

## Teaching Techniques Deployed at Various Stages of Ameliorating Listening Alongside Facets & Nuances of Sub-Skills Bonded with It – CLT Approach of ELT'

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*"A wise old owl sat in an oak; the longer he sat, the less he spoke. The less he spoke the more he heard. Why can't we be like the old wise bird?"*

Why is listening ABC of a language? A child shoots its mouth off only after listening to the parents and others; by the same breath, listening is honey and manna as it scores a bull's eye in school and at work in today's business world. In the epoch of intricate web of relationships, listening helps us grow the people and deal with our own can of worms in black and white. It provides the aural input that serves as a cornerstone for language acquisition generally and speech development particularly. Honeymoon is all-over, as our most consequential communication skill listening is frequently relegated to a lesser role in many educational, social, and political spheres. The googling in listening isn't in the public eye but still crawling in its infancy, which is a bitter pill to swallow.

While listening is meat and potatoes for win-win conversations, the research in listening is a horse of another color – laying in the blackness waiting for lambent glow. Teaching listening isn't a duck's soup or a child's play but a tightrope walk. Taking the bull by its horns, this paper, according to its own lights, draws a bead on equipping ELT professionals, listeners, speakers, readers, writers, scholars, pioneers, pedants and ESL/EFL learners with blow-by-blow account on employing various teaching-learning techniques of listening for trenchant communication via effective listening. In a nutshell, this dissertation also spotlights the **nuances of sub-topics alongside listening**.

### CONTRIBUTING STATEMENTS

*"There is support in the literature for **hypothesis** that attention is required for all learning. Learners need to pay attention to input and special attention to all aspects of the input (phonology, morphology, pragmatics, discourse, etc) that you are concerned to learn" — (Schmidt: 1995).*

Is listening alpha and omega to speaking? Uh-huh! From the year dot, effective language instructors show pupils how they can tweak their listening behavior to deal with a variety of situations, types of input, and listening purposes. Without walking around hot porridge, within two shakes of a lamb's tail, let us get down to brass tacks of the paper – a proposal intended to investigate certain observations on how listening skills are integrated in CLT classrooms for efficient communication. By throwing a torch, it accounts a tentative insight, on the chemistry between sub-skills of listening. Likewise, it would explain certain facts and phenomena, how they work

in tandem to aid learners for betterment of their listening, if handled prudently with appropriate strategies to each listening situation.

**Back to the drawing board, the dissertation digs its teeth deep into the flesh of teaching techniques of listening, puts them together in a parcel and unfolds them to university faculty, staff, collegians and administrators for improving their listening skills in a square deal.** Listening is the awareness of and the organization of data entering our nervous system via hearing mechanism. Unlike hearing, listening is an active cognitive process. It also supposes Gordian knots of listening, opposes barriers and proposes bumper solutions.

## ABSTRACT

*“I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen” — Ernest Hemingway*

What is A–Z of communication? Before you say Jack Robinson, In the K-Society with 5-G technology, cold-shouldering listening is setting a cat amongst pigeons. However, this knowledge-hunt goes to the whole hog just to evoke inquisitiveness and lit the lamp in minds and souls of assimilators, also English speakers, regardless generations — both youth and adults with effective listening strategies. It also aims to warm the cockles of each heart by reaching all the language commuters, i.e. MT, ESL & EFL communicators. With the doctrine, “Be a curio, driven by the curiosity”, at the outset, this paper aims to intensify the minds of teachers, learners and lovers of English with an in-depth analysis – a probe on subtleties and trivialities associated with its sub-skills, for the promotion of listening in a holistic approach, with efficacious communication as an objective.

At a rate of 40 knots, teeming idioms run from pillar to post, mushrooming all-over this marathon article, with a focal point to re-explore lucid teaching-learning techniques of listening in apple pie order via – pre, while and post listening stages in classrooms. Thirdly, it puts its best leg forward to satisfy the quench and augment the appetite of pedants, scholars, teachers with wide-ranging info about impelling listening. Further, it takes the rough with the smooth or traces out brain-teasers in teaching listening skills, accommodates barriers, and ends handsomely with suggestions in interactive manner for promoting efficacious listening. That’s the size of it; cut me some slack while you hit the road!

## What is listening?

Listening has a “volitional component”. Tomatis’ (2007) view is, while listening; the desire to listen, as well as the comprehensibility of a listener, for successful recognition and analysis of the sound. So, two concurrent actions (listening and

comprehending) are demanded to take place in this process. Besides, according to MechealRost (1991), listening comprises some component skills:

- discriminating between sounds, recognizing words,
- identifying grammatical groupings of words,
- itemizing expressions and sets of utterances that act to create meaning,
- daisy-chaining linguistic cues to non-linguistic and paralinguistic cues,

Using background knowledge to predict and later to confirm meaning and recalling important words and ideas.

### **What is effective listening?**

*“Listening is defined as not simply transferring info, but the fundamental info processing paradigm sees communication as spic-and-span encoding-decoding process.”*

Good listening is my cup of tea and an adorned feather in everybody’s cap. Listening is viewed as a construction of process by Cognitive Science. According to relevance theory, understanding involves both decoding and inferential process including verbal and non-verbal signals the speaker sends.

Listening can be depicted as: Input— — —->Processing— — —->Output.

Input is the words spoken by speaker and by output listener’s response. The listener processes the input before coming out with his output.

### **Introduction to Developing Listening Skills**

Listening is a noteworthy skill but neglected – by thinking we give learners enough practice in listening classrooms vis-à-vis expository methods of teaching – truth contradicts. Always a bride’s maid is never a bride, so is the relationship between speaking and listening. For donkey’s years, listening is on the backburner but now, tables are turned and it has become a heliocentric skill. Off the cuff, get off your high horses and hold all the cards as there is plenty of other fish in sea, i.e. knowing different aspects of listening can amplify horizons of your knowledge.

