

LISTENING AND SPEAKING. THEIR IMPORTANCE IN LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES. THE CASE OF ITALIAN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: This paper aims to present the importance of speaking and listening and to improve the art of communication in Italian language. *Listening* is an immediate and spontaneous activity, exercised by the man from the first moments of life. Furthermore, in the modern world, oral communication is the most widespread form of information transmission, so it is very important to refine our ability in listening and to be able understand the various types of information that we receive. *Speaking* is a daily activity. *Listening and speaking skills* allow us to communicate effectively with others. Communication involves more than the ability to simply talk and hear other people. It is essential to have good listening and speaking skills, as this will allow us to adapt our language to suit certain situations and improve our ability to successfully share our thoughts while also considering the views of others.

Keywords: listening; speaking; Italian language; skills.

1. Introduction

Learning a second language is always a challenging and rewarding experience. Italian is a beautiful language that is widely spoken in Italy and many other parts of the world, including the United States. Like any language, mastering Italian requires practice, patience, and dedication. Listening and speaking are two essential skills that are critical to mastering Italian. In this paper, we will explore the importance of listening and speaking skills in learning the Italian language.

Listening is an important skill in learning Italian. The ability to understand and process spoken words is crucial to learning any language. This is because understanding spoken words in context is important to fully comprehend the meaning of a sentence. Listening allows us to take in the sounds, rhythms, intonation, and other linguistic features that are unique to Italian.

When learning Italian, it is important to listen to native speakers as much as possible. This can be accomplished by listening to Italian music, watching Italian movies or TV shows, or even attending Italian-language events. By listening to Italian, we will become more familiar with the language, and we will be able to recognize and understand more words and phrases. Additionally, listening to Italian will help to improve our pronunciation and accent, which is important to communicate effectively with native speakers.

Speaking is another important skill in learning Italian. Speaking allows us to express our thoughts and ideas and is a very important and essential communication component. However, speaking can be intimidating for many language learners, especially those who are just starting. It is important to remember that everyone makes mistakes when learning a new language, and that practice is the key to improving these speaking skills. This can be done by finding a language partner, joining an Italian-speaking group, etc.

Learning Italian as a foreign language requires the development of both speaking and listening skills to gain proficiency. Listening comprehension work is particularly

crucial in the early stages of second language acquisition. However, processing and decoding auditory input can be challenging for learners just starting to learn Italian. The development of oral abilities, including listening and speaking, is often neglected in second language learning, despite being one of the most difficult aspects of language acquisition. Therefore, to promote effective listening skills in Italian as a foreign language, designed tasks should aim to teach learners how to listen, rather than solely test their comprehension. Online quizzes are a key element in the development of listening skills in Italian as a foreign language. Engaging, flexible listening comprehension practice and assessment through online quizzes offer an extended learning experience and stimulate motivation for learners. Speaking and listening skills are essential for acquiring proficiency in Italian as a foreign language, especially at the early stages of learning. It requires dedicated practice and effective teaching techniques, such as online quizzes, to facilitate the development of these skills.

2. How do speaking and listening skills help in improving pronunciation and comprehension of the Italian language?

Developing speaking and listening skills is a crucial aspect of second language acquisition, particularly when it comes to improving pronunciation and comprehension of Italian as a foreign language. Listening is a fundamental component of Italian language acquisition, as understanding is as important as speaking. Therefore, different software tools can be useful in enhancing pronunciation skills by analyzing speech patterns and providing feedback to learners. Another approach to improving grammatical accuracy in L2 is by focusing on aspects of Italian pronunciation that learners struggle with. The University of Padova in Italy hosts a wiki that facilitates L2 learners in mastering Italian pronunciation. However, speech recognition, speech analysis, and speech understanding can be effective tools for overcoming this challenge. Furthermore, developing speaking and listening skills not only enhances pronunciation but also improves reading and writing skills. For instance, students who study all subjects in Italian language can further improve their oral skills such as listening, pronunciation, and sound recognition. In addition, different research has shown that the self-efficacy of Italian high school students is positively correlated with their speaking performance. This highlights the importance of understanding the relationship between self-efficacy and oral proficiency in L2 learning. The idea that comprehension practice is central to L2 learning has been reiterated throughout history. For instance, the importance of texts in language learning was emphasized during the Italian Renaissance. Recent studies have shown that comprehension practice can be effective in improving listening comprehension skills in L2 learners. Pronunciation plays a significant role in speech understanding. Thus, efforts to help learners improve their pronunciation in a second language are crucial. Lastly, listening is an essential part of second language learning. Therefore, tools like audio and video materials that facilitate comprehension use are effective in helping learners comprehend oral speech.

