

# LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 12 : 8 August 2012

ISSN 1930-2940

Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.

Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.

B. A. Sharada, Ph.D.

A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.

Lakhan Gusain, Ph.D.

Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D.

S. M. Ravichandran, Ph.D.

G. Baskaran, Ph.D.

L. Ramamoorthy, Ph.D.

Assistant Managing Editor: Swarna Thirumalai, M.A.

## Helping Students from Socially Disadvantaged Backgrounds to Develop Effective Listening Skills

R. S. A. Susikaran, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Candidate

=====

### Abstract

Higher secondary education focuses on the writing and reading skills alone where speaking is not the ultimate aim of the English teacher. Unlike other skills, listening skill remains unattended to and needs to be developed throughout the academic career. The problem of poor listening skills of the learners in the beginning stage of education continues with the same degree of negligence and inadequacy at the tertiary level too. This paper identifies the ways to develop this skill.

The focus of this paper is to find out the reasons of poor listening ability among the socially disadvantaged students. Listening is a complex interactive process where listeners actively interpret what they listen to. The inability in recognizing the sound, word meaning, structures, stress and intonation may affect the efficient mastery and use of language.

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 8 August 2012

R. S. A. Susikaran, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Candidate

501

Helping Students from Socially Disadvantaged Backgrounds to Develop Effective Listening Skills

Socially disadvantaged learners have greater difficulty in listening to English utterances and find it difficult to respond to communications addressed to them (Van Avermaet 2006). This research article surveys the problems related to the acquisition of listening ability and provides some solutions to these problems.

## **Introduction**

What are the main ingredients in Listening skills? (1)

- **Intensive:** Listening for acuity of the components (discourse, phonemes, words, intonation, markers, etc.)
- **Responsive:** Listening to a comparatively small stretch of language (comprehension, check a greeting note, questioning & interrogation, commanding & imperative, etc.)
- **Extensive:** Listening to develop a large-scale perception of spoken language. Like listening to a lengthy conversation, lecture, dialogue or purpose.
- **Selective:** Dispensation of discourse like short monologues. The need is not necessarily to look for general meanings, but to comprehend the selective information in a context of communication.

## **Key Skills (2)**

- Classify the distinctive sounds of English language.
- Retain the sounds and codes in memory.
- Understanding the stress patterns, intonation contours, and their importance in language.
- Be acquainted with reduced forms of words.
- Detection of the main elements in sentence and differentiate major and minor elements.
- Identifying word order pattern formation of sentences and their significance.
- Learn the variations in the forms of the words and its usage in language skills.
- Classifying the connotation and denotation meaning and its usage in various grammatical forms.

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 8 August 2012

R. S. A. Susikaran, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Candidate

502

Helping Students from Socially Disadvantaged Backgrounds to Develop Effective Listening Skills

- Identify interrelated devices in spoken discourse.

### **Main skills (3)**

- Recognize the goals, participants, and situations.
- Deduce situations, participants, and goals.
- Segregation of literal and disguised meaning.
- From situations and events, predict outcomes, deduce causes and effects, as main idea, ancillary idea, given information new information, generality, and exemplification.
- Use nonverbal communications like body language, facial to decode meanings.
- Use of a series of listening principles, such as identifying key words, conjecture of the meaning from context, hint comprehension or lack thereof.

### **What makes listening difficult?**

1. Interaction
2. Colloquial language
3. Clustering
4. Reduced forms
5. Performance variables
6. Rate of delivery
7. Redundancy
8. Stress, rhythm and intonation

### **Conceptual Framework**

The primary aspect of education is to disseminate knowledge and skills to the students to function as effective individuals. Education is the only platform to develop and impart competency, skills and knowledge to the students.

Skills in English language have become a fundamental necessity to redress social inequality since English has become the choice medium for well-paying jobs. It is noticed that the socially disadvantaged students, who are mostly first-generation learners and who come from rural and poor neighbourhood backgrounds, generally lack the skill of listening in English, which is the basis for acquiring English. The students from the socially disadvantaged backgrounds have poor knowledge of relevant vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, syntactic constructions, etc. Acquisition of these depends on efficient listening skill. Acquiring the skills of a language is closely linked to certain strategies to be carried out which comprise a set of tasks of interrelated cognitive actions.

Routine teaching methods and general pedagogies may be insufficient to impart listening skills to the set of disadvantaged students.

## **Assessment**

### **Listening skills and language competence**

In the communication cycle process, the socially disadvantaged students literally translate the received signals. With insufficient vocabulary, the ideas conceived by them remain vague and cannot be delivered. The fact behind it is that the 'Target Language' is hardly ever used at home. Most of the Higher Secondary Schools are focused on their students memorizing the correct answers to score high marks in the public exams. When students come to college they have very little exposure to effective listening skill in English. Then, lecture mode dominates all instruction at the collegiate level. Students find it difficult to follow lectures with limited listening skills.

Students with limited listening skills use at home one language another language at the School/ College. The difference in the semantic and syntactical forms creates lower degree of understanding and poor listening skills. The difference in codes, caused by socially determined difference must be taken into consideration. The language teacher should present all information in

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 8 August 2012

R. S. A. Susikaran, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Candidate

504

Helping Students from Socially Disadvantaged Backgrounds to Develop Effective Listening Skills

some simple and step by step process through which the student with limited listening skills can easily acquire the listening ability.

