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## Understanding the Crucial Role of Listening Skills in Communication Enhancement and Academic Success

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### Abstract

The acquisition of knowledge in any field is intrinsically linked to the capacity of learners to actively listen. Active listening, a fundamental skill, plays a pivotal role in fostering effective communication and academic accomplishment. It serves as a linchpin for students aiming to refine their communication skills. Despite its paramount importance, the realm of second language acquisition, research, teaching, and assessment has often overlooked the significance of listening. This study endeavours to delve into the critical role of listening skills in augmenting communication abilities. Learners endowed with strong listening skills exhibit the potential to attain proficient communication capabilities. Activities such as listening to music, watching English movies, and engaging in English language courses have been identified as effective means to enhance students' listening skills. Furthermore, this study underscores the effectiveness of Computer Assisted Language Learning in fortifying students' listening proficiency. The acquisition of adept listening skills emerges as a catalyst, empowering pupils to elevate their overall communication competence.

**Keywords:** Improving Listening Skills, Enhancing Communication Skills, Language Proficiency.

### Introduction:

Developing effective listening skills is indispensable for enhancing overall communication abilities. For learners to communicate successfully, a fundamental requirement is their ability to actively listen and thoroughly comprehend the subject matter. Proficient hearing necessitates a resilient intellect capable of grasping the nuances of the surrounding circumstances. Language acquisition stands as a pivotal component in both academic and social spheres. Numerous studies affirm the pivotal role of active listening in the cultivation of effective communication skills. The acquisition of language skills contributes significantly to the holistic development of a learner's personality. Recognized widely, the English language acts as a gateway to the world for learners. Research indicates that English learners allocate a substantial portion, approximately 45-55%, of their time to practising listening skills, among the four language skills.

According to Mendelsohn (1994), the vital components of language acquisition—

listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW)—constitute a comprehensive framework for effective communication. However, despite its paramount importance, listening often takes a back seat in educational institutions, with many failing to impart it effectively (p. 9). Presently, the emphasis on listening skills is more pronounced in both English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies, recognizing its significance in fostering linguistic proficiency and communicative competence.

According to a conventional study, a substantial portion of our working hours, ranging from 70 to 80 per cent, is dedicated to various forms of communication. Within this timeframe, 9 per cent is allocated to writing, 16 per cent to reading, and a significant 45 per cent to listening. The research underscores the pivotal role of listening in comprehending and assimilating spoken information, fostering interpersonal connections, and enhancing cognitive abilities. Proficiency in the English language bestows individuals with esteemed status in society, allowing them to stay informed about global affairs. Recognizing the significance of this, English has been deemed an obligatory component of the curriculum. The instructional design aims to equip learners with effective communication skills and proficiency in all four language dimensions.

Distinguishing between hearing and listening is essential when delving into discussions about listening abilities. Often, learners may consider hearing and listening as interchangeable concepts. Hearing pertains to the passive act of perceiving

sound, whereas listening entails actively concentrating one's attention on the sounds being heard. Consequently, it becomes imperative for learners to maintain active engagement in the listening process during comprehension exercises. In the instruction of listening skills, educators play a crucial role in ensuring that learners grasp the differentiation between mere hearing and the more intentional act of listening. This awareness is vital to prevent learners from inadvertently overlooking the significance of the auditory input they receive.

The directives outlined by the Secondary Education Commission (1952), National Policy on Education (1986), National Curriculum Framework (2005), and National Policy on Education (2020) collectively underscore the importance of teaching English, recognizing its significance at both national and international levels. The overarching goal is to inspire learners to acquire the requisite skills in the English language. These educational policies acknowledge the global prominence of English as a means of effective communication, access to knowledge, and participation in international discourse. The emphasis on teaching English aligns with the broader objective of equipping learners with the language proficiency necessary for active engagement in diverse academic, professional, and cultural domains.

Definition of listening:

The act of listening goes beyond the passive reception of sound; listeners actively engage in a cognitive process to comprehend and interpret the conveyed message (p. 6). Underwood (1989) further defines listening as a cognitive activity wherein individuals

seek to understand the meaning of the auditory stimuli they perceive (p. 1). Mendelsohn (1994) distinguishes hearing as the basic ability to understand spoken language. O'Malley, Chamot, and Kupper (1989) contribute to the understanding of listening, defining it as a cognitive process involving the comprehension of contextual significance through the utilization of cues and prior knowledge (p. 19). These perspectives collectively highlight the active, cognitive nature of listening, emphasizing its role in extracting meaning from auditory stimuli.

Types of listening:

- Casual listening: Casual listening refers to the act of hearing without any specific aim or intention. In this form of listening, the listeners lack earnestness, and the engagement is often relaxed or leisurely. Activities such as listening to music or enjoying a storytelling session fall under the category of casual listening. In such instances, the emphasis is on the enjoyment of the auditory experience rather than a focused effort to comprehend or analyze the content. Casual listening allows individuals to unwind, appreciate the sounds around them, and experience the pleasure of auditory stimuli without a specific cognitive agenda.

