

Importance of Teaching Listening skills in English Language Classroom - A Study

Mr. V. Balachandran, Ph.D., Scholar, P.G. Department & Research Centre in English,
H.H.The Rajah's College, Pudukkottai.

Dr. G. Somasundaram, Assistant Professor, P.G. Department & Research Centre in English
Alagappa Govt. Arts College, Karaikudi.

Abstract:

Language is an extraordinary gift of God to man. Language only makes the man fully human. Man, in the words of Aristotle, is a rational animal. Man has attained this rationality because he has the ability to reason, and this reasoning capacity in the bountiful benefit of the language. Language is a resort to man's aesthetic senses as he recites beautiful poems which engages his fellow humans in their leisure time and of course, academically also it is utilized. Spread of religions and religious harmony depends entirely on the language as all scriptures are put in language only. This paper focuses the method of teaching listening skills in English language classroom.

Keywords: *Language, rational, reasoning, harmony, second language*

Introduction:

Language means different things to different persons depending on their perceptions. Broadly speaking, language is studied in three important manifestations-its physical aspect, its mental aspect and its social aspect. That is to say, linguistic scholarship concerns itself with formal structures, the acquisition and use of language so the teachers of English have to be wary about these aims of learning English. The general aims of teaching English are:

- The students understand English when spoken by others
- The students speak English intelligibly
- The students read English and understand the content of the reading
- The students write English with coherence and accuracy

Aims of Teaching English in India:

In India, English is taught as a second language, which means the learners should be able to use the language in their day to day life. Teaching English as a second language will not be easier to the English teachers as there are many hiccups to the learners in learning it. Firstly, English is a non-phonetic language that means its alphabets don't represent any specific sound. So, learning to pronounce all the words of English may take one's whole life time. Unless the user of English refers a standard pronouncing dictionary for the pronunciation of the world, he cannot be sure of the exact pronunciation of any single word. Secondly, the structures are in English. Structures in English can go on being formed which may give complexity to learn this language and of courses, it is the beauty of this language. Thirdly, the interference of mother tongue in learning English as a second language is a problem to many learners of English.

In schools, where Hindi is taught as a first language there English is taught as an L2 and in part of India where a regional language is the medium of instruction there Hindi is taught as a second language and English is taught as an L3. Above all, in today's context, with the mushrooming spread of English Medium schools, English is taught as the L1.

Teaching Language Skills:

English should be taught in the perspective of making the learners to use the language globally. What do you mean by preparing the students to use the language globally? To use the language globally means to use it in all possible situations that the learners encounter in their life situation.

S. Kudchedkar (2002) says "Indeed, it is very important that teachers realize at the outset that what they are teaching is language, not literature, not the content of a textbook or a subject. Language learning is a mastery of skills and it to this that teachers at the school level must direct their energies"

Teaching strategies can be formulated only based on the learning theories. The English teachers who attempt to teach English without knowing and applying the theories of language

learning, their teaching will be half-baked and they will be unpopular English teachers among their students. There are two main theories exist on language learning. They are 'Behaviourists Theory of Language Learning' to which B.F. Skinner is an ardent lover, and 'cognitive theory of Language Learning' to which Chomsky is a strong supporter.

Behaviourists say that the language is learned through 'habit formation'. As the child constantly is exposed to the mother tongue spoken at home, it develops a habit for the language, tries to imitate and finally succeeds in its attempt to learn and use the language. Cognitivists say that the language is learned only with the mental ability. They argue that if the child is blessed with a good brain, it is bound to acquire the language. A child which aspires to learn the language should have a blend of both 'habit formation' and 'strong mental ability'. For example, a mentally retarded child is put in a joint family where a very conducive atmosphere prevails for 'habit formation'. Will the child be able to make any language habit there? Definitely not. So, behaviourists' theory is defeated. And at the same time, we can not blindly support the cognitivists also. Suppose, a child with a strong mental ability, is put in an isolated place where it has no opportunity to listen to the language. Will the child be able to acquire any language even with its strong mental ability? Absolutely not. So, the child should satisfy both the Behaviorists' theory and the Cognitivists' theory for acquiring the language and for effective use of it.

