

TEACHING LISTENING WITH RIGHT AND LEFT BRAIN THINKING

Titis Sulistyowati

ABSTRACT

Otak manusia terbagi dalam dua bagian, hemisphere kanan dan hemisphere kiri yang biasanya disebut otak kanan dan otak kiri. Kedua bagian otak tersebut bertanggung jawab atas pola-pola fikir yang berbeda, tetapi pada dasarnya mereka mendukung satu sama lain. Kebanyakan individu-individu mempunyai kecenderungan tertentu, pada salah satu model berfikir. Otak kiri berperan dalam, logika, analisa, bahasa, dan matematika, sebaliknya otak kanan berhubungan dengan rithme, kreativitas, warna, imajinasi, dan dimensi. Untuk itu sangatlah penting bagi sekolah-sekolah lebih berorientasi pada keseluruhan bagian otak dalam proses belajar-mengajar mereka, sekolah-sekolah harus memberikan rangsangan yang sama pada seni, kreativitas, dan kemampuan mengembangkan imajinasi, agar otak kanan dan otak kiri para murid berfungsi dengan optimal. Jadi sangatlah penting bagi para guru menemukan model pembelajaran baru yang lebih menekankan pada pemberian stimuli pada kedua belah otak muridnya, agar hasil belajar yang optimal dapat tercapai. Dalam artikel ini diberikan sedikit gambaran bagaimana menerapkan pola fikir otak kanan-otak kiri yang seimbang dalam pengajaran 'listening'.

Key words: hemisphere, right brain, left brain, teaching listening,

INTRODUCTION

Our education system tends to activate or left brain thinking in spite of the other one. It is seen from how some schools allocate their times most on the analytic, logic, and mathematics where such characteristics are found in the left brain. They pay less attention on the other side of the brain, which is our right brain. The fact is that from the first time we are learning, only few of the percentage of our times are allocated on art and music. The question is how we could maximize our right brain functions as many as we use our left brain to increase the quality of our education.

How we can apply our right brain thinking on second language learning? McFarland (1981) simply says that 'in most human being, almost all right handed as well as most left

handed, their left hemisphere is slightly larger than the right. Perhaps it is because the language and speech areas are usually located in the left hemisphere.' From the above explanation, I can draw a line that our ability on language acquisition is located on our left brain, but I believe that by maximizing both sides of our hemisphere, will produce attractive and varied model of teaching on second language.

This article is trying to explore the power of using both sides of our brains in teaching listening for second language learners. Hopefully it will also discover how important of our right brain in the teaching and learning listening.

TEACHING LISTENING

As second language learners, our students want to be able to understand what people saying to them in specific language, English. If they do not understand of what is being said, the students may fail in listening and do not give any respond and there will be no two ways communication, so the objective of communication may not be achieved. In communicating by using second language, the second language learners need some efforts in understanding/ thinking about the words they have heard, they have to think first before they could grasp the meaning of the words, especially if they are not in the level of the language.

Listening skill of second language is not derived naturally; it needs some processes of learning. The processes of listening in the classroom involve a teacher and students. In the classroom the students are given some lists of exercises from a number of materials. A lot of listening materials are derived from recorded extract, for instance on CD, tape record, video and others. Probably the main source of listening for students is the voice of their teacher. Individual voice of the teacher also can be called as the source of listening, because in teaching learning process, teacher talk as he is giving some instructions should also be understood by their students. But in fact the students need variety in listening then just listen to the teacher's voice.

Instead of doing listening activity in the classroom, the students should also practice their listening skill outside of the classroom. This kind of activity can be more challenging and fun. They can find any others materials every where, often on CDs, on MP3 players, videos or on the internet-should consist of text that they can enjoy listening too, because they more or less can be understood although without any intervention from their teacher for their do such kind of activity and practice their listening unconsciously. Probably the easy way of practicing listening is by

listening to songs. Many of the students enjoy songs very much, they will be curious on understanding the lyric as it may reflect his or her feeling. Another way is by watching English movie, as they see the set on the screen and listening to the dialogue. Although they may not understand the whole dialogue, at least they will know some parts and they will absorb the language gradually.

Listening Difficulties

There are obviously many differences among the students we teach all over the world. Concerning to the background differences, the students also have different attitudes in the classroom. Thomson (2005) says that some teachers find that their students are often busy talking and chatting among others and do not concentrate on the listening subject. We know that in listening students need full concentration on the audio being played, otherwise they may not catch the messages from the audio. Some students have low motivations because they are forced to be in the class and because their own willingness. Some of them have problem on concentration and find listening is more difficult than other subjects. Students simply turn off when listening to spoken English as it seems too difficult to follow without a high level of concentration.

