

Information Transfer: A listening comprehension technique from oral texts to diagrammatic texts

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Resumen: El artículo presenta la técnica *Information Transfer* como una estrategia para mejorar la habilidad de escucha en el aprendizaje del inglés como segunda lengua, la cual involucra dos aspectos importantes: *input* y *output*. En este caso, el *input* está dado por textos orales que se exploran a través de los procesos de *Bottom-up* y *Top-down* mediante el reconocimiento de elementos específicos y contextuales del discurso. Por su parte, el *output* hace alusión a la producción del lenguaje escrito por medio de herramientas gráficas que demuestran la construcción de significado en torno a los textos orales analizados. En efecto, la técnica se da a conocer para que los aprendices del inglés interesados en mejorar su comprensión auditiva se valgan de ésta para lograrlo.

Palabras clave: Técnica de Transferencia de Información, escucha, escucha dinámica o activa, *Bottom-up*, *Top-down*, textos gráficos.

Abstract: This paper focuses on the *Information Transfer Technique* to enhance listening skill in English learning as a second language. It comprises two aspects which are *input* and *output*. The former *-input-* refers to oral texts that students interpret through *Bottom-up* and *Top-down* processes; these processes involve the identification of specific and contextual parameters of the speech. The latter *-output-* is associated with the production of graphic texts which show the development of meaning from the messages. Altogether, this article advocates the aforementioned technique to English learners as a meaningful way to improve their listening comprehension.

Keywords: Information Transfer Technique, Listening, Auding, *Bottom-up*, *Top-down*, diagrammatic texts.

Listening goes beyond the hearing of sounds. This is a benchmark to depict reality because it is an active process through which learners are aware of their learning. In that way, this paper advocates the “Information Transfer” technique to students with B1 English level for enhancing their listening abilities. At that level, learners must be able to understand the main ideas and supporting details as well as the inference of key messages from oral speech. This article takes into consideration some authors who have supported this technique as a way to refine listening skill in second language learning, such as Zi-yan Meng & Ju-qing Zhao (2015), Paul Nation & Jonathan Newton (2009), among others. The technique encloses two parameters: input and output. The input is related to Bottom-up and Top-down processes that enable to receive and understand the information from recordings. On the other hand, the output involves the composition of diagrammatic texts via students must demonstrate message comprehension and a creative organization of ideas. Therefore, this technique does not only help learners to comprehend ideas of a spoken text, but also it entails the transformation of those ideas in order to consolidate meaning.

Information Transfer technique becomes a meaningful technique to improve listening in a dynamic way. It refers to the process through which learners revamp information from a spoken text into another form. For instance, they create textual diagrams, graphics, or charts, and even they design new ways to comprise the studied content. In that case, the comprehension requires enduring attention and understanding owing to the reconstruction of ideas from an oral text is a wide challenge for students. According to Johnson, Smith, Smythe & Varon (2009), challenges enrich critical reflection about life because learners have to strength their endeavors to learn, and they achieve self-awareness. In this sense, it goes further, the codification of ideas in memory rote or mechanical modes because the operative thinking processes increases.

Although teachers take an important role, as they should engage students in the listening task, learners could not wait for teachers' pressure. In fact, teachers suggest students take notes, write down ideas about the oral text, compare those ideas with contextual situations, and integrate similar ideas according to their senses. Meng & Zhao (2015), advocate teachers must guide learners to use suitable resources and design tasks based on the Information Transfer technique, and students should communicate textual meaning in a different form. Learners must make the transformation of oral texts to diagrammatic texts and teachers support their process. Thereupon, whether teachers want students to refine their listening skill, the Information Transfer technique underpins this goal because it eschews the reinforcement of passive agents.

Information Transfer comprises the strengthening of significant input which intertwines Bottom-up process that draws into an assortment of language dimensions through some tasks. Bottom-up is the process via someone analyzes a text taking into account specific patterns of language e.g. syllabic, lexical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, phonemic and interpretative aspects. According to Field (2003), quoted by Nation & Newton (2009), Bottom-up allows listeners to build meaning of the whole information step by step and not only at the beginning. This process is holistic owing to students develop and enhance different components of language at the same time they strength oral interpretation. In that sense, this process provides some benefits for listening comprehension because

learners deconstruct the meaning of all information through the identification of particular elements from oral texts. To illustrate, some specific aspects are dates, rhetorical devices, formal or informal utterances -jokes, idioms, slangs-, the denotative and connotative meaning of words, and so on. Thus, Bottom-up process lets students focus on precise parameters of language in order to intertwine those components in the reconstruction of the text sense.