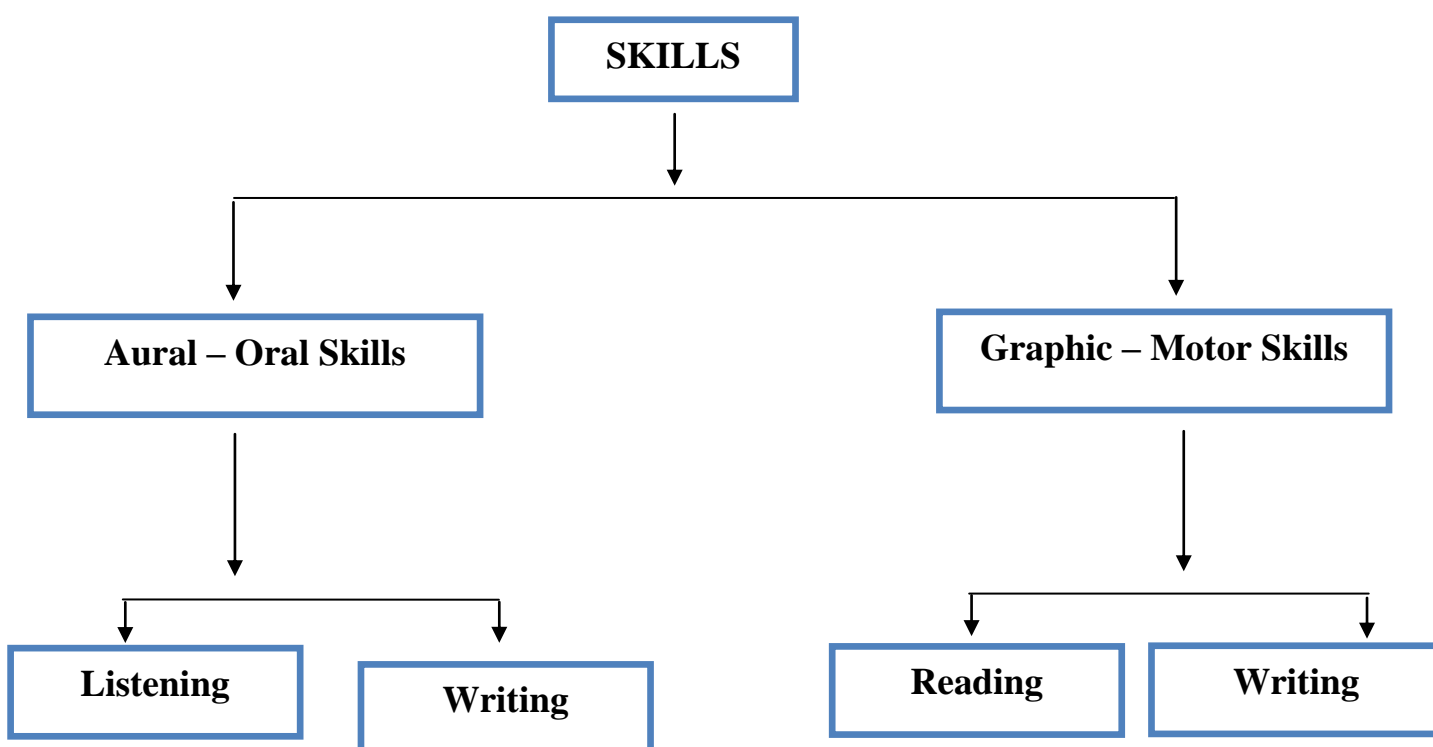
Most of the English teachers in India are not privileged to enjoy the Acquisitions – rich – environment for teaching English. Classroom alone is the place for learning English for many students. Giving these children to acquire language skills is in the hands of the English teachers and this increases their responsibility considerable. They have to make amends for the scanty environment for language learning by formulating many tasks to ensure maximum learning.

The English teachers also should be aware of the meaning of difference between 'acquiring' and 'leaning'. One can acquire the language quite naturally. He doesn't need to put his conscious efforts while acquiring a language. And, at the same time learning doesn't take place quite naturally. One can learn only with teachers of English to transform acquisition-poor-environment into acquisition –rich-environment for teaching English as a second language. Mother tongue is

acquired where acquisition-rich-environment prevails and any other language is learned where acquisition – poor – environment prevails. So, it is mandatory for the teachers of English to transform acquisition-poor –environment into rich-environment for teaching English as a second language.