3. What are the benefits of incorporating speaking and listening activities into the Italian language learning curriculum?

Incorporating speaking and listening activities in the Italian language learning curriculum has numerous benefits. Research indicates that foreign language (FL) learners benefit from activities that focus on various language skills, including listening and speaking, in

the FL curriculum. Technology is another tool that can enhance the effectiveness of the language learning process. Teachers can use various technology-based materials to make the learning process more interactive and engaging for students. One way to integrate technology into Italian language learning is by using surfing Italian websites, which combines learning with fun. Additionally, incorporating a year-long course focused on oral communication within the FL curriculum can help students improve their language skills. Furthermore, teachers can identify and address areas where students face challenges and benefit from additional support. For instance, incorporating translation activities in foreign language teaching can help students develop their comprehension and translation skills. This can be especially useful for students who are pursuing a degree in International Relations in Italy or those who are interested in a particular subject field such as law or economics. Instructors can also use theater techniques to enhance students' language learning experience, as research reveals that this technique can improve speaking and listening proficiency. Humor and spontaneity should also be incorporated into the curriculum, as it can foster an enjoyable learning environment and motivate students to learn Italian as a valuable life skill. Overall, incorporating speaking and listening activities in the Italian language learning curriculum has numerous benefits for students, and foreign language educators should explore these opportunities to enhance their students' learning experience.

Listening and speaking, are essential as they enable effective communication and interaction with native speakers. Below are some reasons why speaking and listening are important when learning Italian:

- **Communication:** Communication is the ultimate reason for learning any language. Speaking and listening skills help learners to connect and communicate with native speakers, express their ideas and opinions, and understand others. Speaking and listening form the foundation for effective communication in any language, and Italian is no exception.
- **Fluency:** Fluency refers to the ability to speak a language fluently and confidently. It requires practice and constant exposure to the language. Speaking and listening provide learners with the opportunity to practice their Italian pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. This, in turn, helps them to speak fluently and confidently.
- **Vocabulary:** Speaking and listening skills help learners to increase their vocabulary by exposing them to new words, phrases, and expressions. They learn how to use new words appropriately and effectively in a conversation, improving their communication skills.
- **Understanding Italian Culture:** Language and culture are inextricably linked. Speaking and listening skills enable learners to understand Italian culture, traditions, and customs better. They can interact with Italians differently and appreciate the nuances of their language and culture.
- **Networking:** Networking is an essential aspect of learning any language. Speaking and listening skills foster networking opportunities, enabling learners to connect with others who speak Italian fluently. They can exchange ideas, share resources, and collaborate to learn Italian more effectively.

Language skills, also known as language skills or abilities, are a set of four abilities that enable an individual to understand and produce spoken language for proper and

effective interpersonal communication. Language skills relate to different aspects of language use. In other words, they are those that allow us to communicate, effectively, with other people. Language training involves the development of analytical skills to understand how language works and how it is used to communicate our message. Having language skills means that we are well-versed in the grammar, structure, phonology, semantics, etc. of one or more languages. The four language skills are a set of four abilities that enable an individual to understand and produce spoken language for proper and effective interpersonal communication. In the context of first language acquisition, the four skills are most often acquired in the order of listening first, then speaking, then possibly reading and writing.

These four skills are also called *macro language skills* because they are a set of complex skills that allows a person to act effectively and efficiently. These macro skills refer to a good "know-how" and integrate conceptual contents such as "knowing", procedural such as "doing" and attitudinal such as "being".