## **MAIN TEXT**

### **I. SUB-SKILLS OF LISTENING**

*“God gave man two ears but only one mouth so that he might hear twice as much as he speaks.” (Epictetus, a Greek philosopher)*

Listening isn't the only pebble on the beach so it's significant to get the picture of various facets connected to effective listening. Pull your weight and go extra-mile as gardens aren't made by sitting in the shade! So good listeners burn their candle on both ends to improve their listening, a total skill which includes sub-skills, such as:

- Prediction: to predict what the speaker will say depending on the context.
- Guessing: to guess the meaning of difficult words through listening.
- Skimming: to run quickly over the oral message and get the central idea.
- Scanning: to run over the oral message, looking for certain points.
- Discovering the speaker's point of view: good listener will try to discover the speaker's attitude and feelings from the oral message.
- Utilizing the context: Good listeners can guess the new words and structures depending on the listening text.
- Listening sub-skills discrimination: to get the accurate message out of the oral message, listener needs to be able to discriminate between the English sounds, stress and intonation patterns.

## II. THE FACETS & NUANCES OF VARIOUS SUB-TOPICS/SKILLS CORRELATED WITH LISTENING

### 1) Tight-knit-LanguageSkills – LSRW

*"To meet at all, one must open one's eyes to another; and there is no true conversations no matter how many words are spoken, unless the eye, unveiled and listening, opens itself to the other."* — Jessamyn West

Listening is both a skill and art! Well, skill is planned and conscious effort to learn something over a stipulated time, whereas, an art is practiced out of interest and mastered spontaneously, regardless timeframe. The building of successful decoding skills requires teaching and using LSRW prudently in ESL/EFL context. A good EFL teacher will breakdown confusing signals into simple parts: shows the correctly written words, explains the content and context and allows spoken and written practice.

Dynamic relationship between input and output: United we stand, divided we fall; most skills are integrated, so are language skills. Nothing can be done in isolation. Similarly, no language is learnt in solitary confinement of skills. Thus it's clear as cloudless sky that use of language is multi-layered/multi-dimensional skill oriented one. Hitherto, it is gimcrackery to teach each skill in purdah. So, it's better to look at how input and output are connected in the classroom. It's clear as mud; most important info comes from reading and listening which are inputs for the output of writing and speaking.

## 2) Sensory & Fruit-bearing Skills

*“The validity of the receptive/productive distinction as a way of distinguishing types of knowledge in most cases depends on its resemblance to the distinction between the “receptive” skills of listening and reading and the “productive” skills of speaking and writing”, (Palmer, 1921: 118; West, 1938; Crow, 1986).*

### Receptive skills

The term receptive skills carries the idea learners don't produce language but receive language input from others tête-à-tête listening or reading and decode the meaning to comprehend the message. To talk turkey, it is better to call receptive skills as sensory skills they need involvement of our senses.

### Productive or Fruit-bearing Skills

On contrary, productive skills, a term in vogue is that we produce a message through speech/written text for others to understand. Let me not talk through my hat but call spade a spade, birds of same feather fly in a flock, so are integrated language skills. In the classroom, certain activities, like working with literature and project work, seek to **integrate work on both receptive and productive skills.**

Hence, language skills are bifurcated into receptive and productive skills which feed off each other in many ways.

## 3) Active Vs Passive Listening

### Passive Listening

The researcher defines, *“Passive listening means just hearing with/without understanding (minus feedback) and misses-out verbal and non-verbal communication cues”*

Passive listeners, like stones absorb info with no non-verbal feedback to demonstrate, they are engaged in what is being said. In passive listening, the listeners will usually remain stock-still while the speaker talks, they won't make eye contact, nod or use empathetic facial expressions. The message that the speaker receives is that the listener is hearing them, but isn't genuinely interested.

### Active listening

*“Active listening is reacting or doing something that demos you are listening and have understood with non-verbal cues,”* writes the author.

Active listening requires you to “get inside” the speakers’ head to interpret communication from their point of view. When someone is actively listening, they use non-verbal cues to demonstrate their interest in what is being said. They may nod, lean forward, make eye contact or exhibit facial expressions in response to the conversation. They listen objectively without judging content. At long last, as an active listener, you take responsibility for completeness.

*“Interactive and non-interactive listen are birds of different feather – the former is a rose in the bush whereas non-integrative listening is a thorn in the flesh!”*

#### 4) Intensive Vs Extensive Listening

##### Extensive Listening (EL)

*“To make the most of this kind of input, students should set themselves a simple listening task, adopt a relaxed posture and lie-down and doodle when they listen”, — Joseph Quinn.*

Hence, EL which is done for aesthetic pleasure and for general language improvement can also have dramatic effect on collegians’ language learning abilities. For extensive listening to work effectively with groups – we need collection of appropriate tapes, CD’s and pod-casts, DVD’s clearly marked for the topics and genres. EL takes place outside the classroom, in students’ homes, cars, watching a film, understanding and enjoying the story, etc.

**EL involves** a) listening to massive amounts of text. b) the text which learners can understand reasonably smoothly c) high levels of comprehension d) listening without being constrained by pre-set questions or tasks e) listening at one’s comfortable fluent listening ability.

##### Intensive Listening (IL)

A student might find herself in a situation in which she has to listen advertently or intensively. IL also involves more detailed analysis of the language used or listening for specific info, i.e. finding answers to specific questions. “What is the speaker’s favourite Chinese dish?” would involve listening for specific info because the pupils listen for that particular response. Teachers should have a bag full of tricks in his kitty.

**IL involves** a) attention to specific items of language, sound or factual details such as words, phrase, grammatical units and pragmatic units. b) Sound changes, stress, intonation, pauses, etc. c) Listening for details d) Listening to mimic a text. e) Feedback on accuracy and repetition on the teacher’s part promote success here.



**Oops-a-daisy! One can't make an omelette without breaking eggs, so put your chin up and move heaven and earth to improve listening skills by gaining valuable language input – At the drop of a hat, take Omni-directional antenna through a combination of extensive & intensive listening material and procedures.**

## **5) Teaching-learning Strategies of Listening**

*“Heed with your brain and ears. Your brain makes meaning out of all the clues available. Not only you need listening to sounds, but you also make use of your knowledge. Your ears pick up sounds; your brain makes the meanings.”*

### **i) Bottom-up processing**

In Bottom-up processing, like reading, learners utilize their linguistic knowledge to identify linguistic elements in an order from the most midget linguistic unit like phonemes (bottom) to the most Brobdingnagian one like complete texts (top). In bottom up processing, the listener depends solely on the incoming input for the meaning of the message or the text.

