



IIT Madras
ONLINE DEGREE

LISTENING

THE FOUR SKILLS

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| • Listening | Speaking | Reading | Writing |
| • Good listeners | | Good readers | |
| • Become good speakers | | | Become good at Writing |

WHY IS LISTENING IMPORTANT?

- Only if we listen can we understand/comprehend and only then can we assimilate ideas/thoughts that are spoken
- It is also important because listening leads to thinking
- Thinking leads to decision-making

- Research shows that poor listening habits and skills can cause as many failures of communication as ineffective expression of ideas.
- We have to understand that successful listening is not a passive act.
- It involves active processing, reformulation and revision.

LISTENING-THE FIRST LANGUAGE SKILL

- Most children come to school armed with only one way to learn – listening.
- Almost all of us were born doing it.
- Indeed, for the first few years of formal education, listening is an integral part of teaching.
- But something happens around first and second grade, when students learn to read and write.
- Slowly the read aloud books and story time are phased out, replaced instead by silent reading.

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WHAT DO WE LISTEN FOR?

- 1. Understanding detailed information for a purpose**
 - Can understand straightforward factual information about common topics; understand simple technical information
- 2. Understanding & interpreting a range of features of context**
 - Can follow the main points of extended discussion

3. Understanding the topic & the main points

- Can understand the main points of familiar matters; can understand the main points & information content of news bulletins & TV programmes

4. Distinguishing main points from sub points

- Can identify general messages and specific detail.
- Can follow a lecture or talk on familiar subject matter detail.

WE LISTEN FOR:

- Comprehension
- Acquisition
- Listening and listening comprehension are one and the same thing. It is believed that people listen for understanding the spoken language.
- When we say listening for acquisition it means listening will provide us inputs for developing our second language skills. In this case English.

- It means when we listen we also acquire vocabulary of that language, words, phrases and how to use them and where to use them while speaking or writing.
- The challenge of listening is the manner in which the speaker is delivering the spoken language, their pronunciation, intonation and above all speed of delivery.

MOVING FROM LANGUAGE TO MEANING- COMPREHENSION

- Comprehension begins with first understanding.....
sounds.....words.....clauses.....sentence.....text.....till meaning
is derived

MOVING FROM MEANING TO LANGUAGE-ACQUISITION

- In the second method we move from meaning to language.
- For this the listener need to have background knowledge of the topic of discourse.

UNDERSTANDING BOTH PROCESSES

- Let us take an example to understand both the processes.
- Situation: Visit to a doctor.
- Your friend tells you she is going to visit her doctor in the evening as she has been having stomach ache. She tells you that the pain is severe.
- First process:
- Words and expressions:
- Stomach Ache
- Visit the doctor
- In the evening
- Severe pain

These chunks help us identify the underlying meaning the words express.

LET US LOOK AT THE SECOND PROCESS

Situation: I heard on the TV last night that Japan has suffered an earthquake. As many as 200 people were killed.

- The moment the word 'earthquake' is uttered a set of questions come up in the mind of the listener.
- Where exactly was the earthquake?
- How big was it?
- Did it cause a lot of damage?
- What rescue efforts are under way?
- These questions guide us through the understanding of any subsequent spoken discourse that one will hear.

- The first one is called the Bottom-up Approach
- The second one is called the Top-down approach
- When we start listening to a language for the first time we tend to use the 'Bottom-up Approach' to listening. We are looking for familiar 'words' and 'phrases' to get some meaning.
- An expert user of the language uses the 'Top-down Approach' to listening.
- Most of us are somewhere in between these two. If we wish to become an expert user of the language we need to move towards the second approach.