

LEARNING LISTENING SKILLS: A MEANS AND AN END IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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- **ABSTRACT:** Listening constitutes a valuable means of foreign language learning and an important goal for students in the purpose of obtaining information produced in the target language. Its successful acquisition involves the use of mental processes that need to be internalized by the students and later put into practice in their oral interactions to facilitate comprehension in different communicative contexts. It is the teacher's responsibility to find the best ways to guarantee the students' active acquisition of this language skill by choosing the kinds of tasks and materials that best suit their needs and interests as individuals and as language learners. Following these ideas, the present paper aims to highlight the importance of listening skills in the process of foreign language acquisition. It also explores the ways in which these skills can be approached in the classroom in order to add a student centered dimension to their teaching-learning process. In order to achieve these goals, the article relies on theoretical contributions offered by authors like Krashen (1982); Nunan (1998); Richards (2008, 1983); Brown (2006); Hinkel (2011, 2006); Nation and Newton (2009); Vandergrift (2011, 2007, 1999); Rost (2011, 2001) among others, who have developed substantial research on this field.
- **KEYWORDS:** Listening skills acquisition. Listening processes. Students' needs.

Introduction

Learning listening skills has frequently been underestimated by foreign language learners, who tend to prioritize speaking and writing based on the assumption that the mastery of these productive skills is equivalent to having proficiency in the foreign language (NUNAN, 1998). On these grounds, many foreign language courses have

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overlooked the importance of listening as a source of language input as well as the role of this skill in everyday communication. In this respect, Vandergrift (2007, p.191) states: “Listening comprehension lies at the heart of language learning, but it is the least understood and least researched skill.”

Nation and Newton (2009, p.37) share this view when they point out: [...] “We often take the importance of listening for granted, and it is arguably the least understood and most overlooked of the four skills [...] in the language classroom.”

The above considerations suggest that listening has historically received little attention from students, teachers and researchers alike, as compared to other language skills. However, the importance of this ability in the foreign language learning context as a means of incorporating new linguistic elements into the students’ communicative competence and as a way of processing authentic discourse in real time (RICHARDS, 2008) is undeniable. The previous statement finds support in the criteria of several authors who have approached this topic.

Nunan (1998) considers that listening is a fundamental skill in the process of language learning, without which students would hardly reach effective communication, since more than 50% of the time that they interact in a foreign language will be devoted to listening.

For Harmer (1998), listening is the main way to expose students to different topics and varieties of oral exchanges, and this guarantees the acquisition of vital information not only about grammar and vocabulary, but also about pronunciation, rhythm, intonation, pitch and stress, even if teachers do not draw attention to these elements in particular.

Rost (2001) and Vandergrift (2011) also highlight the importance of this language skill, considering it a critical means of acquiring the second language and a channel through which we process language in real time (ROST, 2001), since it internalizes language rules and favors the development of other language skills (VANDERGRIFT, 2011).

On the grounds of the previous considerations it can be argued that listening, far from being a secondary skill, constitutes a fundamental tool in the teaching learning process of foreign languages. It favors the students’ contact with authentic samples of oral texts, which constitute ideal models in terms of pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation, and guarantees their exposition to a large variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures used in real communicative contexts. All of this encourages the development of students’ skills as foreign language learners and facilitates their immediate access to valuable information from the linguistic, affective, professional and social points of view.

It is therefore assumed in this paper that listening should be an important goal in foreign language teaching since the more we understand, the more we have an opportunity to interact efficiently with other people. Such interactions may also allow us to pick up language that has been used by an interlocutor, as a means to compensate for our lack of language resources.

In line with the ideas expressed above, teachers should direct the teaching of this ability considering two fundamental functions: listening as a way of facilitating oral discourse comprehension (listening as comprehension) and listening as a means of foreign language acquisition (listening as acquisition) (RICHARDS, 2008). In both cases, it is necessary to understand the complex nature of this ability and the processes involved in its effective acquisition.

The complex nature of listening: processes involved

Despite former views, which assumed that listening was a skill that could be naturally acquired in the second or foreign language learning process, it is now accepted that it is a complex skill that needs to be taught (BROWN; YULE, 1983), along with speaking, reading and writing. Its successful acquisition involves the processing of the aural information at neurological, linguistic, semantic and pragmatic levels, which integrate and complement each other (ROST, 2011). Each of these dimensions entails the use of different kinds of knowledge, skills and strategies to facilitate real time processing. In order to shed some light on these elements, the next pages will be devoted to presenting the ideas of several authors on these particular points.

