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**INFLUENCES ON THE DEXTERITY OF LISTENING:  
ABILITY OR APTITUDE?****T. AKKI RAJU**

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**ABSTRACT**

Listening is very not quite alike as hearing since hearing is just the demonstration of perceiving sound by the ear. On the off chance that you are not hearing-disabled, hearing essentially happens. Listening, be that as it may, is something you deliberately do. Listening requires to focus on the goal that your mind forms significance from words and sentences. Listening prompts learning. Listening is a procedure that includes currently hearing what the other individual is saying and taking care of that correspondence. Listening is the means by which we get the verbal part of a person's message. Certain influences on the listening activity include – 1. Lack of Interest: Oftentimes, we get ourselves caught in a conversation that essentially does not hold our interest. In such cases, we'll be tempted to float off in our own contemplations or concentrate on something unique — which, shockingly, can be an obstruction to listening. 2. Noise, Awkward Seating Positions and Temperature: Ecological factors, for example, noise, temperature and awkward seating positions can make us concentrate our attention on other factors alongside what the speaker is saying. 3. Distractions: The most evident and presumably the most significant barriers to listening this day and age are different distractions. 4. Personal Bias: Personal bias can cloud your judgment and influence you to deliberately ignore significant information or great individuals. When you live and work in a multicultural domain, it's essential to abandon every one of your biases when you're speaking with others. 5. Intrusion: The fact that no good thing originates from interfering with somebody while they're talking is one of those cardinal tenets of communication we're all taught as kids. Sadly, that lesson doesn't tend to stick. Individuals are so anxious to be heard that occasionally they intrude on discussions to express their own supposition. It's the disease of *not listening* that teachers are troubled with!

[Keywords: Listening Vs Hearing; Influences on Listening; L1 Vs L2 perception, Way out]

**FULL PAPER**

*“And he goes through life, his mouth open, and his mind closed.”* – William Shakespeare

Listening is not a simple matter. One listens for different purposes. These different purposes call for different skills. To gain accurate information requires a different ability than to listen in a social situation in which one wishes to give and to get enjoyment. To listen to ideas is different from listening to ideas. The whole field of critical thinking begins with listening. Still another reason for training in listening seems, in this noisy age, to be the need to know when to shut one's ears to escape.

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All the same, we do not question that reading is a skill that must be taught. We approve of spending many school hours to develop that skill. Surely we should recognize that listening also is a skill, a skill that is not effectively learned by accident. One does not know instinctively how to listen for information, for social enjoyment, for critical understanding. One does not come by happenstance upon these highly complex skills, especially when the accent is an altogether new stumbling block for one who is already influenced by mother tongue.

To say, many a student of U.G. Level is confronted with the task of Listening Skill to appear for Standardised Tests on Listening to get qualified which is a mandate to study abroad and the students who learn English as Second Language treat it a difficult assignment. As such, there should be a way out to help them. We do not question that reading is a skill that must be taught. We approve of spending many (school) hours to develop that skill. Surely we would recognise that listening also is a skill, a skill that is not effectively learned by accident.

Let us have some suggestions in brief that skills that serve certain purposes. If one is listening for information, between major and minor points; but his task in listening is harder than in reading; for, if he does not understand, what is said as he hears it the first time, he cannot go back by himself and read for the second time. The speaker has gone on. What is more, the slow listener and the rapid one must both adjust on to one rate, the speaker's!

If the listener's purpose is to like and to be liked, the skills he needs are quite different. What is said is far less important than his attitude of attention, of friendliness, of response in the area the speaker has chosen. For instance, many of us could have seen a group of people all of whom would have been interesting conversationalists, except that not one of them was a listener. Even the telephone is useless if no one answers.

It seems very strange that we teachers have given children so much training in speaking and have been so little aware that speaking and listening are interlocking skills, neither one of which can be adequately learned without the other and each useless to anyone who does not possess them both. We cannot continue as we now are doing, training some people to be speakers and others to be listeners. Communication is a two-way process. The pitcher that always pours goes empty. The glass that always receivers runs over!

