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## Unit 6 TEACHING LISTENING–II

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### 6.0 OBJECTIVES

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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.

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### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

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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 the English language.

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 LISTENING FOR PERCEPTION

Listening for perception is practised more at the primary level where learners are being 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. The teacher may correct the students where necessary.

## 6.3 LISTENING FOR COMPREHENSION

Listening for comprehension is more relevant to the teaching of listening at the middle 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 examples, 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.

## 6.4 FAMILIARISATION WITH DIFFERENT KINDS OF LISTENING ACTIVITIES

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

The exercises we will introduce to you are, listening and following a route, listening to a telephone call and writing a message, listening to a sports commentary and completing a chart, listening to instructions and marking a groundplan and jigsaw listening.

However, 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 learners 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 the section.

### 6.4.1 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 suggests an interesting activity. The teacher dictates a number of words very quickly

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 use 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 Rinvoluceri for interesting ideas for using dictation innovatively.

### 6.4.2 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 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.

### 6.4.2 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 noting 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 to a Telephone Call and Writing Down the Message

Smita Hello ..... Is that 677506?

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 — its not th 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 Simla. 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.

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Name of Caller .....

Person called .....

Number called .....

Message 1) .....

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**Details of Itinerary**

Day & Date of Dep. ....

Duration of Trip ..... days .....

Day & Date of Return .....

Things to carry      1) .....

   2) .....

   3) .....

**6.4.4 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.

**6.4.5 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 interesting and real-life context can be provided with the Principal giving important information over the intercom.

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.

**6.4.6 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 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.

## 6.5 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.

### 6.5.1 Listening Material

The listening material or listening passage for 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 is not a written text spoken aloud but is to 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, not too fast and not 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.

### 6.5.2 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 class do the following:-

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

#### In the Pre-listening Stage

- set all physical arrangements e.g. closing doors, windows, etc.
- introduce the lesson/subject briefly
- deal with vocabulary if any, which might mar 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

In this stage the learners may be asked to exchange information in pairs or groups. You may then need to replay the cassette so that learners can fill in the missing information. Finally, with the help of the worksheet plan on the blackboard, you can elicit answers briskly and complete the worksheet on the blackboard so that all the learners are sure of the answers.

### Check Your Progress 1

Try out in your class at least two activities listed under 6.4 and write a report taking into account the steps you took at the pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening stages.

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## 6.6 INTEGRATING LISTENING WITH SPEAKING, READING AND WRITING

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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 2 ways.

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

### 6.6.1. 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 Sunita 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 be asked to dramatise it.

### 6.6.2 Listening as Stimulus

The listening material can be used as a stimulus, to set the learners 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 eg. **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 2

After you have completed the two tasks in your class (Check Your Progress 1), create at least two activities (other than those in the unit) which integrates them with the other skills.

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## 6.7 HOW TO DESIGN YOUR OWN LISTENING ACTIVITIES

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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 learner 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 the already available material.

The next stage is an important one, in case you are making 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 is to 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.

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## 6.8 LET US SUM UP

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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.

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## 6.8 KEY WORDS

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<b>listening for perception</b>	listening for sounds or intonation patterns
<b>listening for comprehension</b>	listening for understanding the message
<b>listening as input</b>	the listening material or completed worksheet can be used for another activity
<b>listening as stimulus</b>	the subject of the listening material can be used to motivate learners to think on a particular line.

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## 6.9 SUGGESTED READING

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- Raterop. B. J. and Revell. R. 1987. *Telephoning in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Morgan J. and M. Rinvoluceri. 1983 *Once Upon a time*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
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