The Top-down process is another cornerstone of the Information Transfer technique, and it makes possible the relationship between new information and learners' background. Top-down is the process whereby somebody relates contextual cues to understand a spoken message. In this process "...the listener uses what they know of the context of communication to predict what the message will contain, and uses parts of the message to confirm, correct or add to this. The key process [...] is inferencing" (Nation & Newton, 2009, p. 40). In that way, learners have to associate their prior knowledge with the context of the spoken text to decipher the whole meaning. In this process learners can reach different goals. Peterson (2001) mentions some of them: discriminate between registers of speech and tones of voice, identify the speaker or the topic, find main ideas and supporting details, and make inferences. According to Peterson (2001), the Top-down process allows learners to use word stress to understand the speaker's purpose, recognize missing grammar markers in speech, and use milieu and world knowledge to reconstruct the message.

Information Transfer upsurges the quality of learners' output through the transformation of ideas and building of meaning. In that respect, students learn how to listen, analyze, organize the contents of spoken texts hierarchically, and they transmute an oral speech into a graphic text. This technique has been introduced to the College English Teaching in China, as Meng & Zhao (2015) claim, in order to have authentic pedagogical practices which are differentiated from traditional methods. Students enhance the interpretation of the world and they have more control of their own learning process when they use this technique (Meng & Zhao, 2015). Additionally, Information Transfer upgrades the capacity to sum up information and reconstruct it by distinct ways and the outcome becomes a graphic text. Specifically, Nation & Newton (2009) indicates Information Transfer strengthens the ability to deconstruct messages in a meaningful way due to students learn how to organize a text in a different format upholding the original sense. Assuming that the construction of sense requires a capacity to figure out messages, the features of sounds in a particular speech become cues for comprehending texts. Lems, Miller & Soro (2010) suggest that some keys are: stress patterns, emphasis, intonation, and paralinguistic dimensions e.g. laughter, weeping, questions, and exclamations. In lieu of replicating ideas of a spoken speech in a graphic text, learners must be aware vis-à-vis of the message transfiguration without altering its meaning.

While other traditional teaching strategies which belong to the audio-lingual method -such as repetition, replacement, restatement, dialogue memorization, completion, mechanical drill, transcription, dictation, among others- are only associated with systemic parameters of the language (Larsen, 2000), the Information Transfer technique also involves practical components of real-life communication. Audio-lingual method techniques are isolated

from the use of language in real life situations (Kamhuber, 2010). Notwithstanding that audio-lingual method envelops some strategies to enhance listening i.e. the presentation of daily life dialogues, those programs interweave pre-established models based on reduced specific patterns. Larsen (2000) developed a research with an English course in Mali through which this academic identified some features of the audio-lingual method in its classes. The pedagogical sessions were focused on the consolidation of dialogues and drills, indeed teacher targeted on teaching repetition habits instead of the comprehension of oral speech. Thereby, theoretical listening techniques do not empower this skill unless they support an interrelationship among knowledge and practice in language.

Accordingly, Information Transfer technique overtakes traditional teaching strategies to improve listening, as it does not focus exclusively on oral speech memorization. It engages contextualization of information, as the designed tasks embrace meaningful pragmatic activities. Furthermore, it becomes an innovative way to boost listening and cognitive capabilities, since it develops some mental functions, e.g. memory, attention, analysis, synthesis, and textual interpretation. Lems et al. (2010) point out, dynamic listening – Auding- is not associated exclusively with the hearing of sounds, but rather it intertwines intense mental workout. Therefore, this technique targets dynamic listening due to the fact that it involves activities in which students encourage their cognitive abilities.

In conclusion, listening is an active process owing to it requires attention to the oral messages in order to reconstruct meaning. To develop listening comprehension it is important that learners pay attention to the speaker to collect and comprehend data. Information Transfer technique incorporates input and output processes. It encompasses identification of ideas from oral speech and the consolidation of inferences. Furthermore, it promotes a careful listening to create a tool through which learners refurbish the message they listen. This technique is different from traditional listening strategies, as it allows students to depict the information in diagrams, mind maps or semantic networks through which they strength several cognitive abilities. Thus, it encourages learners' creativity because they must design a diagrammatic text to demonstrate how much they have understood the oral speech.

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