- Intensive hearing: The described form of listening represents intentional and attentive engagement, where the listeners are fully focused on comprehending the content. This type of listening involves a purposeful and deliberate act of attentive listening. It encompasses activities such as actively participating in lectures, seminars, or any situation where the primary goal is to absorb and understand substantial information. In

this mode of listening, individuals apply cognitive effort to grasp the nuances of the spoken content, emphasizing a more concentrated and purposeful approach compared to casual listening.

- Appreciative hearing: This form of listening involves actively accepting and appreciating the speaker's message or the auditory content. Appreciative listening typically occurs when individuals engage in the act of listening with the sole purpose of deriving pleasure or enjoyment from the sounds being heard. This could include activities such as listening to music for the sheer joy of the auditory experience, where the focus is on appreciating the artistic or aesthetic qualities of the sound rather than analyzing or comprehending specific information. Appreciative listening reflects a more subjective and emotionally driven engagement with the auditory stimuli, emphasizing the pleasure derived from the act of listening itself.

- Gist listening: The form of hearing described here involves the listener focusing specifically on the crucial ideas being conveyed. This type of listening is characterized by a deliberate effort to concentrate on the key messages or important information being communicated, emphasizing the extraction of essential concepts from the auditory input. It implies a more selective and purposeful approach to listening, where the listener is attuned to identifying and understanding the central or significant elements of the spoken content. This focused listening helps individuals discern and retain the key points, contributing to a deeper understanding of the intended message.

**Present situation of listening and communication skills:**

Learners consistently encounter challenges in acquiring fundamental listening and communication skills. English, much like other languages, is commonly treated not as a skill to be taught but rather as a subject within educational institutions. Often, the focus is on completing the syllabus rather than on enhancing language proficiency. In the context of India, English is often considered a secondary language, receiving less emphasis in teaching. The primary objective of English education in India is to provide learners with the essential skills to comprehend both written and spoken English and to communicate effectively with clarity, accuracy, and appropriateness (Lakshmi, 2017). The instruction of English must place significant emphasis on helping learners understand the importance of listening skills in developing effective communication abilities.

Additionally, it is a common observation that teachers tend to prioritize the enhancement of reading and writing abilities over the cultivation of listening and speaking skills. Research suggests that a considerable number of teachers lack the expertise to effectively teach listening skills, and educational institutions frequently lack the necessary technology to support the instruction of these skills. The increased emphasis on testing writing and reading skills further contributes to the prevailing imbalance, as learners often prioritize these aspects over listening and speaking skills, which may not carry the same weight in the examination process. This imbalance in focus can hinder the holistic development of language proficiency and effective

communication among learners.

**Review of related literature:**

Based on the gathered data, it has been identified that several researchers have delved into alternative methods to enhance listening abilities. The review encompasses insights from 25 scholars in India and 15 researchers from various other locations. Numerous studies have underscored the significance of listening as a crucial skill for improving communication abilities. Additionally, a body of research has indicated that effective listening contributes to the cognitive development of learners. To provide a comprehensive understanding, this review was expanded, focusing specifically on the following aspects: [To be filled with specific aspects based on the study's content].

Challenges in obtaining proficiency in English listening and communication skills

i. Enhancing proficiency in English hearing and speaking abilities

ii. Comprehending the lexicon

iii. Utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance listening and communication abilities.

iv. Challenges faced by learners in comprehending accents

**Barriers to listening:**

Many learners are not adequately instructed on how to effectively exercise their listening abilities. The learners receive instruction in reading, writing, and speaking, but they do not receive instruction in listening. Despite the implementation of numerous training programmes aimed at enhancing listening abilities, learners continue to struggle with the difficulties associated with this particular talent. Here

are several obstacles that hinder effective listening:

- Engaging in incessant speech without attentively listening to others
- Diverse forms of obstacles and disruptions
- Inattentiveness while listening
- Deficiency in cognitive comprehension
- Interruption during the conversation

#### **Tips to develop effective listening skills:**

The learners should adhere to the following guidelines to comprehend and assimilate the information conveyed by the speaker during listening exercises. During the process of listening, the learners are required to:

- Maintain direct eye contact with the speaker to ensure the student comprehends the speaker's intentions.
- Embrace and welcome new ideas and information.
- Comprehend the lexicon and the connotations of the terms.
- Seek clarification by posing questions to the speaker.
- Record the salient aspects.
- Preserve a state of silence while engaged in listening.

#### **Conclusion:**

The importance of listening in the development of effective communication skills is undeniable. Active listening not only enhances communication abilities but also elevates the overall quality of interactions. By engaging in active listening, learners can augment their capacity to make informed and improved decisions across various domains. The significance of listening extends beyond communication, influencing decision-making skills comprehensively.

Therefore, learners should prioritize the cultivation of their listening skills and adhere to effective practice methods.

Teachers play a pivotal role in this process, necessitating thorough preparation in listening skills to adequately train learners in this critical area. Learners, in turn, must possess the ability to comprehend both the terminology used and the speaker's accent to effectively grasp the material. Recognizing that prioritizing the development of listening skills significantly enhances proficiency in communication, individuals can actively contribute to their personal and professional growth.

To facilitate this growth, instructors must provide multiple opportunities for learners to hone their listening skills and actively participate in the listening process. Such opportunities not only reinforce the importance of listening but also create an environment conducive to the continual improvement of communication abilities. In essence, the emphasis on listening is a key factor in fostering well-rounded and effective communicators.

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