Bottom-up strategies include: a) listening for specific details/words b) recognizing cognates c) recognizing individual phonemes d) recognizing phoneme sequences which form words e) recognizing word-order patterns, f) recognizing prefixes, roots, and suffixes g) recognizing stressed syllables and h) recognizing intonation contours.

### **ii) Top-down processing**

Top-down strategies are listener based or on the knowledge the listener background knowledge of the topic, the situations, contexts, texts, phrases and sentences, the speaker, you reconstruct the meaning using the sounds as clues and comprehend what you hear. “This prior knowledge helps the listener activate a set of expectations that help the listener to interpret what is heard, and anticipate what will come next.”

Top-down strategies include: a) listening for the main idea b) predicting c) drawing inferences d) summarizing e) distinguishing fact from opinion and g) interpreting tone

Teacher should be as keen as mustard while selecting listening strategies and use both depending on the classroom situation!

## **6) Methods of Teaching Listening**

*“Most eloquent speakers of the world aren't only voracious readers but also vivacious listeners.”*

The teacher may use story-based method or task based method according to the situation as both are even-Stevens and part and parcel of teaching listening!

### **Story-based Method**

Teachers can think of many other ways of teaching listening. She can come out with her own listening activities if the textbook doesn't have enough of them. Ex: the teacher can tell learners a story, real or imaginary, and pause frequently while narrating the story and ask them to guess what is going to happen next.

### **Task-based Method**

In, task-based teaching, learners have to listen to the speaker and carry-out the tasks given by the speaker, viz. they listen to the text and fill a table/label a diagram/list the main points. Successful performances of these tasks show that learners have comprehended the message. Holy-cow! Learners bounce off the walls with bells on and fling themselves into these tasks because they resemble natural language use.

7) Teaching Listening Better: Is Listening being taught as well as it could be?

*“Without good listening ability, it's just to ride on the back of tiger and end up in falling upside down.”*

In EFL/ESL classrooms, assimilators are given practice in listening but they aren't actually **taught** listening. Practice isn't enough. Research and case studies told us many things about how listening should be taught. But often, this knowledge hasn't made the jump into classroom practice. **In addition to giving students plenty of listening practice, we should also break the skill of listening into micro-skill components and make sure that our pupils are aware of what they need to know to understand and how to listen.**

**Teaching listening is a dark horse which has to be placed in the sun.**

### **8) Three Cycles Involved Ameliorating Listening Skills**

**What Listening Entails:** *Mary Underwood (1996)* says, “We may appear to be inactive while listening but we're engaged in the activity of constructing a message as listeners. Whilst hearing can be thought of as a passive condition while listening is always an active process”. This process has three stages.

#### **Stages of Listening**

**Stage One:** The sounds go into a sensory store, called the 'echoic memory' and are engineered into meaningful units according to the knowledge of language the listener already has. The sounds remain in the echoic memory for a second.



**Stage Two:** it's all about processing of info by the short-term memory within few seconds. At this point, words/word groups are checked and compared with the info already held in the long-term memory and the meaning is extracted from them.

**Stage Three:** Transferring the info to long-term memory for later use. It seems that a listener records the message and stores it in the long-term memory in a truncated form. The evidence of this is, when we recall something from the long-term memory, we remember the gist of what has been heard, rather than the exact words spoken.

## 9) Integrating Meta-cognitive Strategies

### Pre-listening: Plan for the listening task

Set a purpose or decide in advance what to listen for,

Decide if more linguistic or background knowledge is needed,

Determine whether to enter the text from the top-down (overall meaning) or the bottom-up.

### While-listening: Monitor comprehension

Verify predictions & check for inaccurate guesses,

Decide what is important or not to comprehend,

Review to check comprehension,

Ask for help.

### Post-listening: Evaluate comprehension and strategy use

Evaluate comprehension in a particular area,

Evaluate overall progress in listening or in particular types of listening tasks,

Decide if the strategies used were appropriate for the purpose and for the task.

**Tip:** You can really turn on the magic by mixing and modifying strategies in the classroom.

## III. TEACHING–LEARNING TECHNIQUES DEPLOYED AT VARIOUS STAGES OF UPGRADING LISTENING

Teaching listening isn't a coffee-table small talk but a hot potato as teachers ought to go through fire and water to improve educates' listening skills. Nonetheless, if you could draw and drum trainees into these techniques, then developing listening becomes neither pie in the sky nor a sour grape.

There are 3 stages of teaching listening:

## 1) THE PRE-LISTENING STAGE

### A) The Pre-listening Stage

Occasions are rarefied when citizenry listen without having some idea of what they expect to hear.

In the railway junction, you have an idea of what announcer will say.

When you attend a public meeting, you probably know what the dignitaries speak.

Notwithstanding, there are instances when academics sit and the pedagogue says out of thin air "heed to this!" They may have no idea what to expect.

They may not know what the topic is!

What the setting is!

Why they are asked to listen to the topic.

Even if the educator has indicated what they are going to listen to, they may have scrimp grasp of the 'cultural framework' in which the speakers will speak, henceforth, they will have no idea what it's meant, even if they can understand (some of) the words. It is below the belt to plunge students straight into the listening text, even if they are being tested rather than teaching listening comprehension because this makes them to be in tight spot of deep water to use natural listening skills.

Thus, what they hear with, what they expect to hear are to be horses for courses or matched by using their previous nemesis to make sense of it. This kind of preparatory work is generally described as 'pre-listening work'.

## B. Teaching Techniques/Activities for Pre-listening Stage of Improving Listening

Pre-listening Stage: Just like pep-talk helps players before substantial matches, some activities before listening may serve as tune-up for listening. These also function as 'reference' and 'framework' by giving prior knowledge of listening activities.

Types: Pre-listening work can consist of diversified activities, including:

- The instructors giving background info,
- The tutees reading something relevant to the topic,
- The learners looking at presentations, pictures, graphs, slides, etc. for related info;
- A discussion on the topic by learners among themselves,
- A question and answer session or filling out questionnaire,
- Reading through comprehension questions in advance,
- Trainees figuring out own opinion on a topic, predicting content from the title, etc.
- Teacher informing them of the type of text, their role, purposes of the listening.

All these activities help to rivet students' attention on the topic by narrowing down the things that the students expect to hear and activating relevant prior knowledge which will help them to keep an eye on the listening text.