If we train well for both speaking and listening, we shall get better speakers and better listeners. The good listener is more than a sponge. He can be a chooser in the market of human thinking. At present, many people listen for hours and hear any idea! Many a classroom situation gives training in those poor listening habits. The student should be given training in listening if he is to learn a skill by any means other than the socially expensive trial-and-error method. He must be trained so that he can screen out the useless and yet not miss the valuable. He must know how to skim in listening. If he can listen well and also speak his questions, his objections, and his own creative thinking both he and those with whom he talks will develop their critical judgement, not only of their communication skills but, more importantly, of the ideas and actions for which they use those communication skills.

The need for training exists... What are the means? There are many a hand every day. When the teacher gives the new assignment, he is giving training in listening, sometimes training is very poor listening. If students ask to have directions completely repeated or say that they do not understand what has been said, either the teacher is a poor speaker or the children are poor listeners. One or both of those skills must be improved, or education in that classroom breaks down at its start.

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The teacher can emphasize the need for listening in such discussions by asking someone to repeat the opinions he has heard. The teacher can then ask several persons to write their opinions of the mother. Their listening should have served as a means to increase the ideas that each considers before reaching his written opinion. Their papers should show the teacher whether the training he has been giving in listening has been effective: What has the child heard? What happens to the child's thinking if he hears?

Teachers should also realize that during class recitations not all children should be listening attentively all the time. The gist is caught by the bright child long before the repeated explanation gets through to the slower learner. One important skill that should be taught to the child who learns more quickly is the social one of polite mental escape while he waits. Many of us learn expensively, by accident, how to shut out 90 per cent of what we do not need to hear and yet let enough trickle through so that we know when we need to begin again to listen more fully.

No one questions the need to communicate. No one doubts that the major share of the receptive end of communication comes through listening. But many of us give too little thought to the unconscious serfdom of untrained listeners. He who controls the minds controls the people. He who controls the mass communication media has a frightful power over the minds of supposedly free individuals. Of course, English teachers have too much to teach. Of course, our job is too big. Perhaps we shall have to look over what we shall have to offer and decide to do which things we shall give priority to improve students' language skills.

The extent to which listening ability in a second language (L2) is a function of the transfer of the first language (L1) listening abilities or of L2 proficiency needs a probe into. Implicit in the 'language problem/listening problem' is the notion that L2 proficiency (i.e. linguistic and grammatical knowledge) must be examined separately from L1 listening comprehension ability. In other words, we need to tease out the separate contribution of each of these two variables to the explained variance in L2 listening comprehension ability, that is, determine whether L2 knowledge or L1 comprehension is ability is the better predictor of L2 listening performance.

As Hulstijn suggested, our theoretical understanding of what comprises L2 proficiency in general and L2 listening comprehension ability, in particular, can be enriched if these could be linked with theories of L1 proficiency and L1 listening comprehension ability. In addition, until we resolve the language problem or listening problem question. What Bernhardt and Kamil posed the same question for reading, L2 listening comprehension studies risk measuring L1 listening comprehension knowledge and confusing it with L2 listening comprehension knowledge.

One of the most important skills required of anyone who wants to be an excellent communicator is that of being able to listen effectively. More specifically, the research questions of interest are 1. To what degree does L2 proficiency contribute to L2 listening comprehension ability? 2. Does L1 listening comprehension ability also contribute to L2 listening comprehension ability? If so, to what degree?

Furthermore, following Bernhardt and Kamil's (1995) recommendation that the nature of the relationship needs to be understood, the current study also considered performance across question types. Given that listening comprehension is operationally referred to as the

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ability to understand direct information and to make inferences, a third question addressed was:

Assuming that both L1 listening ability and L2 language proficiency are significant predictors of L2 listening comprehension ability, what is the relative importance of each with respect to one's ability to answer questions demanding different levels of comprehension, that is, inference questions and literal questions?

First, identifying other factors that could account for the remaining variance in L2 listening comprehension ability is an important direction for future research. What might such mediating factors be? One possible factor, the ability related to the acoustic trait, is a likely predictor that needs to be empirically verified and teased out. This ability could be measured by means of the sound discrimination sections of language aptitude tests, such as the Modern Language Aptitude Test (Carroll & Sapon 1959)<sup>2</sup> or the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery.

