
UNIT 5 LISTENING AND SPEAKING IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall look at what listening is. We shall also look at the different types of listening and at ways of developing proficiency in listening abilities within a primary school. The teacher's role in helping children become effective listeners will be highlighted.

After you have been through this unit you should be able to :-

1. understand the difference between 'listening' and 'hearing'.
2. appreciate the importance of listening as a medium of communication.
3. identify some important component skills required for listening.
4. understand the different types of listening skills that a child needs in daily life.
5. identify some major problems in the development of effective listening skills.
6. use classroom methods which will help children become effective listeners.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The most obvious fact about first language development is that it is very closely related to a child's cognitive development. The child learns a new language as he or she encounters new objects and new situations. The child then brings the new object or situation into his or her own scheme of mental operations and develops the language to deal with it. All of the child's early language is oral rather than written. And it is the aural or listening part that precedes the oral or speaking aspect. The development of language comprehension for children proceeds in two directions simultaneously. One

direction is the development of comprehension of whole situations or events such as "bed-time", "meal-time" and so on. The child learns to understand the meaning of these situations and how language functions in them. The other direction is the development of comprehension of individual sounds and then words and eventually phrases.

Learning to listen in our first language requires considerable cognitive development and constant attention to social and linguistic inputs over a period of several years. Children are treated in a special manner by those around them in order to allow them to become involved gradually in family activities and other social events. In this process, children receive a special kind of language input which helps them acquire their language. In comparison, learning to listen in a second language is relatively more difficult. The primary difficulty is developmental. We all learned our first language in order to be able to bring about meaning and order in the world around us, as well as, to express and comprehend new ideas and relationships. For example, we learned to understand the word cow about the same time as we learnt the basic concept of a cow (that it has four legs, it moves, it belongs to a group called 'animals'). Once we have learned the basic objects and concepts and have associated them with words we have acquired one of the principal motives to learn language — self expression. Since second language learning generally takes place at a later stage of development it is less closely linked to cognitive and social development of the child. Hence the primary motive to learn the language i.e. self expression, is missing, as the first language already provides the vehicle through which the child can express herself. This makes the task of the teacher of a second language more challenging. It is important to relate the teaching of the second language to some real motives that a child would have to learn it.

As children we received 'caretaker' language, which simplified words and sounds so that they catered directly to our own learning capabilities and interests. This language allowed us to use on-going opportunities to develop our listening ability. Second language learners, seldom experience this same access to rich and understandable inputs. As a result, they are deprived of a necessary condition for full language acquisition, namely a suitable social environment.

When speaking, it is the child herself who selects the language that is used. To some extent, therefore, she can compensate for deficiencies in her repertoire, through communicative strategies, such as using paraphrase or simplifying her message when speaking. However, she cannot normally exercise any control over the language that is directed by others to her. She must be prepared to extract meanings, from whatever language is directed at her. It is therefore not enough that she should merely be able to understand the same range of language that she can speak. Her receptive repertoire, (i.e. the language she is able to receive and understand) has to be matched against the productive repertoire of the native speakers (i.e. the language produced by another speaker and directed at her). She will need to understand this language. In addition, the child must be prepared to cope with a wide range of situational and performance factors which are outside her control, such as noise, distractions, variations in accents, body movements and so on.

Listening has often been called a passive skill. However recent linguists claim this to be misleading (Littlewood 1991) because listening demands active involvement from the hearer. In order to reconstruct the message that the speaker intends, the hearer must actively contribute. It is only by applying her knowledge of the language that a child can divide the continuous stream of sounds, that she hears, into meaningful units. Further by relating these to her earlier language experiences, the child is able to find a suitable meaning. In fact a majority of utterances that we hear in daily life could be

conceived as carrying different meanings in different circumstances and it is only because the child is actively involved in the communication process that she is able to relate them to a single appropriate meaning. A child therefore cannot get meaning or understanding by listening to ideas that are unrelated to her intellectual or cultural experience.