## **2) THE WHILE–LISTENING STAGE**

### **A) The While-listening**

“When ramping up listening comprehension skills is the aim, while-listening activities must be chosen with a fine-tooth comb. Testing/activities, which simply produce “right/wrong” answers, will soon throw cold water on all but the most enthusiastic learner. Testing listening comprehension is an arrow in the quiver and benchmarking scale but shouldn't be the purpose of every listening session. Good while-listening activities help learners find their way through the listening text and build-up expectations raised by the pre-listening activities”.

### **B) Purpose of the While-listening Activities**

While-listening activities mean ‘what educates do during the time they are listening to a text’. As far as listening comprehension is concerned, the purpose of the while-listening activities is:

To aid learners develop the skill of eliciting messages from spoken language. There are other reasons to put one's finger on but mainly to learn to recognize the pronunciation of words, to comprehend the stress pattern, to construe & appreciate connected speech, to know and observe voice modulation so that they can use what they hear as a model for their own speech. Sometimes while-listening activities are also conducted for specific purposes, especially for testing.

### **C) The Nature of While-listening Activities**

### 1) *Interest*

While-listening activities should strike a chord and pull the string of pupils' heart, so that they feel they want to listen and carryout the activities. Part of the interest can stem from the topic and content of what is being said, and the listening text should be chosen according pupils' interest. Example: a video transcript extracted from Oscar-winning movies.

### 2) *Levels of Difficulty*

While-listening activities should be like taking candy from a baby, so that most pupils can do. A **dead duck** here may rapidly lead to de-motivation. Activities with potential "sticking points under headings" are like a double edged sword, where students are likely to get into difficulties, should be used sparingly in the abecedarian stage. Change your horses in the midstream, i.e. include such activities latter, so that the students learn not to be put-off but pursue in-spite of the problems.

## D) **Basic Principles for While-listening Activities**

Activities in this stage must follow the learners' specific needs, instructional goals, listening purposes and learners' proficiency level. Trust me! Teachers have to go to any lengths to have their ducks in a row in designing while-listening activities. Think/give:

If pupils are asked to give written info after listening, they should have chance to listen to the text more than once which makes it easier to keep concentration going on while-listening with specific purposes.

Global activities like getting the main idea, topic, setting, theme, summary, plot, etc. that focus on the content and forms of the text should be given more as these guide through the text.

More questions should be set up to zoom in students' attention on the crucial elements which help to comprehend the text.

Instant feedback makes pupils examine their responses and how much they are developing.

## E) **Teaching Techniques/Activities for While-listening Stage of Meliorating Listening**

### 1) *Marking items in pictures*

Carry-out some pre-listening work using pictures/slides/maps. Then ask students to respond to various stimuli by marking things or commenting on the picture/slide. They're umpteen activities which fall into this category: Identifying the concept,

people and things, marking items mentioned by the speaker, marking choices and errors, checking details, match the following and true/false.

## **2) *Selecting pictures***

Tutees hear a description and have to cherry-pick from the selection offered which picture is the right one? The most common pictures used are slides/photos of people and scenes – indoor/outdoor. Prepare/download a wide-ranging repertoire of pictures on a PPT and play on a projector. Educators may also use audio or oral description or both to make trainees listen in a heartfelt way.

## **3) *Storyline picture sets***

Present 2/3 sets of, 6-8 pictures/slides to the learners and instruct them to listen to a story, either read by the teacher or played on a tape. Then learners should make deliberate attempt to decide which set of pictures represents the story. We can also conduct pre-listening activity by presenting sets of slides and ask them to make a guess and say it aloud.

## **4) *Arrangement jumbled pictures/slides in order***

Give learners PPT with number of pictures /slides. The aim is to arrange those pictures in the sequence according to the listening text. Obviously, numbering each picture is only the ordering and most exercises of this kind are done from books. Hence, a repertoire with a tough series, of which they shouldn't make head and tail without listening, is to be administered but make sure that slides are limited.

## **5) *Completing pictures using picture cues***

This activity takes young pupils by storm and is particularly helpful at springboard stage of learning. Having looked at the basic outline of the picture, pupils should follow the instructions orally or on tape and draw/colour various items. It's important for students to realize that the drawing or colouring isn't a test of their artistic skills but just a signpost for their understandability.

## **6) *Carrying out actions***

This activity is generally carried out with young learners at the jumping-off point. Simply instructing the class to do a series of actions is a good listening practice, which can be more effective by turning it into a game. Pupils must merely carry out the instructions.

## **7) *Following directions on a map***

Make learners listen to set of directions, thereafter tell them to follow a route on a popular road/map with reasonably authenticity. It is easy, if the map covers a small area and uses road names which are easily recognized with a small number of features marked on it which in turn help listeners by confirming that s/he is going the right way.

When students have got used to following routes, they can be presented with more complicated maps like large-scale geographical maps, plans of the school, hotel, hospital, scientific diagrams combined with more lexical sets can be used. Example: ask your pupils to mark the direction of the flow of the blood in the body.

### **8) Information gap activities**

A wide-range of 'info gap activities' can be designed based on forms, charts, tables, etc. with activities in which learners ought to take info from the listening text and use it in various kinds of written completion activities.

### **9) Using lists**

A popular while-listening activity consists of making a list, often a shopping list or a list of places to visit. Students mustn't be asked to jot too much and the info mustn't be given, chop-chop.

a) Problems: Learners' maladroitness to jot down the words and recognize them while listening to the text.

b) Solution: Use lists provided by the teacher/syllabus designer using listening book. Ex: ask the educatees to mark the items on the list in some way, which indicate that they have heard the words and can match them with the printed words.

### **10) True/False**

This is useful for a listening comprehension exercise. But identify beforehand, whether responses can be a matter of opinion/interpretation rather than facts. Such responses can then be the subjects of discussion; some trainees may find their answer incorrect though it's a perfectly reasonable choice. Then accept it.

### **11) Multiple-choice questions**

Let scholars read through the questions before they listen, as they would be between the devil and the deep blue sea to read and listen, simultaneously. If MCQ's are to be answered at the while-listening stage, it's often necessary to stop the tape to allow the scholars take time to make their choices.

### **12) Text completion exercises**



This is also an info transfer exercise but just a different kettle of fish. Give assimilators enough time at the pre-listening stage to go through the text; it's a shot in the arm to bolster their confidence and their chances of success soar upwards. Ideally give few gaps for completion, and if a text has too many, then aid pupils to fill some in the pre-listening stage. It also develops their listening and pronunciation.

