UNIT 6  TEACHING LISTENING-II

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6.1 INTRODUCTION

Before we proceed to examine a variety of listening activities suitable for learners at the middle school level, it is important to understand the two major reasons for teaching listening.

The first reason is called listening for perception. In this the learner is given practice in identifying the different sounds, sound combinations, stress and intonation patterns of spokens English.

The second is called listening for comprehension. In this the learner is given practice in developing listening for understanding by using listening materials and conducting listening activities which take into account the real-life needs of the learner.

6.2 OBJECTIVES

This unit will enable you to:

- understand the two main reasons for teaching listening;
- familiarise yourself with the different kinds of listening materials and activities for classroom teaching;
- understand the procedures for conducting a listening class effectively;
- understand the features of an effective listening lesson;
- integrate listening activities with other skills such as speaking, reading and writing;
- understand how to design your own listening activities effectively.
6.3 LISTENING FOR PERCEPTION

Listening for perception is practised more at the primary/middle school level where learners are introduced to the language. The focus of the listening activity is aural perception. Comprehension is of secondary importance. The listening exercises do not use visuals so that the learners concentrate on the sound of words or intonation patterns. The learner has to rely on his/her ear to repeat these sounds. The methodology involves repetition of short, discrete items. The teacher demonstrates the sounds which she wishes to teach while learners are encouraged to imitate and identify them using drill and choral repetition.

1. Another effective way is to use worksheets to give the students more practice. e.g. the teacher wants the students to differentiate the two sounds /p/ and /b/ or /s/ and /S/. She makes the necessary worksheet with the relevant words and ask the students to underline what they hear. e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/p/</th>
<th>/b/</th>
<th>/s/</th>
<th>/S/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pin</td>
<td>bin</td>
<td>sun</td>
<td>shun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pun</td>
<td>bun</td>
<td>soot</td>
<td>shoot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pen</td>
<td>ban</td>
<td>sin</td>
<td>shin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pit</td>
<td>bit</td>
<td>seer</td>
<td>sheer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The teacher should underline her own worksheet so that she knows which words she has called out).

Listening for perception can also be taught at the sentence level e.g. the worksheets can have two or three sentences and the student tick marks the sentence she/he hears.

1. I want to get the house painted in light green.
   I want to get the house painted in light cream.
2. Have you locked the car?
   Have you knocked the car?
3. Bring the glass here (a teacher to a student)
   Bring the class here (a teacher to student)

The teacher may correct the students where necessary.

6.4 LISTENING FOR COMPREHENSION

Listening for comprehension is more relevant to the teaching of listening at the middle and secondary school level. In this, the listening material is based on a particular context and the learner is given practice in specific areas of listening, which are related to his/her needs. The learner is most often expected to make short, quick responses as part of the listening exercise. Learners usually find these activities challenging, as effective listening activities have an element of game playing or problem-solving built into them. For example learners may listen to a tape script giving details of a kidnapper while they play the role of an inspector or detective, jotting down details of physical description, place of kidnapping, etc. (as given in the sample lesson of the last lesson).

6.5 FAMILIARISATION WITH DIFFERENT KINDS OF LISTENING ACTIVITIES

In this section we will introduce you to some of the different kinds of listening activities.

There are listening comprehension activities where a learner may be required to listen and not make an overt response or make a minimum non-verbal response. For example, the teacher may tell a story giving practice to learners in extensive listening where they listen to
large chunks of spoken language. Alternatively she may use a set of pictures which illustrate
different parts of the story, asking learners to put them in a sequential order. This would be
a non-verbal response.

Another kind of listening activity which is done most often in classes is listening to a text
and reading it at the same time. But this kind of exercise does not really develop the learner’s
skills of listening comprehension. The text that is being heard or read aloud is not the kind
of heard speech that the learner will be faced with in listening situations. Besides, it does not
develop the learner’s reliance on the ear because they have the written text in front of them.
It may happen that the written word hampers the learner from understanding accurately what
(s)he may hear in a real listening situation. For example, the learner may read aloud or hear
the words spoken from a written text all right and fail to recognise these words when heard
as part of a spoken discourse. The sound of these words changes when spoken as part of
natural colloquial speech.

Now we shall examine specific activities for listening comprehension that we mentioned at
the beginning of this section.

6.5.1 Dictation

One of the most common listening exercises which has been practised continually in schools
is dictation. One of the positive features of dictation is that it involves the learner, who
becomes actively involved with the language.

Dictation can become a meaningful and interesting language activity provided the teacher
plans carefully. In Once Upon A Time, John Morgan, M. Rinvolucr (1983) suggests an
interesting activity. The teacher dictates a number of words very quickly, e.g.,

village
emigrate
marriage
absence
pregnant
shame
attack
destruction
birth
deep well
suicide

Students are unable to catch all the words. They are then asked to pool in the words they have
written. The complete list is then used to write down a story.