Since listening is such an important language and communication skill, it is essential for effective language learners to be skilled in how to listen, why to listen, when to listen and what and whom to listen. This unit shall attempt to look briefly at all these aspects of listening.

5.2 WHAT IS LISTENING ?

Consider the following situations. Gita was watching television when the news came on. Gita's brother came into the room and asked her, "What was the weather report?" "Oh, I'm sorry" said Gita. "I wasn't really listening."

Take another situation, your own English classroom, you have been reading out a prose piece. You decide to ask one of your students to give you the gist of the piece. "Oh, I am sorry, I wasn't listening" comes the reply.

These are very common experiences. We often hear that people have arrived for a programme on the wrong day or at a wrong time, simply because they did not hear the date or time correctly. We hear something but we do not pay attention to it. Hearing and listening are therefore different. We may hear many words and sounds and not notice them. When we listen we pay attention. Hearing is a physiological process and is the concern of the medical doctor; listening is related to intellectual and experiential aspects and is the concern of the teacher.

Listening has been defined in many ways. Linguists and language learners view listening as -

... The first language skill. It precedes speaking, reading and writing and is used more than the other three together.

... more than just hearing, good listening involves an active conscious effort to understand, to evaluate and to appreciate what is heard.

... a powerful communication tool that puts us closer to being in charge of our lives by enabling us to make decisions based on evaluated information, insight and understanding.

... a vital mental capacity that involves both social and cognitive processes.

Reading and listening are the receptive or assimilative language skills. They are both means of getting information second hand, yet both are active processes and require effort. In reading the individual determines her own rate. The child has time to pause and evaluate ideas, to organise her thoughts, and to reread and compare. In contrast the spoken words or sounds define the listening rate. There is also a sense of finality to the spoken word, for there is usually no chance to relisten to and little time for reflection on what has been said. Yet listening has the advantage over reading by being a kind of personal experience between the listener and the speaker or between the producer and consumer of language. Voice inflections, gestures, facial expressions and body postures

help the listener to hear what the speaker is saying. Listening is therefore the assimilation of aural plus visual clues, while reading is the assimilation of visual clues alone.

Appropriate lessons are needed to teach listening skills. Opportunities to talk over what they listened to, or to repeat important points, increases the retention of the material and gives purpose to listening. Teachers now have access to an ever - increasing selection of recorded and broadcast materials. They can therefore plan a systematic extension of their learners' repertoire and skills, by exposing them to sounds and speech with varying linguistic and situational characteristics. We shall look at this aspect in greater detail a little later .

Check Your Progress 1

What is listening?

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5.3 COMPONENT SKILLS FOR LISTENING

In second language instruction for children or adults, the consistent and systematic use of listening practice, through the use of tapes and oral interaction, by itself, constitutes a holistic approach to language teaching. Linguists have however, also taken a more analytical view of the kinds of specific listening skills that learners need to develop. (see Michael Rost, 1994). Some of the important component skills for listening have been listed as follows:

- discriminating between sounds (auditory perception)
- recognizing words
- identifying stressed words and groupings of words
- identifying functions (such as greetings, apologies, commands, questions) in a conversation
- connecting linguistic cues to paralinguistic cues (intonation and stress) as well as to non-linguistic cues (gestures and relevant objects in the situation) in order to construct meaning
- using background knowledge (what we already know about the content and form) and the context (what has already been said) to predict and then to confirm meaning.
- recalling important words, topics and ideas.
- giving appropriate feedback to the speaker
- reformulating what the speaker has said.