Vandergrift (2011) argues that listening is a particularly complex cognitive skill because listeners have to process discourse while attending to new input, which is produced at a rate controlled by the speaker, and characterized by phonological variations including enunciation, pronunciation and accent. In addition, they have to divide the input message into meaningful units where, unlike reading, the boundaries between words are difficult to determine.

Regarding the complexity that the listening process entails, this author warns:

It is a complex, active process in which the listener must discriminate between sounds, understand vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpret stress and intonation, retain what was gathered in all of the above, and interpret it within the immediate as well as the larger sociocultural context of utterance. Co-ordinating all of this involves a great deal of mental activity on the part of the listener. (VANDERGRIFT, 1999, p.168).

It thus may be argued that identifying prosodic and syntactic units is just a part of what listeners need to fully understand an oral message. They must go beyond grouping a set of sounds and words to make sense of the meaning of a given utterance. Listeners also need to co-interpret the message taking into consideration the text and the context to make sense of the speaker's intended meaning (BROWN; YULE, 1983).

In this broader sense, Richards (1983) identifies three levels of discourse processing involved in listening: propositional identification, interpretation of illocutionary force,

and activation of real world knowledge. It is by integrating these levels, with the use of different listening processes, that foreign language students may become effective listeners.

According to Richards (1983), the first level (propositional identification) refers to the listener's ability in identifying the propositions of utterances with the support of their knowledge of the language system (grammatical competence) and using real world knowledge. In his words, it is the knowledge of language syntax that enables the fragmentation of discourse into meaningful segments, which are later organized to understand the meaning of utterances. This first level described by Richards involves the kind of processing that takes place from the parts to the whole, which is currently referred to as bottom-up processing (NUNAN, 1998; ROST, 2011, 2001; HINKEL, 2006; BROWN, 2006; RICHARDS, 2008; NATION; NEWTON, 2009; VANDERGRIFT, 2011).

Bottom-up processes in listening acquisition

Bottom-up listening processes are related to linguistic decoding and they have to do with the use of data which is directly obtained from the speech signal to make sense of it. These processes constitute a tool to unify understanding rather than the goal of comprehension (ROST 2011).

For Nunan (1998) this kind of processing consists of decoding sounds in a linear way, starting from the smallest significant units to complete texts, deriving meaning as the last step of the process. He explains that this process includes decoding phonemic units that are linked together to form words, which in turn are combined to form phrases that later come together to form utterances, which are finally linked together to form meaningful texts.

In the words of Hinkel (2006), *bottom-up processing* constitutes a view to listening which is based on the linguistic elements of comprehension and aims to develop the students' abilities in identifying formal elements such as words, sentence limits, contractions, individual sounds and sound combinations.

At this point, Brown (2006) outlines that *bottom-up processing* involves using our knowledge about sounds, word meanings, and discourse markers to set up the understanding of what we hear. In this sense, he explains that it is important to hear some sounds and keep them long enough in our working memory; so that they can be connected to each other to allow the interpretation of the message before there is new incoming information to be processed.

Similarly, Richards (2008) defines *bottom-up processing* as a process of decoding, where comprehension starts with the analysis of the input data in successive levels of organization (sounds, words, clauses, sentences, texts) in order to establish the relationship between the constituent elements of the sentences and understand their meaning based on the listener's lexical and grammatical competence.

For Vandergrift (2011) this type of processing includes the segmented decoding of the sound stream into meaningful units, constructing the meanings by their successive combination, starting from the phonetic level up to the discursive level.

The authors above agree that *bottom-up processing* mainly focuses on identifying formal elements in a spoken text, such as individual sounds or sound combinations, words, phrases and utterances, based on the listener's grammatical and lexical knowledge of the foreign language.

In our opinion, the recognition of these syntactic elements through listening constitutes an important part of learning a foreign language. However, it is convenient to remember that these linguistic aspects are just *temporary carriers of meanings* (RICHARDS, 2008) and that the foreign language must be understood within specific social contexts (ROST, 2011), which means that it is not enough for listeners to rely exclusively on their linguistic knowledge to understand spoken texts. To achieve this goal successfully, they must be able to integrate contextual knowledge and general knowledge about the world (WANG; TREFFERS-DALLER, 2017).