Pair work can be used effectively while using dictation. Students A and B are given copies
of gapped exercises.

The students know that each group has half of the text. A dictates and B writes, then B
dictates and A writes until the story is complete. So, not only are the students listening, but
also writing. You may like to refer to Dictation by Paul Davis and Mario Rinvolucr (1988)
for interesting ideas for using dictation innovatively.

6.5.2 Listening and Following a Route

In this activity a route map is used and exercises designed to link the spoken description with
the map. This activity can be improvised quite easily by the teacher. The route she wishes
the learner to mark can be traced on her copy of the map. She can then give the learner
Listening Comprehension and Speaking

instructions, adding comments and a brief description. A map of a place they would like to visit as part of a class trip can be given. In this way a real life context is introduced and the activity becomes more interesting.

6.5.3 Listening to a Telephone Call and Writing the Message

Learners at the middle school are often required to make telephone calls for formal and informal purposes. Listening forms a key element in telephone skills. In this activity the learner is introduced to a situation where Smita has to give an important message to her friend Manvi. It is the mother, Mrs. Verma, who receives the message. The learner has to jot down the message nothing important details of the school trip. In case you wish to use the word 'itinerary' in the Listening Worksheet, you may wish to deal with it in the pre-listening stage or you may use the word in the listening passage in such a way that its meaning becomes clear. If you find the word too difficult for your learners to grasp, you may not use it at all, and use the term 'Tour Programme' instead. These are decisions you will have to take, keeping in mind your learner's level and experience.

Listening Passage

Listening to a Telephone Call and Writing Down the Message.

Smita : Hello.....Is that 677306?
Mrs. Verma : Yes, who's speaking please?
Smita : Good evening Aunty...this is Smita here. May I speak to Manvi?
Mrs. Verma : She's gone out for a walk. Anything important?
Smita : Yes Aunty, it's very important. You see, Manvi was absent today and our Trip-in-Charge was asking for her.
Mrs. Verma : But, I did send the cheque for the trip — I remember signing it yesterday.
Smita : No Aunty — it not the cheque — we're all supposed to hand in a consent slip.
Mrs. Verma : Really! How careless of Manvi to have forgotten!
Smita : Aunty please ask Manvi to get it tomorrow — its the last day. We leave the day after.
Mrs. Verma : What about the itinerary?
Smita : Well — we leave the day after, that is on 19th July. Its a Monday. Then — on Tuesday we reach Shimla. We have three days at Shimla for travelling and sightseeing. We return on the 23rd evening — that's Friday night.
Mrs. Verma : That sounds exciting. Smita, has your teacher given you a list of things to take along?
Smita : Yes Aunty. Manvi's got one too. But she's added a few things. You see now we're staying in tents — so we all need to carry a sleeping bag.
Mrs. Verma : Yes, just a minute — I'll note down the things. What else?
Smita : Well — we need to carry a torch and — I forgot — it's rained in Shimla. So she said we must carry raincoats.
Mrs. Verma : A raincoat — Okay — I've got that. Anything else?
Smita : Yes — an extra pair of shoes too — Yes, Aunty I think that's all she told us.
Mrs. Verma : Thank you Smita, you've been a real help.
Name of Caller
Person called
Number called
Message

Details of Itinerary
Day & Date of Dep.
Duration of Trip
days
Day & Date of Return
Things to carry
1.
2.
3.

6.5.4 Listening to a Sports Commentary and Completing a Chart

Another interesting context for a listening lesson is provided through listening to a sports commentary. The learner listens to the commentary for specific information. In this the learner uses background sounds for clues, for example, playing of the band for the march past, applause and cheering of the winner's name, and so on.

At times, you may find it useful to use the same listening material for another class by designing a new worksheet based on the listening passage. For example, the chart can now focus on details of individual sportsperson's description, record, etc.

6.5.5 Listening to Instructions and Marking a Ground Plan

In this activity the learners have to mark a ground plan for the school fete. It is more appropriate for learners at this level to mark diagrams, maps, ground plans and flow charts rather than pictures, which are more suitable to learners at the primary level.

The context in this particular activity is a familiar and relevant one - that of the school fete. One of the advantages of using a ground plan is that it is easy to trace and thus can be reproduced without spending money or photocopying. Learners are given copies of the ground plan.

An example is given below.