Another possible factor, seen in light of the work in L2 reading by Schoonen et al. (1998), is metacognitive knowledge (e.g., text characteristics, listening goals, and listening strategies, etc.) which, when measured via a metacognitive awareness listening questionnaire, could also help account for additional variance in L2 listening comprehension ability. Other variables, such as background knowledge (e.g., Long, 1990) and motivation are measurable and also need to be examined for their potential role in accounting for the remaining variance in L2 listening comprehension ability. When the data for each of these measurement instruments are acquired, researchers may be able to develop a clearer picture of what mediates L2 listening comprehension ability and the relative contribution of each variable.

Second, pure listening tests need to be carefully designed. Tests in listening comprehension ability for both L1 and L2 should be comparable. Text genre, syntactic complexity, length and number of propositions, general topic, question type, and depth of questioning should be comparable in both language tests in order to control for potentially confounding variables. Most important, both tests must assess listening comprehension ability only, that is, there should be no reading involved either in the question prompts or in the answer choices. An appropriate test should, therefore, involve only the use of oral prompts, and the comprehension verification/response options should be limited to techniques such as selecting among a choice of pictures or objects, sequencing pictures or other graphics, drawing a picture or tracing on a map, or performing through some kind of physical response. It should be noted, however, that in using a test with oral prompts only, memory will become a confounding variable.

Third, as noted earlier, the instrument for measuring L2 proficiency should preferably provide continuous data. Although it is possible to treat dichotomous data as if they were continuous for statistical purposes as a variable in standard regression, continuous data can provide finer distinctions in the results. Continuous data will also allow for an examination of the theoretically interesting question of a threshold for listening, if it exists, and the L2 proficiency level at which listeners can transfer L1 listening skills. More important, as determined by Schoonen et al. (1998) for reading, measurement of L2 and L1 listening

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comprehension ability should separate out language-specific knowledge (e.g., vocabulary) from general knowledge about listening (e.g., metacognitive knowledge). This separation will help uncover other potential mediating variables in the relationship between L1 and L2 listening comprehension ability, for example, knowledge of text structure, task preparation (listening goals), task complexity, and other possible variables.

Finally, this study necessitates careful reproduction with different populations at different age levels for further research on the topic by future prospective researchers. For example, a study of this type could be very useful in the early years of language immersion programmes with the young were listening plays such an important role in initial instruction. Listening comprehension ability is assumed in a school setting because children arrive at school with a basic mastery of this skill and, compared reading, formal instruction in L1 listening rarely takes place in school.

Listening serves a number of possible purposes, and the purpose of listening will depend on the situation and the nature of the communication.

- ✓ To specifically focus on the messages being communicated, avoiding distractions and preconceptions.
- ✓ To gain a full and accurate understanding of the speakers' point of view and ideas.
- ✓ To critically assess what is being said.
- ✓ To observe the non-verbal signals accompanying what is being said to enhance understanding.
- ✓ To show interest, concern and concentration.
- ✓ To encourage the speaker to communicate fully, openly and honestly.
- ✓ To develop a selflessness approach, putting the speaker first.
- ✓ To arrive at a shared and agreed understanding and acceptance of both sides views.

Therefore, being able to disentangle L1 listening comprehension ability from L2 listening comprehension ability could be helpful in detecting problems not related to the L2, such as a hearing or a listening problem that might interfere with L2 learning. Knowing the source of the difficulty will allow teachers to carry out more directed and appropriate remediation activities. In conclusion, this study was exploratory in nature; future studies require many refinements in the choice and construction of measurement instruments. The limitations notwithstanding, the results of this study are promising. As seen in the L2 reading studies, in this study both L1 listening comprehension ability and L2 proficiency appear to play a significant mediating role in L2 listening comprehension ability.

Listening is so important that many top employers provide listening skills training for their employees. This is not surprising when you consider that good listening skills can lead to better customer satisfaction, greater productivity with fewer mistakes, and increased sharing of information that in turn can lead to more creative and innovative work. The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention.

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