

UNIT 2 LEARNING AND TEACHING MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE SKILLS

2.4.1 PRE-LISTENING

Pre-listening is the stage before the students start listening. Pre-listening tasks are important for many reasons. Teachers can use them to motivate the students and establish their listening expectations, to introduce the topic, to introduce the type of text, to activate the existing knowledge that the students possess, to introduce some background information, to make predictions about the content, to introduce new or difficult vocabulary or expressions which may occur in the listening text, to make students aware of the purpose(s) for which they will be listening, to provide opportunities for group or collaborative work and for class discussion activities.

During this phase it is important to tell students that they do not have to understand every word but focus their attention on the information requested.

Sample pre-listening activities:

- looking at the title or visuals, like pictures, maps, diagrams, or graphs, and predicting the content of the listening text
- matching words with definitions
- filling in gaps of sentences or short texts with target/key words.
- asking students to answer questions about the topic of the listening text / starting a class discussion about the topic of the listening text.
- eliciting what students know about the subject of the listening text, what they do not know, and what they would like to know.
- brainstorming the words and expressions which are likely to appear in the listening text
- constructing semantic webs, that is a graphic arrangement of concepts or words showing how they are related
- reviewing vocabulary which is important to understand the text
- reading something relevant to the topic

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES:

A) A history teacher who wants to plan a module about the Irish Question in the 20th century can start the topic in a very motivating way through the listening of a song, "Zombie" by The Cranberries, which deals with the period of conflicts in Northern Ireland known as "The Troubles" and contains references to the Easter Rising of 1916.

Class discussion:

1. Today you are going to listen to "Zombie", a song by the Cranberries. Have you ever heard this song?
2. What does the word "zombie" make you think of?
3. Do you know where the band is from?
4. What is the political situation of that country now?

Reviewing/checking/predicting vocabulary:

The teacher can write the following words on the blackboard:

- Bomb, gun, tank, dying, fighting, crying

and say:

- The song contains the words written on the blackboard. Do you know what they mean?

After checking the meaning the teacher can ask:

- Considering the title and the above words, what kind of song do you expect?

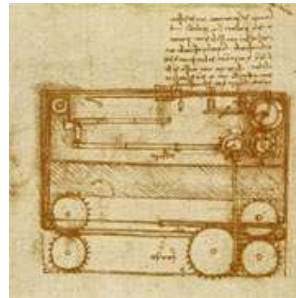
B) Art teachers who want to prepare a CLIL lesson on Leonardo Da Vinci could use the following listening activities based on an audio-clip taken from BBC LEARNING ENGLISH ENTERTAINMENT. This is the website if you want to download the audiofile and listen to it:

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/entertainment/audio/ent_060928_da_vinci.mp3

Class discussion:

Teachers can say:

- Today you are going to listen to an interview between a man, who is a radio reporter, and a woman, who is the curator of an art exhibition. Have you ever been to an art exhibition? If yes, did you like the experience? According to you why are art exhibitions useful?
- Look at the following pictures. Who is the author of these works? What do you know about him? Do you know in which period he lived? Why is he so famous all over the world?



- Considering the topic, what kind of words do you expect to hear?