



**DEVELOPING LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS
IN YOUNG LANGUAGE LEARNERS THROUGH
INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES.**

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Abstract: *This article examines effective ways of developing listening and speaking skills among young foreign language learners through interactive activities. The study is based on communicative language teaching (CLT) principles and supported by the theories of Krashen, Vygotsky, and Bruner. It highlights the importance of meaningful interaction, emotional engagement, and active participation in improving oral communication. Practical classroom activities such as storytelling, role-playing, songs, and Total Physical Response (TPR) are presented as efficient tools for enhancing both listening comprehension and speaking fluency in children.*

Keywords: *listening skills, speaking skills, young learners, interactive activities, communication, motivation, emotional engagement, listening comprehension, cultural understanding.*

Introduction

In today's globalized world, the ability to communicate effectively in multiple languages has become increasingly important. For young language learners, developing listening and speaking skills is essential not only for academic success but also for social interaction and cultural understanding. These skills serve as the foundation for language acquisition and are critical in helping learners express their thoughts, engage with others, and navigate various social contexts. This article explores the significance of listening and speaking skills in young learners and presents a range of interactive activities designed to foster these competencies in a fun and engaging manner. Listening and speaking are the core skills of language



learning, as they form the foundation for communication. For young learners, developing these skills requires active involvement, playfulness, and emotional engagement. According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982), comprehension precedes production—children must first be exposed to meaningful and understandable input before they can speak effectively [1].

In the early stages of foreign language learning, children are more responsive to interactive and multisensory tasks than to traditional drills. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in cognitive development, suggesting that language emerges through communication [2]. Therefore, using interactive activities creates a natural learning environment where listening and speaking evolve simultaneously.

The Importance of Listening and Speaking Skills:

Listening and speaking are two of the four fundamental language skills, alongside reading and writing. In the context of language learning, these skills are particularly vital for several reasons:

1. **Foundation of Communication:** Listening is the first step in communication; it allows learners to understand what others are saying, pick up new vocabulary, and grasp the nuances of pronunciation and intonation. Speaking enables learners to articulate their thoughts and feelings, ask questions, and engage in dialogue.

2. **Cognitive Development:** Young learners are at a crucial stage of cognitive development. Engaging in listening and speaking activities promotes critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. As they listen to stories or instructions, they learn to process information and respond appropriately.

3. **Social Skills:** Effective communication is key to building relationships. By developing their listening and speaking skills, young learners enhance their ability to interact with peers, make friends, and collaborate in group settings.

4. **Cultural Awareness:** Language is deeply intertwined with culture. Through listening and speaking activities, learners can explore cultural nuances,



idiomatic expressions, and social norms associated with the language they are learning.

Theoretical Background

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) prioritizes real-life communication over rote learning. It encourages learners to use the language purposefully rather than mechanically repeating structures. As Richards & Rodgers (2001) note, “interaction is both the means and the goal of language learning” [3].

For young learners, CLT principles translate into activities that are fun, meaningful, and context-based — where listening and speaking occur naturally.

Psycholinguistic and Cognitive Perspectives

Children learn through doing and interacting. Bruner (1983) proposed the concept of the “spiral curriculum,” where children build linguistic understanding through repetition and increasing complexity [4]. Meanwhile, Vygotsky’s social constructivism suggests that learning occurs through guided participation and dialogue with more knowledgeable peers or teachers [2].

Affective and Motivational Factors

According to Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), emotional barriers such as anxiety or fear can block language acquisition [1]. Therefore, teachers must create a stress-free, engaging classroom atmosphere where children feel safe to experiment with speech. Interactive tasks, songs, and games reduce anxiety and raise motivation.

Interactive Activities for Developing Listening and Speaking Skills

Activity 1: Total Physical Response (TPR)

Objective: Strengthen listening comprehension through physical response.
Procedure: The teacher gives commands such as “Stand up,” “Touch your nose,” “Run to the door.” Students perform the actions.
Benefit: This method links verbal input with physical movement, enhancing memory retention and comprehension (Asher, 1977) [5].

