

# Listening Skill Helps in Improving Speaking Skill: A study on rural medium students

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**Abstract** - Language is a system of communication. Languages survive and prosper on account of their role and function in the society. To understand social relations and processes of an international level, there is a need of a common language. English is the most popular language globally and the key force of it is universal rather than general. While learning and teaching English as a second language, we always talk about the four language skills viz. listening, speaking, reading and writing which are referred to as LSRW. The teacher as well as the learners of rural background has been facing many confrontations in teaching and acquiring these four language skills. This study mainly aims on enhancing the listening skills of the students who come from rural areas to improve speaking skills. The main objective of the present study is to establish the relation between listening and speaking and to find out how listening skill improves speaking skill.

**Key Words:** Language skills, listening, speaking, rural medium students.

## I. INTRODUCTION

"Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols," Edward Sapir.

Languages survive and prosper on account of their role and function in the society otherwise they become unessential. We all know that the human language is a well-structured language. To understand social relations, structures and progressions of an international level, there is a need of a common language. English is the most popular language globally and the key force of it is universal rather than general.

In India, the syllabus of the English language at all the levels is not up to the mark to recommend the critical purpose of teaching English as a Second Language systematically. Communication Skills shape the difference between the mother tongue acquisition and a second language acquisition. Language is the most significant resource for communication among humans and also communication is the most crucial function of a language.

Every time we talk about the purpose of Teaching English as a second language, we may think of the four language skills that involve Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, which are referred to as LSRW. In the attainment of these four language skills, pupils at all grades and the teachers of English have been facing many confrontations in the classrooms.

The non-native English speakers have been struggling in pronouncing English words, since they have no good exposure in listening skills. Listening is a complex and intricate skill that pupils need to develop through practice.

### Listening and its importance:

"Everything in writing begins with language. Language begins with listening." --Jeanette Winterson.

In the words of Krishnaswamy N (2003), "Without listening, no speaking is possible. So, in order to speak, one has to listen." Listening is also the basic skill for all the other language skills.

The art of listening is nothing but the recognition and understanding of what others are speaking. This revolves around three factors:

- Comprehending the speaker's pronunciation and accent
- The syntax and vocabulary
- And understand the speaker's intention.

A good listener is the one who can do the above things at the same time. The main thing about listening is that it places a good amount of stress on one's mind, since the listener cannot revise what he/she has listened to. Another thing is, when listening; one cannot focus on something else and come to the listening part at a later point of time. With our attention focused on the spoken text, there is no time or psychological capacity with regards to other thoughtful procedures. What

happens is that in the real situations, we listen with less interest as our mind meanders around. Once we missed something in listening, we would miss it forever. The only remedy is to listen to the same thing again and the speaker is supposed to participate in letting it know once more.

There are two essential levels in the process of learning to listen:

- Identification
- Selection

When a pupil is exposed to a second language for the first time, he simply hears meaningless sounds. He/she does not pay any attention on recognizing what he/she hears to. But when the learner is constantly listening to that particular language, he will start recognizing sounds or words which he/she has already listened to.

There are four stages for the listening skill training in the beginning level of language learning:

- a. Detection
- b. Identification and selection without keeping in memory
- c. Identification with short-term retention
- d. Identification, selection and long term retention

It is clear that the learners would find it complicated to take up all the input given to them. It would be good if the input was given in different levels. Identification, selection and long term retention help the learners to memorize the words they learnt.

There are various elements that make up the levels of developing listening skills, viz., Sound discrimination, Aural memory, Understanding.

When it comes to natural discussions, the speaker might use incorrect syntax or omit some words due to apprehension. McIntosh and Murcia (1978) say, "Understanding a language is a pre-requisite to speaking, reading and writing of that language." If one has good listening skills with enough knowledge, the essence can be understood.

On the other hand, natural conversations are full of breaks, wavering, etc. In a general classroom, the students might be from different backgrounds with varied learning abilities. And during training, it is the duty of the teacher to cater to the needs of the learners.

## II. STUDY

Some regional medium background students from an undergraduate college were taken for the present study to improve their listening competence equal to the English medium students. A small study with some limitations was conducted. A consecutive sampling method was used for the research.

First of all, the learners were told about the four language skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing and then they were encouraged to work on listening and speaking skills in particular and various tasks were designed accordingly. In the discussion with the learners, they were instructed to listen to different words given in the tasks and asked them to utter aloud. They were also suggested to listen to the given sentences twice, if they were unable to get it clear for the first time.

The learners, at first, were unwilling to utter the words aloud. With regard to this situation, they were called personally, motivated by the teacher and encouraged to pronounce, though there were any errors.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Since the learners were taking this type of test for the first time, clear instructions have to be given to make the learners understand the tasks. Instructions were repeated and translated into the learners' mother tongue, whenever the learners found it difficult to understand English. In the first section, that is, the listening test, words were repeated at least four times so as to familiarize the learners with the word pronounced. For the speaking activity, it was observed that some learners were hesitant to speak because of fear of committing mistakes and so had to motivate them to speak without worrying about their mistakes in pronunciation and vocabulary. This showed a positive result as most of the learners tried to speak with whatever knowledge they had of the language.