Listening is giving attention to a sound or action. When listening, a person hears what others are saying and tries to understand what it means. The act of listening involves complex affective, cognitive, and behavioral processes. Affective processes include the motivation to listen to others; cognitive processes include attending to, understanding, receiving, and interpreting content and relational messages; and behavioral processes include responding to others with verbal and nonverbal feedback. Listening is a skill for creating problems. Poor listening can lead to misinterpretations, thus causing conflict or a dispute. Other causes can be excessive interruptions, inattention, hearing what you want to hear, mentally composing a response, and having a closed mind. Listening is also linked to memory. According to Ratcliffe, during a speech, some background noises heard by listeners helped them recall some of the information by hearing it again. For example, when a person reads or does something else while listening to music, he or she can recall what that was when hearing the music again later. Listening also functions rhetorically as a means of promoting cross-culture communicative discourses. Ratcliffe built her argument upon two incidents in which individuals demonstrated a tendency to refuse the cross-cultural discourses

Listening differs from obeying. A person who receives and understands the information or instruction, and then chooses not to comply with it or not to agree to it, has listened to the speaker, even though the result is not what the speaker wanted. Listening begins by hearing a speaker producing the sound to be listened to. A semiotician, Roland Barthes, characterized the distinction between listening and hearing. "Hearing is a physiological phenomenon; listening is a psychological act." People are always hearing, most of the time subconsciously. Listening is done by choice. It is the interpretative action taken by someone to understand, and potentially make sense of, something one hears. Along with speaking, reading, and writing, listening is one of the "four skills" of language learning. All language-teaching approaches, except for grammar-translation, incorporate a listening component. Some teaching methods, such as total physical response, involve students simply listening and responding. A distinction is often made between "intensive listening", in which learners attempt to listen with maximum accuracy to a relatively brief sequence of speech; and "extensive listening", in which learners listen to lengthy passages for general comprehension. While intensive listening may be more effective for developing specific aspects of listening ability, extensive listening is more effective in building fluency and maintaining learner motivation. People are usually not conscious of how they listen in their first, or native,

language unless they encounter difficulty. A research project focused on facilitating language learning found that L2 (second language) learners, in the process of listening, make conscious use of whatever strategies they unconsciously use in their first languages, such as inferring, selective attention, or evaluation. Several factors are activated in speech perception: phonetic quality, prosodic patterns, pausing, and speed of input, all of which influence the comprehensibility of listening input. There is a common store of semantic information in memory that is used in both first and second-language speech comprehension, but research has found separate stores of phonological information (dual) for speech. Semantic knowledge required for language understanding (scripts and schemata related to real-world people, places, and actions) is accessed through phonological tagging of whatever language is heard.

Many people view speaking a foreign language, as simply a skill that can be learned through practice and repetition. Speaking a foreign language requires a deep understanding of the grammar, vocabulary, and culture of the target language. It also requires the ability to effectively communicate with people who speak the language. There are many benefits to speaking a foreign language. It can help you better understand other cultures and make new friends. It can also improve your cognitive skills and memory. Additionally, it can give you a competitive edge in the job market. Despite the many benefits, learning a foreign language can be challenging. It takes time, effort, and dedication. Listening may be a passive skill, but that doesn't mean you can't be an active listener. Active listening requires you to be engaged with the audio. To make sure we pay attention during our listening activities, must choose resources that we're interested in. We'll be more devoted to the content when we listen to language audiobooks that aren't only appropriate to our level but also fall under genres that we genuinely enjoy. The same goes for foreign language audio and video clips. When you listen to and watch foreign language videos that align with your interests, hobbies, and whatnot, you tend to pick up new words and concepts quicker because you're invested in the topic.

4. Diversify and Listening Resources

Podcasts and audiobooks are great, but they aren't the only listening resources at our disposal. We don't have to forget that while we're watching foreign news and movies, we're also listening to the language. Diversity keeps us on our toes, so is important to don't hesitate to branch out from podcasts to mix up our listening activities.