*Entrance*

```
  15 | 16
  14  |  17
  13  |  18
  12  |  19
  11  |  10 |  9 |  8 |  7
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The students are expected to mark out the different stalls as they listen to the teacher calling out the names of the different stalls e.g. in stall number one we will have the Lucky Dip; Ring the Duck is in stall number 2; the Food stalls one from 17 to 20 etc. In the lower classes the names can be called out in sequence and the students given enough time to write down. In the higher classes they can be called out in random order and it is not necessary to call out the names of all 20 stalls. An interesting and real life context can be provided with the Principal giving important information regarding change of stalls over the intercom. e.g. Because of lack of space, we are moving the Lucky Dip stall from stall no: 1 to stall no. 10, stall no: 1 will now be the flower shop etc., where the student has to listen very carefully to process the information.

A similar exercise can be devised with the help of a house plan with accompanying text. An example is given below:

![House Plan Diagram]

As we enter from the porch we enter the drawing room (Mark the drawing room). The garden runs full length along the outer wall (Mark the garden). Mark Anil's room which can be only be entered from the lobby, etc.

The number of rooms or the complexities of details would naturally depend on the level of the students.

The same ground plan can be used for another listening activity by changing the listening material. For example, the listening material can be based on the setting up of cheering squads for the Annual School Sports Day.

### 6.5.6 Jigsaw Listening

Another kind of listening activity is called jigsaw listening. In this the teacher divides the class into groups. Each group listens to a part of the story on the audio cassette. In the next stage learners send one or two members from their group to other groups. They will be asked several questions and will have to respond and give information. The various groups thus collect the missing sequences of the story. Now, in their original groups they speculate on the last part or the ending of the story. Usually, a mystery story is most suitable for jigsaw listening. Each group then reports to the class their version of the story what their point of view or conjecture is. Other groups are free to react, question and comment. Finally, the teacher plays the final part of the recording, which resolves the mystery.

Though this is an extremely challenging and interesting activity yet it has some problem areas in its implementation. First of all, the teacher has to make multiple recordings so that the groups can listen to the recording simultaneously. If she has only one recorder then only one group can listen to the recording at a time, in which case, she has to think of techniques of how to occupy the other groups who are awaiting their turn to listen or for others to finish.

This can also be difficult to manage in terms of noise, availability of recorder, etc. One of the solutions, though not an ideal one, is to let the learners listen to the first part of the story. Then they are set a task which involves predicting what is going to happen, or who the murderer is (in a murder mystery). Each group presents its case giving reasons for their 'theory'. They are questioned by other groups. Finally, the teacher plays the final part of the cassette.
6.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD LISTENING LESSON

By now you have become familiar with a variety of listening materials and activities. What are the major characteristics of an effective listening lesson? Let us first look at the listening material or listening passage.

6.6.1 Listening Material

The listening material or passage for listening comprehension may either be presented live or in recording. The material should have a realistic context which should be interesting and challenging for the learner. The passage should not be a written text spoken aloud but be modelled on heard speech. While scripting the listening material it is important to keep in mind that it is graded in terms of lexis and structural difficulty. The material should not be densely structured but have repetitions built in as they are a part of spoken discourse. This provides valuable time to the learner to complete the task during the while-listening stage. It is important to pace the material at the correct speed, neither too fast and nor unnaturally slow.

On the whole, the material should facilitate understanding rather than block it. Listening activities are aimed at giving practice to learners in areas which pose problems for them. Therefore, it is important that the learner feels successful in doing the activity. If the listening passage or material is too long it will not be able to sustain the learner’s interest and concentration. Ultimately it demotivates and fatigues the learner not only for that particular lesson but for the ones to follow. Finally, there should be a realistic range of the accents used in the listening material.

6.6.2 Role of the Teacher

Once you have designed the listening material and worksheet, it is important to plan meticulously for the different stages of the listening lesson. Before the listening session begins, check the following:

- check the quality of tape/recording
- arrange for the recorder in advance
- pre-position the tape
- plan the seating arrangements so that oral presentation of the listening material is audible to all
- plan on reading aloud (if the material is a monologue), in case of power failure.

In the Pre-listening Stage
- ensure all planned physical arrangements, e.g., closing doors, windows, etc.
- introduce the lesson/subject briefly
- deal with vocabulary if any, which might interfere with the success of the listening activity
- ensure that all the learners have the worksheet
- define the task very clearly — clarify any problems relating to the task.

In the While-listening Stage
- ensure that learners are doing the task
- ensure that there is no disturbance made by the students or yourself.

In the Post-listening Stage
- ask students to exchange information in pairs/groups
- replay cassette if students have missed any information
- elicit answers briskly and complete worksheet on blackboard.
6.7 INTEGRATING LISTENING WITH SPEAKING,
READING AND WRITING

Listening activities can be integrated with the skills of speaking, reading and writing. As in real life, we listen and respond either through speaking, writing or reading.

Let us examine how the listening activities delineated earlier (6.3) can be integrated with other skills.

You will find that the integration can be done in two ways.

1. The listening passage can serve an input to another activity.
2. The listening activity can be used as a stimulus.

6.7.1 Listening as Input