### Results of the Test:

The results of the test were very important for the present research as it provided important information about the learners' ability in listening and speaking.

#### A. Listening Test:

The first task in the preliminary listening test was sound distinction while the second item was word recognition in context. In sound distinction, the learners had to listen and distinguish consonant and vowel sounds while in word identification context; the learners had to identify the heard word from the given alternative while listening. The table shows the difficulties that most learners had in sound distinction and word recognition in the listening item. (Words tested are highlighted)

Task-I: Sound distinction	Task-II: Identifying word at sentence level
<b>pupil</b> instead of <b>people</b>	The baby was <b>naked</b> .
<b>thought</b> instead of <b>taught</b>	I wish to be <b>candid</b> with you.
<b>accept</b> instead of <b>except</b>	I'd like to <b>sail</b> around the world.

If we look at the above table, we can identify the learners' problems in specific areas. In task I, most of the learners had problems with the sounds like / ju:/ and /i:/ distinction (pupil and people), /t/ and / θ/ distinction (taught and thought), and /ə/ and /I/ distinction (accept and except).

In task II, the learners had problems with the sentences that are not used often. If we have a glance at the second column of the given table, the learners had problems in understanding vocabulary that are not used in day to day conversations. For example, words like naked, candid and sail may not be a part of learners' active vocabulary they use in their day to day life. The table below shows that most of the learners could recognize words in sound distinction. (words tested are highlighted)

#### Task-III: Sound distinction

1. Bagged (Packed)
2. Receive (Deceive)
3. Vain (Fain)
4. Pleasure (Pressure)

If we look at the table above, it clearly shows that the learners could distinguish only sounds, which were familiar to them. Most of the learners were able to distinguish sounds like /b/, /r/, /v/ and /l/ from the given alternatives.

#### Task-IV: Identifying word at sentence level

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|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. I have <b>neither</b> time nor money for that.</li><li>2. He <b>worked</b> from morning till night.</li><li>3. I am <b>inclined</b> to agree.</li></ol> |
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The above mentioned task is the test of word identification in listening. In this item, i.e., word recognition in context, most of the learners could recognize words like neither, worked and inclined.

The outcome of the listening test indicates that the learners were able to recognize the words, neither and worked which they are familiar with but they face problems with words that are not familiar like the word inclined.

#### B. Speaking Activity

The speaking activity was given to the learners to make sentences orally using the heard words in the context and the learners were asked to sit in pairs and talk by framing the sentences on their own.

Some of the learners were found using languages, viz. mother tongue as well as English while communicating with their pairs. Since it is not the right way to improve speaking skills in English, it was formally denied and the learners were asked to speak only in English but not in their mother tongue. It was

observed that only some learners could perform well after this strict instruction.

From the result, it was felt that the learners should be given more training in the importance of English language and they should get trained in listening to pronunciation of the words and the letters.

Since technology is being developed in the present competitive era and various technological tools are available, the teacher of English can utilize them while teaching in English language to the learners. Simultaneously, the teacher should also encourage the learners to utilize the available tools while learning and while practicing.

#### IV. PROBLEMS FACED BY THE STUDENTS

1. As the students are from regional background, they faced many difficulties to get adjusted with the new learning environment.
2. Since the students are strictly locked with their mother tongue, they always like to learn and use the same continuously.
3. Students' knowledge gets halted when they come to learn English as they tend to learn in their mother tongue.
4. Students compare themselves with the other people who are from English medium and they themselves will be discouraged as they feel that they cannot compete with English medium students. That is nothing but feeling inferiority complex.
5. Students have inability to listen to the lectures.
6. Since they face no listening and speaking activities in English during their studies from primary level, they feel difficulty in participating in the activities.

#### V. SUGGESTIONS

The teacher is advised to provide activity based listening in the English language classroom. Students, nowadays, are very much interested in learning new things if they involve in the activities. Some suggestions are given below for giving activity based listening.

1. Since most of the students are hailed from rural back ground, they might be habituated in speaking in their mother tongue and they will show no interest in listening to English. The teacher should empower the students who come from regional medium background with the importance of English language.
2. Teacher should give some time to the students to listen to phonemic sounds in English.
3. The students should be encouraged in listening to English songs and rhymes regularly, whatever grade they are (though the students are of higher education).

4. They must be given an activity like listening to the short stories at least once a week.
5. Students should also be motivated to watch English videos or else the teacher should play some English videos in the classroom using the technological tools available.
6. Ask them to illustrate the situations orally using the words they listened in the listening activities.
7. Students must be aware of the word “every individual is unique”. Then only students can get no fear and they would be active.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Remarkably, maximum of the students/learners of English who come from rural areas are unable to adapt the environment of the English classroom and they are also unable to come together with the English medium students due to the above mentioned problems. Teachers have to play a key role to realize the importance of English listening skills to the students at different aspects. They should also play a significant role to make the students aware of how important listening skills are to improve speaking skills.

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