Stories, whether true (news items) or made-up (from books) are good luck charm for this activity as students are carried along by the story, and words to be added are often easily decided upon as the context is apparent. In the case of published materials, check the relevance of the words to be filled if it requires students to fill gaps. Ex: materials with unusual street names aren't irrelevant.

### **13) Spotting Mistakes**

This activity can be based on a picture/printed text or simply facts established orally at the pre-listening stage. Facilitator talks about a picture, making deliberate mistakes and learners are required to indicate each time they spot a mistake. These activities spring a surprise! They sprinkle adrenaline and encourage learners' participation. Then classroom buzzes with activity.

### **14) Prediction**

This activity can be used at the pre-listening stage. Yet in while-listening stage, prediction should be more precise exercise, concerned with predicting the exact words to be spoken or the kind of response to be expected. Normally, there is more than one correct prediction so teacher has to be judicious and mustn't winnow out alternatives which fill the bill, even if speaker doesn't actually use the same words. Discussion on such alternatives by the listeners forms an interesting part of ESL learning.

### **15) Seeking specific items of info:**

Mostly, all while-listening activities require students to seek bits of info; hitherto, this activity is concerned with listening to a fairly extensive listening text (weather forecast, news bulletin, debate, etc.) with objective of finding some previous info for a specific purpose. Ex: Allow students to listen to a BBC documentary to know food habits of a particular tribe. Then the instructor may administer while-listening activity by asking questions about that particular info, for which students need to seek-out specific items and to let the other parts pass, which gives practice in 'picking up their ears' at points when they think the info they want is about to be given.

### **Tips**

Off-times, pair/group checking can follow while-listening activities which lead to interesting post-listening consideration of the tasks.

Teachers may pick up good students and ask them to check the listening competence of their peers from time to time under his supervision.

Give pupils opportunity to listen twice/trice in case of difficult one, to make their listening effective.

### 3) THE POST-LISTENING STAGE

#### Definition

*“Post-listening activities embrace all the work after listening to the text (using audio/video aids or the teacher’s reading/speaking). Some post-listening activities are extension of the work done at the pre-listening and while-listening stages whereas some relate only loosely to the listening text itself”.*

#### Purpose of the Post-listening Activities

Checking whether the pupils have understood what they needed to comprehend and whether they have completed whatever while-listening task successfully.

Teacher gives answers orally,

Pairs check by exchanging each other’s answers

Teacher writes answers/show on slides.

Teacher asks students to check against answers given in a book, etc.

#### Nature of the Post-listening Activities

##### i) Identification of Problems

To reflect on why some educators have failed to comprehend some parts of the message, at the checking stage, the facilitator draws attention to specific parts of listening text and focuses on the forms, functions, lexis, connected speech, stress and intonation which have caused problems to the listeners. Withal, since ‘tolerating vagueness’ is a sub-skill of listening better not to explain the text word by word at post-listening stage.

##### ii) Suggestions Proffered

Attention should be limited to the points which were significant in achieving the aim of completing the task not whole text.

To give students opportunity to consider attitudes and manners of the speakers of the listening text.

To expand on the topic of the listening text and perhaps transfer things learned to another context. Ask students whether they agree to the decision of the speaker or to vent their views.

### **Teaching Techniques/Activities for Post-listening Stage of Ameliorating Listening Skills**

#### **16) Form/Chart completion**

When occasions dictate the completion of some sections at leisurely pace after listening, as the recording of factual info after listening depends largely upon memory than listening, it's best if post-listening chart completion doesn't depend on large quantities of info from the listening text. Post-listening provides an opportunity for pupils to react on something noted at the while-listening stage.

#### **17) Extending lists**

This activity can "straddle" the while-listening and post-listening stages. The assimilators are asked to make a list and tick/check a list while listening that provides a way of collecting words sets or extension of word sets already known to them.

#### **18) Sequencing/Grading**

Assimilators attempt to sort out the various items as they listen and then have to complete the activity after they have heard the whole story. Stories are easy texts to be used to improve listening process because students are helped by the natural development of the story as it unfolds. If you plan exercises connected to sorting out items in correct order, you must take care that they couldn't do without listening to the text. Activities those require some kind of 'grading' rather than sequencing, tend to be more difficult. For ex: students may be asked to 'put in order, from the more liked to the least liked eight jobs that the speaker has to do.

#### **19) Match with a reading text**

This activity is particularly useful for assimilators who have learnt English mainly through reading and writing and those who confront difficulty in matching the heard-words with written record. At first, it's probably best to start with reading the written words as free-listening activity. However, with more practice in listening and when their confidence has begun to build up, then ask them to listen, and carry out a while-listening task. The best exercises are which don't simply ask students to match the words/ phrases from the two texts— but require them to listen carefully to the info provided to complete a task which depends on successful matching.

### **20) Extending notes into written responses:**

Brief notes has to be made at the while-listening stage, but taking notes while listening racks pupils' brain and hence it can only be done with advanced learners. Based on the notes they need write the something, the written text required can be one sentence answers or specific questions or-else long pieces of prose. It's a good idea for students to re-listen after the post listening-writing stage to check their work.

### **21) Summarizing**

This activity can be done by extending notes made at the while-listening stage or by simply depending on memory. If students have to be dependent on memory, it's best to use a story as a listening text, as the sequences of a story makes remembering easier. However, asking students to write summary generates a lot of marking, so you should only use this activity if you are prepared to mark.

### **22) Using info from the listening text for problem-solving/decision making activities:**

Ask the learners to collect info by listening to a tape or other sources like text, chart, puzzle, etc. and apply the info to find solution to a problem or as the basis for making a decision. Students get more practice in reasoning and defending/attacking ideas. While-listening activity can be used to discover the info whereas interpretation and application can be done at the post-listening stage.

### **23) Jigsaw listening**

This term describes a listening activity in which a class of students is carved up into a small number of peer groups. Each group listens to a different listening text but on the same topic, then the groups exchange info to build up the complete picture/story.

### **24) Good jigsaw activities**

A crime story is told by 3 different witnesses. Each group is given with the evidence of one witness and everybody from all the groups has to figure out who committed the crime. Jigsaw listening activities can be very motivating and joyous only if teachers plan it well. Be sure that you have i) Good material, ii) The facilities and spacing between the groups should allow learners to listen to the texts, undisturbed by the other groups and iii) The organizational skills to manage the class so that the whole thing runs smoothly.