It is crucial, then, that listeners are able to process texts in context, which includes the levels of interpretation of the *illocutionary force* (speaker's intention) and activation of real-world knowledge described by Richards (1983). This kind of view is known as *top-down processing* (NUNAN, 1998; ROST, 2011, 2001; HINKEL, 2006; BROWN, 2006; RICHARDS, 2008; NATION; NEWTON, 2009; VANDERGRIFT, 2011) and goes from the whole to the parts.

Top-down processes in listening acquisition

Unlike *bottom-up processing*, which has its origin in the speech signal, *top-down processing* includes a semantic dimension that emerges from the listener's memory and integrates the new information offered by the text with the previous knowledge that he or she possesses. It also incorporates a pragmatic dimension, which allows the listener to make use of his or her social knowledge to obtain and construct contextual meaning in coordination, collaboration and interaction with the speaker (ROST, 2011).

This kind of processing allows listeners to establish the equivalence between the structures of the utterances and their communicative function in specific circumstances of social interactions to achieve certain communicative objectives. It includes the listeners' prior knowledge of the language, along with their knowledge about the communicative situation, the topics of discussion, the participants and their relationships to achieve global comprehension.

Top-down processing demands the listener's active reconstruction of the speaker's original meaning, with the help of incoming sounds and clues, the use of their prior knowledge of the context and communicative situation, to be able to understand what is being said (NUNAN, 1998; BROWN, 2006; RICHARDS, 2008).

In *top-down processing*, aural comprehension depends on the listener's ability to activate his knowledge-based schemata¹ based on his cultural constructs, familiarity with the topic as well as the use of discourse clues and pragmatic conventions (HINKEL, 2006). While *bottom-up processing* goes from language to meaning, *top-down processing* moves from meaning to language (RICHARDS, 2008).

Based on their knowledge of the context, listeners are able to predict the message and confirm their predictions through inference (NATION; NEWTON 2009). This requires the use of the context and the listeners' previous experiential, cultural, textual, linguistic and pragmatic knowledge for the activation of their conceptual framework to interpret the incoming message, which may be in principle incomprehensible to them (VANDERGRIFT, 2011).

Summing up, *top-down processing* demands listeners' background knowledge activation, which may include their knowledge of the world, of the social and cultural context, along with their knowledge of speech events and particular text types, in order to understand the meaning of spoken texts. On the other hand, *bottom-up processing* implies relying on their knowledge of the linguistic code in order to achieve progressive meaning construction, starting from the phonetic level up to the discursive level.

In real life, however, the two types of processing rarely work individually, since both interact in parallel while listeners attempt to create a mental picture of what is being said. The greater use of one process over the other will depend on the listening purpose, the listeners' characteristics, and the context where the listening act takes place (VANDERGRIFT, 2011). In this regard, Richards (2008, p.10), observes:

In real world listening, both bottom-up and top-down processes generally occur together. The extent to which one or the other dominates depends on the listener's familiarity with the topic and content of a text, the density of information in a text, the text type and the listener's purpose in listening.

The previous statement leads to an integrative approach to both processes in listening classes, considering the three key stages involved in teaching listening: *before-listening*, *while-listening* and *after-listening*. These stages should include activities that encourage students to process the text *top-down* and activities that provide practice in understanding the linguistic code, especially through contextual inference (*bottom-up processing*).

¹ Abstract, generalized mental representations of our experience that are available to help us understand new experiences (BROWN, 2006, p.2).

Combining bottom-up and top-down processes: an integrative approach

Richards (2008) considers that the pre-listening phase prepares students for both types of processing through activities that require activating their previous knowledge, making predictions and revising key vocabulary. The while-listening stage focuses attention on comprehension through activities that require selective listening, listening for main ideas (*gist listening*), or understanding the sequence of events (*sequencing*). According to this author, in the *post-listening* phase students should express their opinions on the topic and respond to comprehension. This stage may also include detailed analysis of some sections of the text that could not be understood by the students. In this sense, working with the transcript of the text can be very useful.

Thornbury (2005) proposes that the transcript of the text should be made available to the students at some point during the teaching sequence. He explains that among the advantages of transcriptions are the possibility that students compare the mental representation they made from the text with the written version, as well as the opportunity to make the connections between the sounds and the spelling of the words when listening to the text. Finally, he notes that it is easier for the teacher to draw attention to the linguistic elements by making reference to the written text than by attempting to isolate them on a recording.