Possession of English at their command gives the persons self-confidence, more opportunities, know the world better by reading magazines in English and above all English speaking people are treated better than the people who may not know English. So, teaching of English should be based on the advantages that it gives to the people who know and use it. English teachers should give their students opportunities to have balance acquisitions of all the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing.

All the four skills are classified under the following way;



Importance of Teaching listening skills:

Expressing our wants, feelings, thoughts and opinions clearly and effectively is only half of the communication process needed for interpersonal effectiveness. The other half is listening and understanding what others communicate to us. We are given two ears but only one mouth, because listening is twice as hard and important as talking. Language is essentially a motor-auditory phenomenon, and our auditory sensitiveness and assimilative capacity must be developed. Researchers proved that adults spend almost half their communication time in listening, and students may gain as much as 90% of their in-school information through listening to their teachers and to one another. Listeners have to be very active while listening for comprehension. Different listening script requires different listening perceptive. Academic listening different approach can be effected.

Listening involves a sender that may be a person, a radio, a TV, etc. and a receiver, the listener. Listener has to process what he hears, without regressing on the previous points told or looking ahead, though a little bit of predicting may help the listener to comprehend the listening item. Listeners have to be in line with the choice of vocabulary the speaker uses, the structures and above all the tone of the speaker.

Teachers of English have to feel the importance of listening in language acquisition and make amends for inculcating their students in listening skill. Regular listening activities have to be carried out in the class. The content of the listening script should be the situations that the students encounter in their daily life. Listening and understating a foreign language is not easy. Many techniques have to be adopted to make our students proficient listeners. One of them is selecting listing.

Poor listening skill in students do not just create trouble at home, they can cause problems at school and in social atmosphere. Listening is a learning behaviour. That means, listening habit can be gained only through conscious efforts. It would be advisable to the parents' to inculcate listening habit at home environment first. If the habit is formed in listening, this habit of listening of the students would be properly exploited by the teacher of English, though the listeners have different attitude towards listening to English as a second language. Invariably all the children are almost

heartily interested in watching TV programmes. This behaviour also can be properly channelized in grooming listening habit in the children.

Conclusion:

Students after graduation go to higher education where lecture method is normally followed. Lecture method has its own limitations. Teaching is reaching. But in lecture method reaching is not warranted. Only when the students are smart enough to catch what the lecturer tells in the class then only they will be able to understand anything for the lecture. So it is rightly said that 'nothing is taught, but everything is caught'. To catch everything for the effective lecture students have to be very strong in listening skill. So, it is mandatory for the teachers of English in secondary school to give maximum efforts in training the ears of their students. Regular listening activities have to be undertaken. The listening materials have to be in line with the level of their students. If the teachers feel that their pronunciation may not be up to the mark, then they can make use of standard listening scripts. And, by all means, they have to ensure in the secondary level itself that their students possess strong listening skills.

Reference:

Meskill, Carla. "Listening skills development through multimedia." *Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia* 5.2 (1996): 179-201.

Funk, Hal D., and Gary D. Funk. "Guidelines for developing listening skills." *The Reading Teacher* 42.9 (1989): 660-663.

Sevik, Mustafa. "Teaching Listening Skills to Young Learners through." *English teaching forum*. Vol. 50. No. 3. US Department of State. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of English Language Programs, SA-5, 2200 C Street NW 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20037, 2012.

Kim, Hea-Suk. "Emerging mobile apps to improve English listening skills." *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning* 16.2 (2013): 11-30.

Sabet, Masoud Khalili, and Hamed Mahsefat. "The impact of authentic listening materials on elementary EFL learners' listening skills." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature* 1.4 (2012): 216-229.

Alam, Zerín. "Developing listening skills for tertiary level learners." *Dhaka University Journal of Linguistics* 2.3 (2009): 19-52.

Winn, Deanna D. "Develop listening skills as a part of the curriculum." *The Reading Teacher* 42.2 (1988): 144-146.

Noesner, Gary W., and Mike Webster. "Crisis intervention: Using active listening skills in negotiations." *FBI L. Enforcement Bull.* 66 (1997): 13.