo
Passing	Death	Oo

On the following activity, students listen to a podcast (click the link below) . The text is given below.

Nelson Mandela's death may, in the short term, unite South Africa in ways that have never been seen before.

The sentiments expressed by well-wishers of all races and backgrounds outside the hospital in Pretoria as he lay critically ill for nearly three months - the wall of deeply personal messages, the paintings, the choirs who came from across the country to sing for Mr Mandela - were a reminder of his unifying influence. We can clearly expect so much more in the coming days in this country where the emotional charge is so powerful.

This unity may coalesce around a determination to push South Africa further down the road of non-racialism, of equality of opportunity and the eradication of poverty, all of them among Nelson Mandela's most cherished ambitions for the country.

But South Africa is only months away from a general election, 20 years after the historic one of 1994. And Nelson Mandela's ANC has been facing unprecedented levels of criticism, with new parties surfacing to challenge its hold on power since the days of apartheid.

Will the Mandela legacy help the ANC fend off the challenges, or will his passing - in the longer if not the shorter term - lead to significant change within the ANC itself. 2014 could point the way towards his political legacy.

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