This author suggests a sequence for staging the work with listening materials. It begins with the activation of the students' previous knowledge which, depending on the content difficulty, can help them to establish the topic or context of the discursive act, facilitating the subsequent tasks. One type of activity that he proposes for this phase is brainstorming vocabulary related to the topic of the text, as a way to lessen students' listening load. After the activation of students' previous knowledge, Thornbury (2005) advises to focus on the gist which, in his view, can facilitate understanding of the topic and the relationships between the facts included in the listening material. Afterwards, the author suggests checking the register, considering three contextual factors that determine it, which include the relationship between the speakers (tenor), the topic (field) and the choice of channel (mode). Later, he proposes the treatment of specific details, giving pace to a reading of the transcript as the students listen to the text, followed by a subsequent analysis of doubts and a final focus on linguistic elements.

Similarly, Brown (2006) proposes a sequence for teaching listening comprehension which starts with the systematic presentation of listening materials, followed by the work with main ideas, plus the subsequent identification of specific details and a final stage where students are encouraged to make inferences. This author explains that these kinds of teaching procedures help students to establish their listening purpose, which is a type of strategy training useful for developing and building language skills.

Brown (2006) notes that activating students' prior knowledge is an effective way to help them understand in a better way. He points out that pre-listening tasks should play a double role in this regard; on the one hand they need to provide opportunities for students to learn vocabulary and grammatical structures which will be useful for

carrying out the activities. On the other hand, they should encourage the use of students' previous knowledge to complete the tasks, which in addition may contribute to raise their motivation and interest while favoring a better comprehension.

This author observes that students should be aware of the purpose for listening, since based on that purpose, they will need to listen in different ways. In the first place, he advises to focus on the main idea of the text, not paying attention to secondary details, which will enable students to get familiar with the topic. Brown (2006) also notes the importance of recognizing specific details in some situations where understanding the topic is not enough (e.g. getting directions). Finally, he highlights the need to prepare the students to make inferences, given the fact that in some occasions important aspects of meaning are not explicitly stated, which implies that we must *listen between the lines* to understand the real meaning of utterances.

These kinds of activities that lead students through the listening process by encouraging them to make predictions, to monitor and evaluate their comprehension and to solve learning problems in their way to comprehension, contribute to the development of metacognitive knowledge² and self-regulated³ listening (VANDERGRIFT, 2007) through the use of cognitive strategies⁴ and metacognitive⁵ ones. In this way, teachers favor a process-oriented approach, which will prepare students for the strategic use of resources available from a contextual, visual, cultural, experiential and linguistic point of view to compensate for comprehension gaps. At this point, students' needs, interests and purposes for listening must be acknowledged by the teacher in order to create the best conditions for them to interact with the foreign language through the inclusion of topics, tasks and materials that may be relevant and useful within their sociocultural environment.

Adding a student-centered dimension to the listening process

As pointed out in the previous pages, listening is not an easy skill to learn due to the variety of dimensions (neurological, linguistic, semantic and pragmatic), processes (top-down and bottom-up), skills (identifying key words, retaining chunks of language, making inferences, etc.) and strategies (cognitive and metacognitive ones) involved in successful comprehension of a specific speech act. This implies that teachers must find the best ways to personalize teaching and allow students to bring their previous

² Knowledge of the mental processes which are involved in different kinds of learning. Metacognitive knowledge is thought to influence the kinds of learning strategies learners choose. (RICHARDS; SCHMIDT, 2010, p.361).

³ Self-regulation refers to learning that is guided by metacognition, strategic action and motivation to learn. Researchers in educational psychology have linked these characteristics to success in school and beyond. (RICHARDS; SCHMIDT, 2010, p.518).

⁴ Mental activities related to comprehending and storing input in working memory or long-term memory for later retrieval. (RICHARDS, 2008, p.11).

⁵ Conscious or unconscious mental activities that perform an executive function in the management of cognitive strategies. (RICHARDS, 2008, p.11).

experiences to the listening task (NUNAN, 1998) so that they may have some familiar ground to start from before getting into the new avenues of the unknown.

One way of adding this personal dimension to listening is by bringing to the class topics that may result meaningful and relevant to the students in order to make listening lessons as interesting and accessible as possible. The importance of including materials with interesting topics as a source of valuable input in terms of listening comprehension and language acquisition was outlined by Krashen (1982, p.66) when he stated: “Optimal input focuses [...] on the message and not on the form [...] the best input is so interesting that the acquirer may even ‘forget’ that the message is encoded in a foreign language.”

Likewise, Rost (2011, p.161) acknowledges the need of relevant input in the process of language learning when he observes:

We learn to listen primarily through attention to input and by engaging in intentional interaction. We can make gains in our listening capacity in more indirect ways also [...] But it is through listening to relevant input and taking part in meaningful interaction that the actual gains are made.