### **25) Identifying relationships between speakers**

Listeners should be in a position to identify the relationship between speakers while they are actually listening to them. By and large, it's useful at the post-listening stage to consider what features of the listening text made the relationship clear. In some cases, the lexis is sufficient (e.g. the forms of address, references to shared knowledge), other cases features are subtler.

By discussion of these features, the students' awareness of how language is used in particular social setting will be raised and they will gradually appreciate it. If you incline to hold a post-listening discussion about relationships, to pull assimilators' attention, alert them by giving questions before listening, so that they will focus on these aspects while they are listening.

### **26) Establishing the mood/behavior of the speaker**

This activity depends on listeners' interpretation rather than the barefaced meaning? More than exact words of the speaker, how they are spoken is significant. A comment such as "You are so kind" can be spoken with varying stress and intonation, i.e. sincerely, sarcastically, adoringly, etc. In other words, the loudness and quietness of a voice might indicate anger or sorrow, excitement or boredom".

Wires may be crossed through non-recognition of the hidden meaning which is swept under the rug might be opposed to the surface meaning of the words spoken. Students' command over the language step-ups, their listening confidence develops and their perception of meanings hidden behind words can get heightened by post-listening discussion on the speaker's mood/actions, etc.

### **27) Role play**

Role plays/simulations are activities which can be based on a number of different stimuli: role cards, stories, characters seen on TV, etc. as well as listening passages. **Using listening as an input provides the students with a selection of language appropriate to the roles and situations, which are to be developed.**

*"Give it some stick by putting above activities into practice; you will look like the cat that swallowed the canary."*

#### IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF INSTANT FEEDBACK FOR ALL KINDS OF LISTENING

Whatever activities you handpick for implementation, it's Copernican to provide instant feedback, to what extent, the students have succeeded in the tasks, and why/why not.

Feedback is weaponry in the hands of a teacher. If used properly, it's beneficial to learners.

With each feedback, the trainees will know about their mistakes and will get a chance to rectify mistakes.

#### Difficulties in Giving Feedback

Off the top of my head, owing to teacher-learners ratio in ESL/EFL classrooms, it's a wild boar chase for instructors to give feedback to everybody either instantly or aftermath.

Due to the time constraint, immediate feedback is out of question, sometimes.

Providing feedback at a later lesson may not be useful as it's necessary to reply the listening text immediately in order to refer to the salient points.

Moreover, the value of discussing why students have missed things or made errors is lost if the discussion is not held instantly, as relevant thoughts are spontaneous.

Giving feedback is like finding a needle in a haystack and different from shooting fish in a barrel but if you don't, you will be in the doghouse. Nonetheless, if teacher keeps nose to the grindstone, it plays pivotal role in teaching listening so give it a whirl.

#### V. DIAGNOSIS OF GORDIAN KNOTS IN ALL KINDS OF LISTENING ACTIVITIES (CONTEXT: ESL/EFL)

##### General Research in Teaching Listening

**Unfortunately, research in ELT has found-out Lilliputian effort has been put in teaching listening in countries where it's studied as ESL/EFL (read similar acronyms, ESOL, CALL, ELL and ESP). This discussion may appear "whistling Dixie" or "whistling in the dark" even to ESL teachers, forget about learners! What do we find in a**



traditional ESL classroom? At best and at most, pupils complete the language course without practicing listening even for a day, which is a badge of dishonour and a malodorous flip-flop. Few ELT trained teachers, now-a-days, in line with the flow of CLT are making efforts to practice listening in classrooms, which consists of teacher reading aloud a written text slowly, once/twice so that it's understood and then asking some comprehension questions and nothing more. Writing takes driver's seat where spoken language plays second fiddle and listening bushwhacks which is an ominous note of alert.

### Find-outs of Author's Research in Teaching Listening

The author has been teaching English (ESL) for 10 years at different institutions. Having taught intermediate in India, he also taught English for IGCSE 'O' level in Maldives. At IGCSE 'O' level pupils are trained in listening for Paper-2. They were supposed to listen to the audio and complete the different info-gap activities, which most the pupils took it on the chin (failed) due to their inability to comprehend conversation of the native speakers and owing to the barriers of listening stated above.

In recent past, the researcher while mentoring students of RGU-IIIT a pre-university, used to video transcripts to learners as part of their pre-listening, while listening and after listening activities, And then it had been observed "Some learners were unable to follow the instructions or recognize the words on the tape, comprehensively."

The scholar facilitating learning in ELCS Lab for Technocrats at SreeVanmayi Institute of Engineering & Technology found that some educatees are unable to progress on expected lines owing to the difficulty of maintaining concentration coupled with their lower level of understandability of native speech and few other reasons.

## VI. EFFICACIOUS LISTENING

*"The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention."*

Rachel Naomi Remen

### Suggestions to ELT Professionals for Effective Listening

In the above paragraphs problems of teaching-listening are identified, here suggestions are proffered to ESL/EFL Teachers.

**1) Lay stress on listening:** Syllabus design, teaching-learning and evaluation are the three vital components of curriculum. Syllabus has to be designed in accordance with communicative curriculum for interactive classrooms with CLT approach which has wide-ranging objectives. In CLT, speaking is core component alongside reading and writing, however it's time to lay stress on listening.

**2) Allotment of sufficient periods:** Not only in syllabus design but also in teaching-learning stage, listening should be given paramount importance. In each sem., allocation of sufficient time for teaching and facilitating listening is need of the hour.

**3) Listening has to be taught since childhood:** Listening is to be practiced and evaluated from 4<sup>th</sup> grade till the graduation. It has to be graded and facilitated from easy to complex.

**4) Needs better equipment and infrastructure:** Equipment and infrastructure available to the learners in developing nations isn't conducive to offer listening instruction. More OHPs, laptops, audio-visual aids, spring-action chairs, net connection, etc. are to be used in ideal ESL classrooms for listening to prosper.

**5) Authentic materials:** Listening materials has to be prescribed along with syllabus. The authenticity of such materials is of paramount importance for effective listening.

**6) Audio-visual aids:** Pupils should get exposure to native speech through video transcripts or live visualization programs. Ex: a document on human evolution on BBC, live debates on NDTV, etc.

