

WAYS TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS
in
THE SECOND GRADE

AN ABSTRACT OF
A THESIS
PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF DANBURY STATE COLLEGE

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE

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June 1966

Children in school today are experiencing continually increasing pressures for greater academic achievement. Poor listening habits can impede this achievement. It seemed possible that if children could be taught to listen efficiently, great academic growth would result.

To organize a listening program, second grade textbooks and school syllabi were examined. A review of the needs of second grade children in previous years also aided in formulating a list of the listening skills to be taught. A variety of lessons was planned to provide instruction in the skills selected. This instruction was planned to cover one semester.

In an effort to make the listening program as effective as possible the teacher's role as a listener was evaluated. Since children use the teacher as a model her personal listening habits were carefully studied, and use of voice considered.

To determine the efficacy and value of listening instruction, testing of pre-and post-instruction listening ability was necessary. On September 16, 1965 the listening section of the Botel Reading Inventory was administered. The tests were scored and a listening level for each child was determined.

The listening instruction program was begun during the last week of September. The introductory lessons were planned to aid children in realizing the need to listen and help them establish criteria for listening. Charts were made by the

teacher for both areas and permanently displayed for reference throughout the listening experiment.

Early in the program a lesson in following directions was presented. After this lesson the children were expected to be able to repeat all directions the first time they were given. Occasionally it was necessary to repeat a lesson of this type.

To provide listening experiences designed to develop the listening skills, a variety of methods and materials was used. Stories, phonograph records, science demonstrations, and social studies subjects all provided sources of listening lessons. Each lesson began with the establishment of the purpose for the listening, the material to be used was introduced and the lesson developed. Immediately upon the conclusion of the lesson some type of follow-up took place. Discussions, written tests, writing conclusions to stories, or drawing pictures were some of the activities used in this process. Listening games also proved useful in the reinforcement of the listening skills taught.

The listening section of the Botel Reading Inventory was readministered on January 31, 1966. After scoring was done and listening levels again determined, the initial and final scores were compared. It was found the average growth was 1.5 years. One child showed four years growth and five children showed no growth.

A careful study of the children and their growth in listening ability revealed that well adjusted children who

are of average or above average intelligence, living in homes that foster good attitudes towards learning, respond more readily to training in listening than children who have low mental ability, emotional problems, or live in homes whose attitudes imply education is unimportant.

As the listening program progressed improvement in other areas of instruction was noticed. Phonetic skills, language usage, and comprehension of arithmetic were areas where much improvement was evident. Improved listening habits increased respect for the opinions of others, and promoted better social attitudes.

The results of this study strongly suggest that through a program of planned instruction children can be taught to listen. They also suggest that these improved skills should increase academic learning and improve social attitudes.