Giving maximum opportunities for acquiring the ‘Target Language’ is not the only task of a language teacher; instead, it is better acquired in context when every subject teacher pays attention to the language acquisition process. Through this continuous process of application in the classroom, the proficiency of the listening skills can be subsequently gained. When students are allowed to interact with one another with no focus on correct choice of vocabulary and structure, etc., possibly the level of listening skills may increase to a notable mark. When slow listeners are given individual attention, conversational flaws may be rectified.

### **Active Listeners and the Limited Listening Proficient Student**

In a class room environment, the active listener gains a sense of empowerment from the list of thematic units given by the teacher, and they indulge in the activities to pursue the given idea. But the students with limited listening skills stumble to get a clear picture of the signals received and the manipulation of the data is not carried out fully as demanded. The students have no further generation of activities outside of the classroom since the parents and surroundings have the similar socio-economic, cultural and linguistic barriers.

One of the major difficulties for a language teacher in imparting effective listening skills is due to the use of native language all around in a very high degree. The time of exposure given to the target language is minimal. In order to teach a target language both for the active and limited listeners, the language teacher needs to take many and varied steps to make learning happen in the classroom. The language teacher should provide a safe and predictable environment to reduce the fear, anxiety, and confusion from the students by delivering contextual meaning explicitly.

### **Recommendations for Active Listening in the Classroom**

- Room arrangements should be comfortable to interact and share the ideas and tasks.

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 8 August 2012

R. S. A. Susikaran, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Candidate

505

Helping Students from Socially Disadvantaged Backgrounds to Develop Effective Listening Skills

- The arrangements should be formal that the procedures to be followed in the exercises will be easily communicated to the students.
- Create predictability in classroom routines.
- The language teacher should not only be a guide and facilitator, but also an information disseminator.
- Encourage students to perform their task with each other's knowledge and experiences.
- Generate ideas from out-of-College experiences into classroom practice.
- Use additional teaching resources such as audio-visual aids.
- Divide the class into groups in terms of active listeners and learners with limited listening skills.
- Student engagement must be continuously monitored.

## **Strategies and Roles**

### **Suggestions for Active Learning at the College Level**

- In addition to English Language teachers, subject teachers also should focus all instructions in the target language.
- Teamwork of all staff members with the identified students of limited listening skills should inculcate all possible mechanisms for collaboration in achievement.
- Planning and carrying out activities, incorporating the home and community with that of the learning environment. In other words, develop some cell groups in the poor neighbourhoods to practice speaking and listening in English. This can be achieved by encouraging social service groups whose members are able to speak in English and listen to English conversations.
- Within the college campus also, develop social service groups led by individual college teachers and/or students with proven competence in English listening to interact periodically with the students who need better listening skill in English.

## **Language Teachers**

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 8 August 2012

R. S. A. Susikaran, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Candidate

506

Helping Students from Socially Disadvantaged Backgrounds to Develop Effective Listening Skills

- Give freedom to innovate to improve methods of learning.
- Use active learning approaches to train teachers.
- Provide teachers further experience in speaking and listening in English.
- Encourage the art of reflective practice.
- Provide in-service training on an ongoing basis, including classroom-based support for teachers involved in implementing active learning.
- Encourage teachers with demonstrated better skills in speaking and listening in English to monitor and coach their peers.

## Conclusion

We should, first of all, enable students with limited listening skill not to develop any inferiority complex. They should be encouraged to develop positive attitude towards learning new things. The language teacher should ensure the use of visual aids, extra linguistic support, avoid idioms, etc. Both teachers and students should be really motivated and interested in completing the tasks assigned to them. We also should recognize that English skills will develop over a period of time, not instantly.

---

## References

1. Listening Skills Development, [www.albany.edu/etap/faculty/CarlaMeskill/publication/TESLIST.pdf](http://www.albany.edu/etap/faculty/CarlaMeskill/publication/TESLIST.pdf)
2. Study, Learn, Teach English [www.english.tarbiya.ma/docs/GuideProg.doc](http://www.english.tarbiya.ma/docs/GuideProg.doc)
3. Teaching by Principles [www.old.brusov.am/docs/English\\_Language\\_teaching\\_Method.pdf](http://www.old.brusov.am/docs/English_Language_teaching_Method.pdf)

Van Avermaet, Piet. 2006. Socially Disadvantaged Learners and Languages of Education. Centre for Diversity and Learning, Council for Europe, Strasbourg.

---

R. S. A. Susikaran, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Candidate  
 Assistant Professor  
 Department of English

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 8 August 2012

R. S. A. Susikaran, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Candidate

507

Helping Students from Socially Disadvantaged Backgrounds to Develop Effective Listening Skills

Oxford Engineering College  
Tiruchirapalli 620013  
Tamil Nadu  
India  
[sukirtha\\_27@yahoo.com](mailto:sukirtha_27@yahoo.com)

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

12 : 8 August 2012

R. S. A. Susikaran, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Candidate

508

Helping Students from Socially Disadvantaged Backgrounds to Develop Effective Listening Skills