Activity 2: Storytelling and Story Retelling



Objective: Enhance comprehension and speaking fluency.

Procedure: The teacher tells a short story using gestures and pictures. Then students retell the story using key vocabulary. Extension: Students act out the story in pairs.

Benefit: Encourages narrative skills and spontaneous speech production.

Activity 3: Songs and Chants

Objective: Improve pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation.

Procedure: Children learn and perform simple songs (“Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes,” “If You’re Happy and You Know It”). Psychological Aspect: Rhythm and melody activate both hemispheres of the brain, improving phonological awareness (Gardner, 1983) [6].

Activity 4: Role Play and Dialogues

Objective: Foster authentic communication and confidence in speaking.

Procedure: Students act out real-life situations (in a shop, at school, visiting a friend).

Benefit: Encourages creativity and provides functional vocabulary in context.

Theory: Based on Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development, where learners construct knowledge through social interaction [2].

Activity 5: Listening Games (“Simon Says”, “What’s Missing?”, “Sound Hunt”)

Objective: Develop active listening and auditory discrimination.

Procedure: Students listen carefully and respond only to correct commands or identify missing objects. Benefit: Promotes attention, comprehension, and listening accuracy in a playful form.

Activity 6: Picture-Based Discussion

Objective: Combine listening and speaking skills using visual prompts.

Procedure: The teacher shows a picture and asks questions: “What can you see?”

Extension: Students describe similar pictures in pairs.

Benefit: Supports vocabulary recall and sentence formation.

Benefits of Interactive Activities



Interactive activities are particularly effective in enhancing listening and speaking skills among young learners. These activities promote active engagement, collaboration, and practical application of language skills. The benefits include:

1. **Enhanced Engagement:** Interactive activities capture students' attention and motivate them to participate actively. When learners are engaged, they are more likely to retain information and develop a positive attitude toward language learning.

2. **Real-Life Contexts:** Activities that simulate real-life situations allow learners to practice language skills in meaningful contexts. This relevance helps students see the value of what they are learning.

3. **Peer Interaction:** Working with peers fosters a sense of community in the classroom. Collaborative activities encourage students to communicate with one another, providing opportunities for authentic language use.

4. **Immediate Feedback:** Interactive settings allow for immediate feedback from both teachers and peers. This feedback is crucial for language development, as it helps learners identify areas for improvement.

5. **Development of Confidence:** Regular practice through interactive activities helps build learners' confidence in their speaking abilities. As they become more comfortable expressing themselves, they are more likely to take risks in using the language.

Discussion

Interactive learning transforms language classes into dynamic communication spaces. When children are emotionally engaged, their listening and speaking abilities develop naturally. Cameron (2001) emphasizes that young learners “learn best through activities that combine movement, imagination, and language use” [7].

Through consistent practice, TPR builds comprehension; storytelling fosters imagination; songs improve rhythm; and role-play promotes real-life communication. These strategies align with Bruner's (1983) notion that children construct meaning through active discovery [4].



Incorporating such interactive approaches not only strengthens linguistic competence but also nurtures children's confidence, creativity, and motivation.

Conclusion

Developing listening and speaking skills in young language learners requires an interactive, child-centered approach that connects language with action, emotion, and imagination. Teachers should prioritize communicative tasks over memorization, creating a lively environment that encourages expression and understanding.

When learners listen with curiosity and speak with confidence, language becomes not a subject, but a living experience — a bridge to real communication. As educators embrace these interactive approaches, they not only help students improve their language abilities but also equip them with essential social skills that will benefit them throughout their lives. In an increasingly interconnected world, fostering effective communication skills in young learners is a gift that will serve them well into adulthood, opening doors to new opportunities and experiences across cultures.

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