The listening passage can be used as an input. For example, in listening and following a route, the activity described in 6.3.1, the listening material can be used as a model for giving directions. The language forms used in giving directions and the specific vocabulary used can be emphasised in the post-listening stage, and the learners may then be asked to simulate a telephone conversation in which they give directions to a friend on how to reach a particular spot or one's house, etc. You may like to use the location of the school as a context and thus organise the class in pairs wherein one plays the role of a prospective visitor who is being given directions on how to reach the school for its annual day celebration. In this way listening can be integrated with speaking. Similarly listening to a telephone call and writing the message can be used to focus the learner's attention on the use of modals and the use of appropriate forms of language in different contexts. For example, the telephone conversation would have been worded differently if Smita had spoken directly to Manvi. Learners may be asked to role play the dialogue.

You may like to extend this activity and relate it to the writing of an itinerary or planning a class trip. Thus it could entail reading brochures and other tourist information. In this way the telephone conversation can be used as a stimulus for another activity.

Listening to the sports commentary and filling in the chart can be integrated with writing.
Learners can use the completed chart as an input and write a newspaper report on their Sports Day or they may write a more detailed one for the school magazine. It can also be an aural report which can be read aloud for the next day’s school assembly.

Learners can also study and analyse the characteristics of a good commentary, and then, in groups build up a commentary of another incident/event.

Listening to instructions and marking a ground plan can be integrated with an interesting role play. Students of classes VI, VII, VIII, may want to be grouped together because seniors bully them, or some classes may want to exchange stalls, request for more than one stall depending on the choice of their game or event. Thus the members of the groups can be given roles of class teacher, class captain, co-curricular activities captain, and class XI representative and so on.

Jigsaw listening is integrated with speaking. You may design activities of an extrapolative kind in which the learners go beyond the text and do a writing task. For example, they may write a diary entry imagining themselves to be one of the characters. They may be asked to write their version of the ending or to dramatise it.

6.7.2 Listening as Stimulus

The listening material can be used as a stimulus, to set the learner thinking along particular lines or put them in a particular mood.

For example, the learners can listen to a passage which declares the Prefect Body for an academic session. The Prefects can make short speeches on what they plan to do as office bearers.

The listening passage can be used as a stimulus for learners to discuss a set of criteria which each group should prioritize and present. They may then move on to writing out a manifesto and making slogans and posters for the election. Similarly one can tape short viewpoints of different people in the school on topics of common concern e.g. corporal punishment, sports facilities, co-education, etc. and use the listening material as a springboard for lively discussions. The reporting sessions can be followed by a written report which can be submitted to the relevant authorities.

Check Your Progress

Notes:

a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

2. After you have completed the two tasks in your class (Check Your Progress 1), think of and describe at least two activities (other than those in the unit) which integrate them with the other skills.
6.8 HOW TO DESIGN YOUR OWN LISTENING ACTIVITIES?

You will find it interesting, challenging and rewarding to design your own listening activities. The first stage is to identify the learner’s need for a particular kind of listening skill in a specific situation. For example, there may be an inter-school quiz taking place in the near future. This would entail the learner’s making calls for confirming names of participants, etc. Then you can design listening passages on the situation itself. If you are taking students on a school trip to a historical place, it may be relevant to design a listening activity on a tour guide’s commentary. Later, for the actual trip, you could design a worksheet on which learners can jot information such as the following: date of construction, the reason for building, person who built it, and so on.

At times, you may find listening passages whose subject matter is related or suited to your learners’ needs, or the topics that you are covering in your main course. This means that you need not go into the problems of recording your own listening material. You may use this readily available material.

The next stage is an important one, in case you are developing your own listening material. You now have to decide on content, length, number of speakers and type of delivery involved in the listening material.

The listening material can now be written in the form of notes or can be semi-scripted. A thorough rehearsal of the script should be done, preferably, taking the help of one’s colleagues. The listening material can then be recorded.

Now, you can move on to the next stage which is designing the listening activity. Frame very carefully the listening worksheet that you expect learners to complete. Check how effective it is by trying it on your friends. Also make sure to write the lesson notes for the listening class. Next try it out on several classes. Refine and alter the material and activity as and when necessary. Finally, label, catalogue and store listening material/activity so that other teachers may also use it.

6.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have introduced you to:
- the two main reasons for teaching listening
- the different kinds of listening materials and activities
- the characteristics of a good listening lesson
- the integration of listening skills with speaking, reading and writing
- how to design your own listening activities.

6.10 KEY WORDS

| listening for perception | listening for sounds or intonation patterns. |
| listening for comprehension | listening for understanding the message. |
| listening as input | the listening material or completed worksheet can be used for another activity. |
| listening as stimulus | the subject of the listening material can be used to motivate learners to think on a particular line. |
6.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Among the different activities listed, you can elaborate on:
   i) Dictation and (ii) Listening to instructions and marking a ground plan.

2. Open-ended.

6.12 SUGGESTED READINGS