Successful listening involves an integration of these component skills. The integration of these skills constitutes a person's listening ability. The child needs to develop the skills of coping with a wide range of situational and performance factors which are outside her control. For example:

- The child will need to understand speech in situations where communication is made difficult by physical factors such as background noise, distance, etc.
- The child must become accustomed to speech which is not perfectly planned, but contains the false starts, hesitations and so on which characterise most everyday speech.
- The child will need to understand different accents, especially regional variations in pronunciation, as well as variations in intonations.
- There are so many sounds around us that children need to develop the skills of becoming selective in their listening and only hear that which is important and relevant to arriving at a meaning. Children also need to know how to listen. Depending on the situation, listening can be intensive i.e. the child is required to be highly attentive, normal, the child can spread his attention over the entire spoken matter.

Check Your Progress 2

How can one become a good listener ?

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5.4 TYPES OF LISTENING

In a typical day most of us spend a great deal of time listening — to environmental sounds like horns in traffic, to background sounds like music, to informational sounds like the radio and television broadcasts, and to conversational sounds with the people around us. We seem to be listening all the time. However, if we think of the ways we listen, we will realize that we do not actually listen for understanding most of our waking hours. Much of the time we are simply filtering out sounds to find out what is worth attending to. There is also a variety of settings and types of sounds in everyday life. The settings might range from individual (for example listening to music or to the television), to interpersonal (for example, talking to someone on the telephone), to

group-based (for example listening to an announcement at the school assembly or listening to the teachers' instructions in class). Some types of listening are interactional i.e. involving a response to others and some types are non-interactional (not involving a response). Listening involves both social and cognitive processes i.e. our relationship with the outer world, both human and non-human, as well as our ability to receive sounds consciously and to be able to respond to these appropriately and meaningfully.

From the above discussion we can view the various types of listening in two possible ways. Firstly, we can view listening activities on the basis of the nature of the sound input or aural stimulus. Secondly, we can look at listening activities in everyday life on the basis of its functions.

5.4.1 Types of Listening on the Basis of the Nature of the Sound Input

- a) Listening to non-verbal sounds
- b) Listening to words or spoken language (i.e. verbal inputs)

a) Listening to Non-verbal Sounds

All sound creates some kind of conscious or sub-conscious response either within oneself or with another human being. There is constant sound throughout life. In fact, there is so much sound that we only hear what we feel is important to us or what we want to hear.

The principal non-verbal sounds are from nature, mechanical sounds and music. These sounds are heard and interpreted perhaps as frequently throughout the day as the voices of people. We need to:

- 1) make children aware of sounds in their environment,
- 2) fill the sounds children hear with meaning, and
- 3) help children develop an alertness to the differences in sounds.

Since children listen to a multiplicity of sounds in daily life, we need to set-up tasks in the classroom which help children to listen purposefully to verbal as well as non-verbal sounds.

Listening and natural sounds

Teachers find that the world of nature is a wonderful medium to explore and use as a means for developing good listening habits in their pupils. Sounds in nature help children to capture different moods and emotions, and associate these with their own meanings. Thus the sounds of birds singing or bubbling streams may signify joy and happiness, while the rumbling of a storm or the loud swishing of trees may be associated with anger. Further children learn to distinguish natural sounds — for example the 'splash' of water or the pitter - patter of rain, the clip-clop of a trotting horse, the hum of a bee, the bark of a dog, the yelp of a puppy, the meow of a cat, the gentle mew of a kitten, and so on. Children learn to group sounds on the basis of their sources, or on the basis of the feelings they evoke or the colours they bring to mind. Especially planned activities sharpen childrens' perceptions and discrimination of natural sounds, and help children to respond meaningfully and effectively.

Listening and mechanical sounds

Listening to and identifying sounds and noises is a step which precedes the discrimination of related words and sounds within the words. Listening to the sounds in our

environment and discriminating between sounds that are far and sounds that are near, or sounds made by heavy things and light things, or inside sounds and outside sounds, or sounds made by vehicles and other sounds — all such activities sharpen the child's perceptions of sound and the capacity to discriminate between these various sounds. If a child tries to take in all sounds, his world will become a bedlam; therefore children need to be able to select the sounds they would like to attend to. Familiarity of sounds depends upon the experiences in one's environment. City children may be surprised to hear that there are children who have never heard the sound of a fire-engine, or the siren of a police car. Children from a rural background, on the other hand, will be surprised to know that some children have never heard a horse neigh or a cow moo or a mill grind grain. Children need to develop the concept of tuning in and tuning out, knowing when and to what to listen, know how to associate meanings to different sounds - for example how to associate a loud yelp or cry with a plea for help, or a growl with danger.