In addition, intriguing audio materials are needed. Ex: listening to a conversation on science-fiction flicks and filling up gap activities.

**7) Pre-planned pre-listening:** Pre-listening activities which can act as precursor to while-listening has to be prepared beforehand and presented. Ex: a set of directions for the while listening stage.

**8) Comprehensive while-listening:** wide-ranging while-listening activities have to be conducted. Ex: listening to the audio and ticking true/false exercise.

**9) Organized after-listening activities:** Summing up and inferential activities have to be organized at post-listening stage. Ex: need to write a gist of the conversation after listening.

**10) Coherence in the listening:** All the activities viz. pre-while and post listening need to be coherent and run smoothly from one phase to another.

**11) Listening more than once:** Allow pupils to listen twice/thrice in case of difficult exercise to make their listening wholesome.

**12) Chance to hear:** In order to beat stress of listening for specific info, give pupils time to listen extensively or give a chance for hearing as both can act as mood changers.

Listening is the language modality that's used most frequently. *"It has been estimated that adults spend almost half their communication time listening, and students may receive as much as 90% of their in-school information through listening to instructors and to one another."* Often, however, language learners don't recognize the level of effort that goes into developing listening ability. It's time for student to show their nerves of steel and question their attitude toward listening and for teachers, to implement better strategies.

## VII. BARRIERS TO LISTENING

***"Listening isn't the same as hearing and in order to listen effectively you need to use more than just your ears."***

Active listening is a skill that can be acquired and developed with practice. However, this skill can be difficult to master and therefore, have the patience of a saint. Nevertheless, there're many things that get in the way of listening and you should be aware of these roadblocks in order to become an effective listener. Barriers can include:

**Listening to more than one conversation at a time**, this includes watching TV while listening to radiogram. While cell-phoning one person and talking to another, simultaneously and also distracted by dominant noise in the immediate environs.

**You find the communicator attractive/unattractive** and you pay more attention to how you feel about them than to what they are saying.

**You aren't interested** in the issue being discussed, become bored and you build castles in the air.

**Feeling unwell or tired**, hungry, thirsty or needing to use the toilet.

**Identifying rather than empathizing:** Understanding what you're hearing but not putting yourself in the shoes of the speaker.

**Empathizing rather than sympathizing:** Sympathy isn't the same as empathy, you sympathize when you feel sorry for the experiences of another, and to empathize is to put yourself in the position of the other person.

**You are prejudiced or biased** by race, gender, age, religion, accent, etc.

**You have preconceived ideas:** Effective listening includes being open-minded to the ideas and opinions of others, this doesn't mean you have to agree but should listen and attempt to understand.

**Don't make judgment**, this person isn't very bright or under qualified so there is no point listening to what they have to say. Otherwise, don't judge the book by its cover.

**Previous experiences** – we're all influenced by previous experiences in life. We respond to people based on personal appearances, or previous interpersonal encounters. If we stereotype a person we become less objective and therefore less likely to listen effectively.

### VIII. TIPS TO LEARNERS TO MAKE THEIR LISTENING COMPREHENSIVE

*"A good listener will listen not only to what is being said, but also to what is left unsaid or only partially said. Listening involves observing body language and noticing inconsistencies between verbal and non-verbal messages and responding back."*

#### **12) Roadblock speaking**

*"If we were supposed to talk more than we listen, we would have two tongues and one ear."* said Mark Twain.

When somebody is talking, listen to what they're saying, don't interrupt, talk over them or finish their sentences for them. When the other person has finished talking you may need to clarify to ensure you have received their message accurately.

#### **13) Tune-up for listening**

Relax and focus on the speaker words as the human mind is easily distracted by teeming number of thoughts – try to put other thoughts out of mind and concentrate on the messages that are being communicated.

#### **14) Make the speaker feel relaxed**

Help the speakers to feel free to speak, remember their needs and concerns, use gestures or words, maintain eye contact but don't stare – just show you are listening and comprehending what is being said.

#### **15) Avoid distractions**

Focus on what is being said: don't doodle, shuffle papers, lookout the window, pick your fingernails and avoid unnecessary interruptions. These behaviors disrupt the listening process and send messages to the speaker that you're bored.

#### **16) Empathize**

Try to understand speaker's opinion and look at from his perspective and fully empathize with the speaker. If the speaker says something that you disagree then construct a logical argument to counter what is said yet be broad-minded.

### **17) *Patience pays***

Don't jump on conclusions as they will jump on you. So wait till somebody completes his speech. A pause doesn't necessarily mean that the speaker has finished his speech. Be patient, it takes time to formulate what to say and how to say it. Never interrupt/finish a sentence for someone.

### **18) Nullify Prejudice**

Try to be impartial. Don't become irritated and don't let personal habits/mannerisms distract you from what they are saying. Everybody has distinct speaking style – some are more nervous than others, some people like to pace whilst talking – others like to sit still. Focus on what is being said and try to ignore styles of delivery.

### **19) *Comprehend pitch contour!***

A good speakers use both volume and tone to their advantage to keep audience attentive; everybody will use pitch, tone and volume of voice in certain situations – tune-up your ears to intonation – understand the emphasis hidden behind spoken words.

### **20) Listen to ideas not mere Words**

The most difficult aspect of listening is the ability to link together just isolated bits and pieces of info to reveal the complete picture/ ideas of others. However, with proper concentration and focus this becomes easier.

### **21) Glue your eyes for non-verbal medium**

Gestures, facial expressions, and eye-movements can all be important. We don't just listen with our ears but also with our eyes – watch and pick up the additional info being transmitted via non-verbal medium.

Though it isn't as easy as pie, these tips help to develop your listening ability and live high on the hog.

## **IX. APPENDIX**

## A. Role of Listening in Communication & ELT

*“Adults spend an average of 70% of their time engaged in some sort of communication, of this an average of 45% is spent listening compared to 30% speaking, 16% reading and 9% writing.”— Adler, R. et al. 2001*

*“He has put forward in a theory called the “Noticing Hypothesis”, which states that learners have to notice something before they can learn it. And as such, we need to help our students notice language points. Teachers need to teach.” (Richard Schmidt, a noted Second Language Acquisition expert)*

These definitions bear witness and speak volumes about significance of listening and teaching listening.