Despite this need, Krashen (1982) claims that a large number of listening materials used in different courses lack the inclusion of relevant and interesting topics, since these requisites have not been widely perceived as requirements for providing input to the students. He also recognizes the degree of difficulty that entails the presentation and discussion of topics that might be interesting to students whose objectives and backgrounds are different from the teacher’s and from their peers’.

A suitable solution for favoring this kind of *optimal input* in listening lessons is the use of authentic materials⁶, embedded in specific real-life communicative contexts where the language used and the topics discussed, stay in harmony with the students’ needs and interests from the linguistic, affective and academic point of view. At this respect, Rost (2011, p. 167) observes that “Language input should aim for user authenticity, first, by aiming to be appropriate to the current needs of the learners, and second, by reflecting real use of language in the real world”.

Similarly, Brown (2006, p.7) offers his point of view regarding this matter when he points out:

Teaching students about something other than the language they are learning is a logical outcome of communicative language teaching [...] When we teach materials in a context, we move beyond language as a set of example sentences to language as it is situated in the world.

⁶ The use of materials that were not originally developed for pedagogical purposes [...] often thought to contain more realistic and natural examples of language use than those found in textbooks and other specially developed teaching materials. (RICHARDS; SCHMIDT, 2010, p.43).

Along with the importance of using authentic texts containing real samples of language related to topics of interest for the students, comes the difficulty that represents for them to understand natural language used by native speakers in real communicative settings.

It is here that the teacher's role as a mediator needs to play an important part, to help students cope with the difficulty that entails their interaction with authentic texts performed by native speakers. In this sense, scaffolding⁷ may be a useful teaching strategy to facilitate the students' work with such materials. Next, we offer some authors' ideas, which may be helpful for teachers in order to provide this kind of mediation while using authentic materials in listening lessons.

Rost (2011) explains that teachers can make authentic materials motivating and useful for students of different proficiency levels with the inclusion of tasks aiming to teach in advance important vocabulary and linguistic structures that will be present in the input. In this sense, he comes up with a set of techniques that could become useful in listening lessons. They include the direct repetition of the text, either orally or by replaying the audio track or video sequence; the simplification of the content by pre-teaching vocabulary and preparing the students for key concepts in advance; and the fragmentation of the input by presenting chunks of it and then providing opportunities for clarification before continuing with the rest of the text.

Rogers and Medley Junior (1988, p.470) report that *tailoring the tasks* to the level of the students rather than the texts, proves to be an effective way of facilitating the students' interaction with authentic materials. At this point, they outline: "In fact, it is the design and focus of the task, rather than the language sample itself, that both defines understanding and determines the effectiveness with which the students 'understand' the materials."

These authors suggest three factors to be taken into consideration while planning tasks aiming to make authentic materials more accessible for learners of different linguistic levels. They are: appropriateness of the text, appropriateness of the task, and appropriateness of the sequence.

The first factor (appropriateness of the text) has to do with the correspondence between the content and linguistic complexity of the text and the learners' cognitive and affective needs, including their language proficiency level. The second factor (appropriateness of the task) is related to the degree of equivalence between what the task demands from the students and their real cognitive capacities and interests for learning the language. Finally, appropriateness of the sequence refers to the need to grade tasks incorporating an increasing level of difficulty, based on the assumption that a transition from the least to the most complex tasks may encourage the progressive transference of listening strategies from the students' mother tongue to the target language.

⁷ A teaching/learning strategy where the teacher and learners engage in a collaborative problem-solving activity with the teacher providing demonstrations, support, guidance and input and gradually withdrawing these as the learner becomes increasingly independent. (RICHARDS; SCHMIDT, 2010, p.507).

In line with the ideas expressed above, Nunan (1998) calls for a learner-centered dimension to listening classes through the design of tasks and the inclusion of teaching materials that guarantee students' involvement during the listening process. In this sense, he advises to design tasks where students may actively construct and reconstruct their comprehension and shape their language skills. He also suggests making students aware of the processes that take place during their learning in order to encourage the development of a reflective attitude to learning. In his opinion, this will contribute to improve their listening skills and their competence as language learners.