Listening and music

Listening and music are very closely related. In fact, music came about as a result of a desire for meaning and beauty in sound. To understand and enjoy music, one must learn how to listen and what to listen for. Music has the potential to stir in us a range of emotions — which breakdown barriers of language and culture. Similarly different types of music bring up mental images or colours. A child learns to listen as she sings, plays an instrument or dances. The child must listen if his/her interpretations of music through bodily movements are to be rhythmic and expressive of the music. Music develops a keener sense of rhythm and rhythmic contrasts, an enjoyment of melody, an appreciation of different musical instruments and so on. In listening to music, the physical, emotional and intellectual levels are so closely interwoven that we are often not able to draw boundaries between them.

b) Listening to Words or to the Spoken Language

Listening is a skill that underlies all verbal communication. It is a process that is triggered by our attention. In psychological terms, by giving attention to certain incoming sounds we stimulate certain nerve pathways in our brain, so that they can organise the incoming sounds (or stimuli) in an efficient way. One way to think of listening is in terms of information - processing, or in other words how the information, initially in the form of sound signals, is transformed into meaningful units in the brain. While listening, the most basic and concrete units are individual sounds and groups of sounds. By combining these sounds we understand words; by combining words we understand phrases and sentences; by combining phrases and sentences we understand ideas, topics, subject matter. In short we use inputs from 'lower' levels to build comprehension at progressively higher levels. Recent research in linguistics has also highlighted the fact that our interests and motives exert a powerful force on how we listen. We cannot view a listener as passively receiving all that the speaker is saying. The quality of the listening is largely determined by the listener's beliefs, opinions, values, interests, motives and background knowledge. For example, a student of economics will listen to a lecture on economic theory with far greater attention than will a cricketer who is not interested in the subject. A little boy who loves animals will listen with greater interest to a talk on animal care, than will a little boy who has no interest whatsoever in animals.

Hearing speech

When sounds reach our inner ear and excite the auditory nerve, they are passed onto

the auditory cortex of the brain. Here we quickly — almost automatically classify them as speech or non-speech. If they are speech sounds we begin phonological decoding. This is the step of discriminating between sounds or putting sounds into categories. As we acquire our first language as young children, largely by listening to people around us speak it, we acquire prototypes or typical examples for each of the sounds of our language. Gradually, over the course of the first few years of our lives, we begin to hear all speech sounds as falling into one of the fifty or so categories that our language has. These categories are phonemes, which are the smallest unit of sound meaning in a language (See Course 2 Block 4). They are the smallest units of speech that can be reliably produced and identified by speakers and hearers of a language. However, in connected speech, individual phonemes cannot be isolated. These phonemes can be further classified as vowels and consonants. We recognise speech as a sequence of phonemes that are particular to our language. These phonemes have slightly differing characteristics of length, duration and frequency which help us to discriminate between them. The various sounds in English (or in any language) can be arranged in various sequences to form thousands of different words, and these words can in turn be arranged in different sequences to form a nearly infinite number of phrases. Michael Rost (1994) points out that in conversational English the average word has about five distinct sounds. Since most of us typically speak at a rate of about 150 words per minutes, this means that we are producing 12.5 sounds per second, and as listeners we are hearing approximately 12.5 sounds per second. Experiments have however, shown that the human auditory system cannot distinguish more than two or three sounds per second. Therefore when we listen to language we must depend on a sampling of sounds from the stream of speech; we are able to infer sounds which we do not actually hear. This inference process, however, can be carried out efficiently only with continuous speech in context. We cannot perceive speech well with sounds and syllables and words in isolation.