Some Listening Principles

Harmer suggests some listening principles (2007), 'firstly a teacher should encourage his students to listen as often and as much as possible. Listening is a process; the more we practice the better our listening will be. Besides listening activity in the classroom, students should also practice away from the classroom through internet, TVs, CDs, tapes, radio and so on. Secondly, teacher should also help the students to prepare themselves for listening. Students need to be ready to listen. It means they will need to look at pictures, discuss the topic, or read the questions first. Thirdly, when the teacher plays the track only once probably there will be no spare time for them to pick up some important information, then they will ask for a second chance. It will be not enough for them to hear the track only once. Fourthly, teacher should draw out the meaning of what is being said, what is intended and find out what impression it makes on the students. The students need to respond to the content of a listening, not just to the language. Fifth, a teacher should also consider about the stage of the students, they have to be classified in

their own level of listening, because different listening stages deserve different listening task. The last part, the teacher asks the students to use time and emotional energy in a listening text – than it makes sense to them to experience in many different applications of listening.’

CHARACTERISTICS OF RIGHT AND LEFT BRAIN

McFarland in his book ‘Physiological Psychology’ (1981) explains that ‘human brain is divided into two hemispheres, which are commonly called left brain and right brain, work differently. The left side seems to operate logically and verbally, the other side functions in more spatial-intuitive mode.’

McCarty also supports that the two different sides of the brain control two different ‘modes’ of thinking. Experimentation has shown that the two different sides, or hemispheres, of the brain are responsible for different manners of thinking. Most individuals have a distinct preference for one of these styles of thinking. Some, however, are more whole-brained and equally adept at both modes. In general, schools tend to favor left-brain modes of thinking, while downplaying the right-brain ones. Left-brain scholastic subjects focus on logical thinking, analysis, and accuracy. Right-brained subjects, on the other hand, focus on aesthetics, feeling, and creativity.’

Budhisetiawan also suggests that left brain indicate logic, analytic, language, sequence, and mathematics. So the left brain respond on stimulus in which it needs criticizing skill, declaring, analyzing, explaining, discussion and judging. On the other hand, the right brain deals with rhythm, creativity, color, imagination, and dimension. So the right brain functions if a person is drawing, pointing, playing, exercising, singing, and other motoric activities.

The following table illustrates the differences between left-brain and right-brain thinking (McCarty):

Left Brain	Right Brain
Logical	Random
Sequential	Intuitive
Rational	Holistic
Analytical	Synthesizing

Objective Looks at parts	Subjective Looks at wholes
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Right and Left Brain Thinking in Learning

Basically, the two sides of our brain function equally, they support each other, but most of us prefer one side over the other. If our education tends to use the left brain recently, what if from now, we use both sides at once? Theoretically, we will have double brain force, because we use both sides of the brain capacity.

‘So it is important for school to be more "whole-brained" in their learning and teaching process, schools need to give equal stimuli on the arts, creativity, and the skills of imagination and synthesis. To increase a more whole-brained scholastic experience, teachers should use instruction techniques that connect with both sides of the brain. They can increase their classroom's right-brain learning activities by incorporating more patterning, metaphors, analogies, role playing, visuals, and movement into their reading, calculation, and analytical activities. For a more accurate whole-brained evaluation of student learning, educators must develop new forms of assessment that honor right-brained talents and skills.’ (McCarty)

SOME SUGGESTIONS ON TEACHING LISTENING

Using Pictures

In this activity, students are given some pictures (suggested colorful pictures), then the teacher encourages them to describe what is going on in each picture. From the pictures the students may get some clues of what the conversation they are going to hear are about. The clues can be in a form of words written on the pictures, color, shapes and so on. In this section, the students are challenged to use his imagination in predicting what is going on next on the conversation.

Using songs

One possibility to vary our listening class is to play some songs and ask the students to listen to them. Students often seem to enjoy the songs because the words are easily to be understood. By using their own words the teacher could ask them to explain their feeling after they listen to the songs.

It is also said that music will bring good effect to stimulate our right brain.

Using audio and video

‘Video provides audio which can be heard by our students, moreover the speaker can be seen; their body movement give some clues to the meaning, the clothes they wear and the color, their location and background of information can be visually seen.’ (Harmer, 2007). He advises some technique for second language learner:

Play the video without sound

After playing the video, give the students some times to think and predict on what the characters have said and rewind the conversations letter with the audio.

Play the audio without picture

The students are played the audio only without watching to the video. They are expected to guess where the speakers are, and what are they look like, what is going on and so on. Once they have predicted the teacher rewind and play the audio with the video.

Freeze frame

The teacher sometime presses the pause button and asks the students what’s going to happen next.

Dividing the class in half

Half the class faces the screen, while the other half sits with their backs to it. The ‘screen’ half describes the visual images to the ‘wall’ half.

Those suggestions mention above are only few numbers from several others. Good teacher should explore his teaching material to give some interesting variation to the students, so they will not get bored for some monotonous in learning but highly motivated in their learning process and the most important is that they stimulate students’ right brains.

CONCLUSION

There is no the most efficient and effective approach in learning and teaching process, but to increase and keep the students highly motivated, we need to explore and varied our listening sequences. It also expected that the students will reach his highest level in his study. Concerning to the right brain thinking, in spite of only preferring to the left brain thinking, hopefully it will boost the students motivation and avoid monotonous in learning second language.

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