It is therefore necessary that teachers choose texts based on their students' needs, in terms of language complexity and content relevance. If texts become accessible and interesting enough for the students, their motivation and involvement in listening lessons are likely to rise. Once this is guaranteed, teachers will need to design tasks that facilitate the students' interaction with these authentic materials. These tasks must be organized in a way that depicts the process that students need to follow in order to become efficient listeners. They should start with the students' predictions about the content and language present in the text, followed by the confirmation of their assumptions in collaboration with their peers (VANDERGRIFT, 2007), since reflective practice helps them become aware of the learning strategies they are using in order to facilitate their understanding. Finally, listening tasks should be organized with an increasing level of complexity, in order to guide students through the listening process, which will allow them to assess their listening skills and their linguistic progress in general.

The elements suggested by Nunan (1998) regarding the features of an effective listening course, whose validity in our opinion remains intact in the current context of foreign language teaching, will be taken as a closure for the present paper, since they in some way encompass the aspects that have been addressed in it concerning the teaching of this skill.

Among these elements, Nunan (1998) outlines the use of materials based on a wide range of authentic texts including monologues and dialogues, the inclusion of schema-building tasks preceding the listening sessions and the work with effective listening strategies. He also suggests providing opportunities for the learners to progressively structure their listening by listening to the text several times and working with increasingly challenging tasks. Finally, Nunan (1998) argues that students should have a purpose for listening and that the content should be personalized so that they can play an active role in their own learning.

Conclusions

Listening constitutes a skill of paramount importance in the foreign language teaching-learning process, as it offers opportunities for providing students with valuable input in the form of oral texts performed by native speakers of the target language,

which favors their exposure to natural language in different communicative contexts where the foreign language is used. Through such exposure, not only will students have access to different linguistic components such as grammar, vocabulary, intonation, stress and rhythm, which are necessary for reaching an acceptable level of language proficiency; they will also be able to access interesting and updated topics related to their study areas or sociocultural environment.

Learning this skill also represents a challenge for students due to the processes they must internalize and put into practice in order to listen effectively. They include bottom-up processing, which involves the discrimination of sounds, words and phrases that are frequently produced at different rates, with a variety of accents, stresses, pitches and intonations. All these elements must be processed and stored in their short-time memory to enable the identification of the initial propositions. At the same time, students need to use top-down processing, which implies bringing to the listening situation their previous knowledge and experiences about the language and about the world to make sense of the speaker's intended meaning in a specific social setting. All these elements must be processed in real time in order to interact and collaborate with the speaker and provide a suitable response that guarantees the progress of the communicative act.

Due to the complexity that listening in a foreign language entails, teachers must guarantee the best conditions inside the classroom to facilitate the students' acquisition of this language skill. They include the use of authentic materials containing interesting, varied and updated topics which match the students' needs, interests and linguistic level. In this sense, the teacher's role as a mediator must contribute to personalize teaching by including tasks which progressively lead students through the listening process, allowing them to use cognitive and metacognitive strategies in their way to comprehension and to evaluate their progress as listeners and as foreign language learners.

LÓPEZ, C.; ARRUDA DE MOURA, S.; DELGADO, A. A aprendizagem das habilidades auditivas: um meio e um fim na aquisição das línguas estrangeiras. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v.64, 2020.

- *RESUMO: A compreensão oral constitui um valioso meio de aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras e um objetivo importante para os alunos no propósito de obter informações produzidas em segunda língua. Sua aquisição bem sucedida envolve o uso de processos mentais que precisam ser internalizados pelos alunos e posteriormente colocados em prática em suas interações orais para facilitar a compreensão em diferentes contextos comunicativos. É responsabilidade do professor encontrar as melhores formas de garantir a aquisição ativa dessa habilidade, escolhendo os tipos de tarefas e materiais que melhor atendam às necessidades e interesses dos alunos como indivíduos e como aprendizes de idiomas. Seguindo essas ideias, o presente artigo objetiva realçar a importância das habilidades auditivas no processo de aquisição de línguas estrangeiras. O trabalho também explora as formas em que essas habilidades podem ser abordadas em sala de aula para adicionar uma dimensão centrada no aluno ao processo de ensino-aprendizagem. Para atingir esses objetivos, o artigo*

se baseia em contribuições teóricas oferecidas por autores como Krashen (1982); Nunan (1998); Richards (1983; 2008); Brown (2006); Hinkel (2006; 2011); Nation e Newton (2009); Vandergrift (1999; 2007; 2011); Rost (2001; 2011) entre outros, que desenvolveram pesquisas substanciais nesse campo.

- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Aquisição de habilidades auditivas. Processos auditivos. Necessidades dos alunos.*

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Received on October 20, 2018

Approved on October 12, 2019