In the classroom, listening is often a one-way process, while in social relationships each person has a chance to speak and listen alternately. Physical movements have an important role in listening. Gestures and facial expressions are important in interpreting the words of a speaker. Listening to speech may be regarded as a dynamic process in the communication act. Children should be encouraged to engage in an active process of listening for meanings, using not only the linguistic clues (phonemes) but also his/her non-linguistic knowledge — such as his/her previous knowledge, as well as the ability to make use of context clues, i.e. what has come earlier in the text, and what follows, to use pictures, etc.

5.4.2. Types of Listening on the Basis of its Functions

a) Accurate, Purposeful Listening

Attentive listening is needed in situations in which accuracy of comprehension is involved, as in following directions, announcements, introductions, questions, etc. Accurate listening is necessary to follow the thread of the discussion, to be able to repeat exactly or to summarize what has been said.

The good listener starts to listen from the first sentence since s/he knows that speakers often state their central idea in the first sentence or at best among the first few sentences. As s/he identifies the main ideas s/he listens to supporting statements in terms of whether they are illustrative, essential or irrelevant to the topic. Systematic training in carrying out directions, early in the school years, ensures accurate, purposeful listening.

b) Courteous, Appreciative Listening

Good conversation and constructive discussion depend upon the individuals willingness to listen while others talk. Throughout the school day the need for courteous listening is evident in group planning and discussions, class conversations and other audience situations. The courteous listener is willing to hear but does not necessarily accept the ideas presented. Children need to learn that it is impolite to interrupt a speaker or fail to listen when someone is addressing them.

From time to time, children need to listen to something purely for aesthetic appreciation, poetry read aloud has a stronger effect than when it is read silently. Through listening to poetry we can teach children to use their voices with melody, range and variety. Appreciation of poetry can be enhanced by listening to the variations in tempo in poetry. An identifiable rhyme scheme or a rhythm pattern in blank verse have a beat and tempo. Melody and movement can be used to describe the action in the poem. Listening to poetry helps children appreciate harmony, rhythm, and beauty in sound and language.

c) Critical Listening

Critical listening is perhaps, the most challenging form of listening as the child is required to think as s/he listens. The critical listener tries to sort out the facts and opinions and then decide what s/he may accept as true. Young children can learn to discriminate between facts and opinions. To become a critical and effective listener the child should try to identify one or more of the following:

1. What are the main points?
2. What lesser points are given under each main idea?
3. Are the ideas explained and supported by facts?
4. Where does the speaker say s/he obtained his/her ideas?
5. Does the speaker follow a logical order?
6. Does the speaker try to present different points of view?

The critical listener thinks about what s/he hears. s/he asks questions and discusses his/her view with others.

a) Creative Listening

Listening to create may be the highest form of listening. As the child is encouraged to gain sensory impressions from what s/he he hears s/he is able to see pictures, smell scents, feel textures as s/he listens creatively. To help the child be a creative listener s/he needs experience in creative activities, such as acting out stories, making up poems, etc. Listening creatively allows the child to reconstruct what s/he has heard either through drawing, body movement, action, songs, etc.

Check Your Progress 3

What are the different types of listening?

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5.5 TEACHING LISTENING SKILLS IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL.

An approach to developing listening is to incorporate a variety of listening based exercises into different areas of the curriculum. The reasoning behind this approach is that such activities integrated into the curriculum will enhance the childrens' 'oracy' i.e. listening and speaking as an additional tool for acquiring new concepts.

For younger children, listening exercises would include word games and rhymes to develop auditory discrimination, clapping in rhythm to poems and songs to develop auditory memory, repeating poems and songs to develop aural vocabulary and instruction following games, more complex games and activities can be used to develop pupils' attention. Many primary school teachers will be familiar with the following games : the telephone game (whispering a message along a row of children to see if it is heard correctly), direction games (following directions to walk around the room blindfolded, using only verbal instructions), 'noise story' (listening to taped sound effects and environmental sounds and writing down a story, or sketching a cartoon, that includes these sounds).

