
Integrating Reading & Listening

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Reading and listening are generally grouped together as receptive skills. They are receptive, but certainly not passive skills; both combine input with prior knowledge to give shape to our experiences. Beyond surface similarities, they are seldom discussed together and are hardly ever linked in the classroom. Yet, each has something to offer the other. Below are two activity frameworks that illustrate the integration of the two.

Main Ideas and Facts

Prepare copies of a short newspaper article that will interest your students. If the article is long, use only the first few paragraphs, where the important information is concentrated. One of my classes was united by its interest in baseball, so we read sports stories. Business people might want to read economic news.

Ask if anyone has read about the events, either in English or in their native language(s). This step involves the students, gets them thinking about their task, and offers a chance to preview vocabulary.

Either in class or as homework, have the students read the clipping and underline main ideas and important facts. In class, play a tape of the radio news report of the same story. The students' task is to circle or otherwise note the facts that are reported both in the newspaper and in the radio broadcast. Likely to be circled are the answers to "wh" questions: names, places and times, as well as one or two important

facts. Play the tape again. This time, ask if there is any information found in the radio report that is not found in the article. Since the additional information is likely to include names of people and places that students cannot spell and do not need to know, accept general answers like, "They said another name."

In the case of the baseball-loving class cited above, one-paragraph summaries of American baseball games were contrasted with sports reports from Armed Forces Radio.

Specific Information

Clozes are often used for listening practice. As used by some teachers, they are often attempts to test the ability to read, listen, and write more or less simultaneously. It is always helpful to have the students listen with pencils down and fill in the information after listening.

It is certainly helpful to know some of the information, to have a context, before hearing the tape. Again, newspaper articles are useful. Give the students a lightly clozed article (two or three items missing per paragraph). It is probably a more realistic task to cloze the sort of information students would really write down in a note-taking situation: names, dates, places, etc. They should read the article and note the information they need. Then, they should listen to a tape of the radio version of the events that contains the answers to the clozes. This is a holistic approach to cloze, one in which the students have to think

about meaning rather than simply follow along in a text.

controlled, can only lead to greater understanding.

Conclusion

Though most often taught separately, reading and listening can supplement each other by giving students two perspectives on a single event. More information, properly

About the Author

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