## B. Explanation of Acronyms

ELT = English Language Teaching; CALL = Computer Assisted Language Learning; MT = Mother tongue; CLT = Communicative Language Teaching; GMT = Grammar Translation Method; ESP = English for Special Purposes; ESL = English as a Second Language; EFL = English as a Foreign Language; PPT = Power Point Presentation; K-Society = Knowledge = society; 3-D = 3<sup>rd</sup> Dimension; 4-G = 4<sup>th</sup> Generation; 5-G = Fifth Generation and IT = Information Technology.

## C. Using Authentic Materials and Situations

Authentic materials and situations prepare students for the types of listening they will need to do when using the language outside the prescribed syllabus.

### *One-Way Communication*

#### **Materials:**

- Radio and TV programs
- Public announcements (airports, train/bus stations, stores)
- Public Addresses, speeches and lectures
- Cell-phone customer service recordings

#### **Procedure:**



Help educatees identify the listening goal: to obtain specific info; to decide whether to continue listening; to understand most or the entire message.

Help students outline predictable sequences in which info may be presented: who-what-when-where (news stories); which-flight number, arriving/departing-gate number (airport announcements).

Help pupils identify key words/phrases to listen for

### ***Two-Way Communication***

In authentic two-way communication, the listener focuses on the speaker's meaning rather than the speaker's language. The focus shifts to language only when meaning isn't clear as mud. After all, communication is sharing info in turns.

**1) Listen to the Complete Message:** Don't Jump the gun and pay the piper. "It isn't over 'till the fat lady sings, so be patient or be in pickle. It's significant when listening to a topic that provokes strong opinions or radically different points-of-view. During such situations, it's epoch-making not to prejudge the incoming message. Learn not to get too excited about a communication until you are certain of the message.

**2) Work at Listening Skills:** Active listening takes blood, sweat and tears. If don't, you will be a rabbit caught in the headlights. Good listeners demonstrate interest and alertness. They indicate through their eye contact, posture and facial expressions that the occasion and the speaker's efforts are a matter of concern to them. Most good listeners provide speakers with clear and unambiguous feedback.

**3) Judge the Content, Not the Form of the Message:** Such things as the speaker's mode of dress, quality of voice, delivery mannerisms and physical characteristics are often used as excuses for not listening. Direct your attention to the message—what is being said.

**4) Cast aside Distractions:** Physical distractions and complications seriously impair listening. These distractions may take many forms: loud noises, stuffy rooms, overcrowded conditions, uncomfortable temperature, bad lighting, etc. Good listeners speak up if the room is too warm, too noisy, or too dark. There are also internal distractions: worries about deadlines or problems of any type may make listening difficult. If you can't manage it, arrange to communicate at some other time.

**5) Think Efficiently and Critically:** Here is food for your thoughts! Normally, we speak at a rate of 100 to 200 words per minute. However, we think at a much faster rate, anywhere from 400 to 600 words per minute. What do we do with this excess thinking time while listening to someone speaking? One technique is to apply this

spare time to analyzing what is being said. They critically review the material by asking the following kinds of questions:

- What is being said to support the speaker's point of view? (Evidence)
- What assumptions are being made by the speaker and the listener?
- How does this info affect me?
- Can this material be organized more efficiently? (Structure)
- Are there examples that would better illustrate what is being said?
- What are the main points of the message? (Gist)

One can easily pick up bad habits when it comes to listening but check them by following authentic materials. Listening is a key interpersonal skill and a prerequisite for many other communication skills – by learning to listen more effectively you can improve the quality of your professional and personal life. In reverse, back listeners draw a blank and flak.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

*“In the days of multimedia and animation, Web Language, English is the MT of most developed nations – Europe, America and the whole globe. Either as ESL or EFL, it has spread its wings in all directions – NEWS”.*

With diminuendo of GMT (1960s) & crescendo of CLT (1990s) wrought a wonder and necessitated vis-à-vis language usage crossing the frontiers of pen and paper exercise. Communication is a two wheeled which involves teeter-tottering – riding up and down by people at either ends or two persons speaking and listening in turns. In today's cosmopolitan world, social butterflies and party animals – tête-à-tête, active listening can blow the cobwebs of ineffective communication; in contradiction, neglecting listening, is burying your head in the sand. ESL/EFL teachers should go through whole nine yards to enhance listening skills of educatees as they aren't exposed to English outside classrooms. Pull your finger out as it won't pay to be lazy! In four corners of the earth, teaching in listening has to travel miles, from rags to riches so one must go to any length to develop it.

We are at the dawn of a new age – marching robots with dashboard IT, Listening is no more MulkrajAnand's untouchable yet research in the area is at the kickoff stage. However, this article takes a dare, pick up the bones with ineffective listening and throws a gauntlet at it, sheds light and strikes the purple patch with solutions, with sky as limit. The paper has more than one string to its bow, i.e. besides, addressing various facets of listening, springs a surprise by fixing old and new wines into a single bottle or puts techniques of listening together. The instructional activities described, would be appropriate for promoting effective listening in any classroom. You have a

ball before you, pick it or kick it, in other words, Success of these activities depend on careful selection of various strategies together accordance to the context.

In the Era of 3-D images and 4-G humanoids, head to toe or down to bottom, listening is a simple skill, can be learned and improved upon no matter one's age, gender, education, or previous skill level, stay cool as cucumber! Developing good listening skills allow the listener to gather more info more easily and to converse more effectively with clients, subordinates, and peers. **But keep your wig on as it's difficult to master listening. It's a double-edged sword for if it's allowed to go unused, it will atrophy. Listening is an art that delivers tremendous benefits but it needs to be polished continually. Further, the purpose of Listening is to engage in win-win communication which not only fosters understanding, affirmation, validation and appreciation, but also creates an atmosphere of trust, honor and respect.**

**When someone truly listens to you, you feel proud as a peacock and relief and joy jostles for space in you. To be effective communicator, one must listen actively and comprehend the speaker in order to respond accordingly. Otherwise, it becomes a chink in the armor with villainous hue. If don't listen properly, all your strategies bitch-slap and your communication will end in gutter. Pick the researcher's brains, move mountains and leave no stone unturned to become a good listener. Before you can say knife, time to pull your socks up, set the ball rolling and reach the stars. Readers break a leg and neck and have a riot!**

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