For slightly older children more structured listening comprehension activities are appropriate, using short stories, taped talks, documentaries, etc. In order to help pupils develop their listening skills when using these kind of inputs, the teacher need to help them focus on key information as they listen : listening for main ideas, for important details, for sequence of events. Most people will be able to develop listening skills if they are given consistent opportunities to listen which challenge them appropriately. However many will continue to experience difficulties and two types of problems have been identified that are most resistant to instruction.

1. **Overuse of preferred information** - This refers to the observation that many pupils have trouble in listening comprehension because they tend to ignore important information and rely excessively on facts that appeal to them. Their attention has to be consciously known to other relevant facts.
2. **Lack of comprehension monitoring** - Poor listeners tend to understand narratives, descriptions and explanations one fact at a time, without being able to evaluate the facts or see inconsistencies in the facts. Children need to be given several such tasks, initially as reading tasks, where the child's eyes can move back and forth to detect inconsistencies. Later similar tasks can be given as listening tasks. The stories they have heard, the places they have visited, the home environment, the

programmes they have been listening to on television all provide the backdrop against which they are able to view and give meaning to the various sounds verbal as well as nonverbal that they hear children “hear and see” with their experiences. The teacher needs to specifically develop tasks which will help children to improve some particular aspects of their listening. Efficient, active, attentive listening needs to be taught at all grade levels. In the next two units we shall take a detailed look at the type of listening tasks that can be taken up in the primary school. While teaching children to listen, they need to

1. Clearly understand what it is that they are trying to learn.
2. Become aware of their ability to listen.
3. Have opportunities to discover that they can improve their listening ability.
4. Have opportunities for many kinds of listening experiences — men’s and women’s voices reading and speaking many kinds of material; music, sounds in the environment, etc.

Children talk and listen better in informal settings rather than in formal, impersonal settings. Getting children to group themselves, in a convenient way is one effective way in which this may be done. The duration of the listening activity needs to be carefully planned. The length of time for which children can attend to any listening activity depends in part upon the interest span and amount of time children of a given age can remain physically inactive. To stimulate attentive listening, children need to be motivated. Interest can be created through a range of post-listening activities which allow children to give personal expression to what they hear—through asking questions, dramatisations, or expressing their ideas with paper, paint and clay.

Appropriate lessons are needed to teach listening skills before beginning a story. The teacher might say, “when” I finish the story, lets see if you know what happened to the rasgullas?” Or she may stop occasionally to ask questions that test attentiveness, as “why did the mangoes fall off the tree?” Opportunities to talk over what they listened to or to repeat important points increase the retention of material and give purpose to listening.

5.5.1 The Teacher’s Role

The teacher who values good listening takes time to really listen to children. Listening is an area where the student and the teacher have a real opportunity to grow and to change together. Aware that the ordinary teacher says eighty percent of the words in the classroom, she tries to maximise informal interactions, which allow students to listen and speak to each other. She bavoides endless repetition of directions by challenging children to listen carefully sequenced. If additional clarification is required, the children can be allowed to help each other. New topics, instructions and activities are carefully planned to correlate with the child’s attention span. They should not become tedious, boring or overwhelming. Variety adds interest, renewed enthusiasm and better listening opportunities in the classroom.

Every school day is full of opportunities for the teacher to reward and commend good listening behaviours. Sincere statements to the class at appropriate times might include.

- I appreciate how you’re looking at me to show that you’re listening.
- I can tell by your answers that you’re listening carefully for main ideas.
- I see that you stopped what you were doing to be ready for these directions.

Individual statements of appreciation and observation are always prized by children. Honest, nonjudgemental, positive feedback is a reward highly valued by students. This kind of comment is quite different from empty praise. It specifically lets students know what the teacher values in the task or behaviour. Children will often follow the teacher's example by commenting on good listening by their peers.