Active listening is crucial for learning a new language. Arguably, so is passive listening. Passive listening language learning is language immersion for the subconscious mind where we're mentally disengaged with the audio. An example of this would be listening to foreign language audio for entertainment purposes or falling asleep to foreign language songs. Although passive language listening is hotly debated as a method of learning, we can't deny that it's an effortless way to immerse ourselves in the target language. By immersing our subconscious, we're covering all the bases for our brain to retain the language. Continuing the idea of mindless learning, our final tip on how to improve language listening skills is by putting on foreign music or language podcasts while carrying out other tasks, such as household chores, silent hobbies, and workouts. This isn't a typical immersion language training technique per se, but if it allows us to learn outside of our designated study hours, why not give it a go? And on days

when we're too busy to squeeze in a quick study sesh, we can at least listen to a podcast while we're driving, on a coffee break, or even on the treadmill.

5. Measures and problem-solving related to the development of language skills in speaking

Language teachers play an important role in the development of language skills.

- The teacher must develop a sense of confidence in the child for the development of language skills. Even the hesitation of children must try to be put aside in the classroom.
- Students must accept the speech and mistakes of the teacher positively.
- The teacher must motivate his students to participate in competitions. Students must receive the contents of the page to participate in the competition.
- Encourage students to use the same word in speech as a "medium" and the same phrase over and over again. To make the speech effective.

Along with speaking, reading, and writing, listening is one of the "four skills" of language learning. All language-teaching approaches, except for grammar-translation, incorporate a listening component. Some teaching methods, such as total physical response, involve students simply listening and responding. A distinction is often made between "intensive listening", in which learners attempt to listen with maximum accuracy to a relatively brief sequence of speech; and "extensive listening", in which learners listen to lengthy passages for general comprehension. While intensive listening may be more effective for developing specific aspects of listening ability, extensive listening is more effective in building fluency and maintaining learner motivation. People are usually not conscious of how they listen in their first, or native, language unless they encounter difficulty. The different research projects focused on facilitating language learning found that L2 (second language) learners, in the process of listening, make conscious use of whatever strategies they unconsciously use in their first languages, such as inferring, selective attention or evaluation. Several factors are activated in speech perception: phonetic quality, prosodic patterns, pausing, and speed of input, all of which influence the comprehensibility of listening input. There is a common store of semantic information in memory that is used in both first and second-language speech comprehension, but research has found separate stores of phonological information (dual) for speech. Semantic knowledge required for language understanding is accessed through phonological tagging of whatever language is heard.

6. Conclusion

Language skills are something that must be learned from an early age. This is because it allows you to gain interaction skills with others and helps in the social and study life of a student. The four language skills are the key to success for each of us.

Speaking skills are the ability to communicate effectively and clearly using spoken language. They involve various aspects such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and coherence. *Speaking skills* are important for many purposes, such as education, work, social interaction, and personal development. *According to the British Council*, some of the ways to improve speaking skills are:

- Practicing speaking regularly with different people and topics

- Listening to native speakers and imitating their pronunciation and intonation
- Recording yourself and noticing your strengths and weaknesses
- Learning new words and phrases and using them in context
- Asking for feedback and correcting your mistakes

Listening skills are the ability to understand and process spoken information. They involve various aspects such as attention, comprehension, memory, and response. Listening skills are important for many purposes, such as learning, communication, problem-solving, and entertainment. *According to the British Council*, some of the ways to improve listening skills are:

- Listening to a variety of audio materials, such as podcasts, songs, news, and stories
- Focusing on the main idea and the keywords of the speaker
- Predicting what the speaker will say next based on the context and clues
- Checking your understanding by summarizing or asking questions
- Practicing listening and speaking together with a partner or a group

Listening and speaking are very important skills in foreign language learning. They help learners to develop their communicative competence, which is the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in various situations. It is critical to develop students' listening and speaking skills by encouraging them to follow directions, understand expectations, and make sense of what they hear. When it comes to socializing and learning, excellent spoken and listening skills are essential. Communication is a defining feature of all relationships. As a result, people can exchange information, ideas, and feelings, as well as build trust. As a result, good speaking and listening skills can assist students in developing important relationships and learning effectively. Students must be able to ask questions that are relevant to their understanding and can use relevant strategies to develop their vocabulary. In addition, they must be able to articulate and justify their views and answers in an objective manner. Finally, they must be able to provide well-structured descriptions, explanations, and narratives for various purposes. Students can develop essential socialization skills as a result of these steps, which can help them learn in the classroom. People will also be better able to express their feelings and understand and be able to engage in the thoughts and experiences of others.

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