Check Your Progress 4

What is the role of the school in developing listening skills?

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5.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we looked at the need to develop listening comprehension skills in the second language. Successful listening requires the integration of several factors, such as, recognising words, discriminating sounds, identifying functions, picking up non-linguistic cues and so on. These were discussed in detail. It was also stressed that a child needs to develop the skill of coping with a wide range of situational factors, which are outside her control. For example, false starts, hesitations, confused order of presentation and so on. It is vital that the child is equipped with strategies to deal with these. The type of listening also varies with the situation; it may be intensive, normal or casual depending upon what the situation demands.

Listening may be classified on the basis of the input into two broad categories, namely:

- listening to non- verbal sounds such as natural sounds or music
- listening to words or spoken language.

In both the categories the interest and motivation of the listener effects the quality of listening.

Research has discovered that the human auditory system cannot distinguish more than two or three sounds per second. We therefore, need to depend on a sampling and infer sounds that we do not actually hear. This is a skill that children need to acquire.

We also looked at a classification of listening on the basis of its function. Some

listening problems were elaborated, such as physical problems, problems with the auditory memory, attention and concentration or comprehension. The teacher's role of providing a variety of listening experiences in the classroom was discussed. It is important that these are based on exercises from different areas of the curriculum. Finally we looked at ways of assessing listening within the classroom. Some scales for assessing listening in a more formal way have been developed. A sample has been provided, just as an indicator of how this is done.

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5.8 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

We hear hundreds of sounds every day. The outer ear, like a funnel, collects each sound we hear. The inner ear takes the message to the brain. The brain tells us what we are hearing. Hearing a sound is however different from listening to it. To hear means to 'pick up' sounds from the world around us. To listen means to 'be attentive' to what we hear. We hear a dog bark, a car horn but we listen for directions, information or explanation. Listening is one of the most important communication skills as it precedes speaking, reading and writing.

Check Your Progress 2

There are times when it is difficult to be a good listener. A speaker may be uninteresting, or the audience may be restless and noisy, making it difficult to concentrate. These guidelines can help one to become a good listener.

1. Sit comfortably, where you can clearly hear and see the speaker.
2. Do not allow yourself to be distracted.
3. Be clear about the purpose of your listening.
4. Listen for the main idea first, and then for supporting ideas.
5. Think, and try and understand what the speaker is saying as you listen.
6. Don't interrupt. Jot down any questions to ask or to look up later.
7. If it is a continuous stretch of speech, take down notes.

Check Your Progress 3

Listening can be non-verbal, when the sound input comes from our environment. Basically three broad categories of non-verbal sounds have been identified. These are natural, musical or mechanical sounds. Listening to verbal inputs or speech involves additional skills such as relating the sounds produced (linguistic clues) to their meaning, comprehension, critical thinking. It also involves picking non-linguistic clues such as gestures, facial expressions, physical movements, etc. which give us additional information about the speaker's intention.

We listen to appreciate or to be courteous. We listen to create, we listen to understand the speakers view points, attitudes and beliefs. In some cases we would need to be critical, by thinking about what we are listening to. Listening can be purposeful when there is interest, motivation and an awareness of purpose. In such situations we give full attention to what we are listening to. Listening is purposeless when the listener is not interested and does not give attention to what is being heard.

Check Your Progress 4

Since it is estimated that children spend at least 50 percent of classroom time listening, it makes sense to devote more explicit, systematic attention to listening as a learned skill. Educators have begun to feel that listening should be developed in all school children since it is a vital means of learning.

The first step in developing listening ability in schools is, to recognise its importance and pervasiveness in learning. Listening skills can be developed through increased attention to the ways in which children participate orally and the ways in which they understand new information that is presented. We also need to know how they retain information and how they respond to speakers. These skills can be developed systematically and consistently through school curricula that emphasize the use of language from audio-visual media, as well as, through structured speaking and listening tasks.