CHAPTER – I

Introduction to Listening Skills and its Role in Communication Process

1.1 Introduction

Communication plays an important role in everyone’s life. As social beings we cannot live without communicating with others and there will be no meaning in our life. Communication is derived from the word *commnis* which means “to share” (Young, D. 1991), that is sharing of ideas, concepts, feelings and emotions. The science of communication is almost as old as man himself. From time immemorial, the need to share or to communicate has been felt. Different vehicles and channels were identified and subsequently improvised for the purpose of transmission of ideas and concepts (Agarwal, 2012).

1.1.a What is the importance of Communication?

The importance of communication can be gauged from the fact that we are communicating in some form or other almost every moment of our lives. Whether we are walking, talking, playing, sitting or even sleeping, a message is being formulated and transmitted (All Wright, 1975). Man possesses the ability to communicate, which is much
more than a composition of certain physical attributes, vocal chords, articulators and so on. He has the ability to symbolize or to understand concepts in terms of images or symbols. It is this ability that helps him to communicate (Grosjean, F., 1980). Communication activity is a composite of symbols, gestures and illustrations that accompany either the spoken or the written word.

1.2. Communication Process

Communication is a two-way process in which there is an exchange and progression of ideas, towards a mutually accepted direction or goal (Bose, K., 1999). For this process to materialize, it is essential that the basic elements of communication be acknowledged. The communication process diagram is given below,
The basic elements of communication are,

1. Sender / Encoder / Speaker
2. Receiver / Decoder / Listener
3. Message
4. Medium
5. Feedback

The sender, according to his ideas, behaviour pattern and intention, selects an oral, verbal or non-verbal message. As soon as the message reaches the receiver, he decodes it and gives an internal response to the perceived message. It is noteworthy that the response is not in relation to the actual content but rather to the “perceived content” of the original message (Pickett and Pollack, 1963). The manner in which the sender and receiver perceive the same word could give rise to difference in encoding and decoding. In the second phase, the receiver formulates his message, encodes it and transmits it to the original sender – now – turned receiver. This stage is referred to as providing feedback (Beand, 1999) and is most crucial.

Unless and until there is feedback – be it in the verbal or the non-verbal form, - we cannot say that effective communication has taken place (Ochs, E. 1989). If the feedback is in tune with the original intent of
the sender, communication proceeds without a snag. However, there could be moments when the receiver does not agree with the message of the sender. This does not mean that there is breakdown of communication (Ellis, 2005). One can state that effective communication is stalled for the time being. It could resume after subsequent discussions.

At the same time, there are wide number of sources of noise or interference that can enter into the communication process and disturb the discussion between the encoder and decoder (Brown, G. 1998). This is technically called ‘Barrier’ in Communication process. This is due to the following factors,

1. Poor listening
2. Lack of Sensitivity to receiver
3. Lack of Basic communication skills
4. Insufficient knowledge of the subject matter
5. Information overload
6. Emotional interference
7. Physical distractions
8. Conflicting message
9. Channel barriers
10. Long communication chain

11. Lack of interest

12. No provision of feedback

13. Inadequate feedback. (Hatch, E. 1998)

So an effective speaker should have confidence, courage and clarity to make effective communication (Dewel, 1974). Today many students suffer due to lack of good communicative skills. Though they learn for more than a decade they fail to communicate with others when required. This is due to poor listening skills. It is the very basic of language skills which are known as LSRW.

1.3. Listening Skills

Listening is one of the most important skills. How well we listen has a major impact on our job effectiveness, and on the quality of our relationship with others. We listen,

1. To obtain information.

2. To understand.

3. For enjoyment.

4. To learn
One would think that one can be good at listening. In fact we are not. Depending on the study being quoted, we remember a dismal 25-50% of what we hear. This means that when we talk to others, colleagues, customers or spouse for 10 minutes, they only really hear 2½-5 minutes of the conversation (Ronald B. Adler, 1999). Corporate industries consider this skill as an important soft skill because when their delegates sit for a discussion, first they have to listen to the viewpoints of other group, and then react in the communication process. Most of the communication skills or soft skill trainers allocate a separate domain for the listening skills because the origin of communication starts from listening activity (Freeman, 2000).

The importance of listening in communication is enormous. People often focus on their speaking ability believing that good speaking equals good communication (Howatt, 1984). The ability to speak well is a necessary component to successful communication. The ability to listen is equally as important. The importance of listening in communication is often well illustrated when we analyze our listening skills with those closest to us. In particular I am referring to our spouse, partner, children
or friends. Pay attention to the everyday conversations we have with these people with whom we think we communicate well.

The importance of listening in communication is something worthwhile to consider. Good listeners are often some of the best speakers because they have taken the time to find out what people are truly interested in. If you understand what is important to people then you understand how to reach them. Clearly, listening is a skill that we can all benefit from improving (Hunnicutt, S., 1985). By becoming a better listener, we will improve our communicative skills as well as our ability to influence, persuade and negotiate. That way, we will avoid conflict and misunderstandings – all necessary for successful performance. One primary reason why listening is so important is the amount of time people spend doing just that – listening. Listening is the most frequent, perhaps the most important type of on - the - job communication (Tannen, D. 2002). Top executives spend even more time listening than other employees.

Listening can improve work quality and boost productivity. Poor listening leads to innumerable mistakes because of which letters have to be retyped, meetings rescheduled. All this affects productivity and
Apart from the obvious benefits, good listening helps employees to update and revise their collection of facts, skills and attitudes. Good listening also helps them to improve the speaking (Rost, M. 2003). Despite all these benefits, as pointed out earlier, good listening skills are quite rare in the business world today (Liebermann, 1963). A number of studies have revealed why people listen poorly, despite the advantages of doing just the opposite.

1.4. English Classroom - A Glance

The teaching of English in schools is far from satisfactory. The students who learn English for about six periods in a week for four semesters hardly know 100 words by the time they come out of school. This means they have not been able to learn English words at the rate of one word per period. They do not know how to use the common structures in English. The conditions of teaching English are different from State to State. The performance of the students in urban schools is better than the students in the rural schools.

Lack of Clear – Cut Policy

After independence, the place of English in India has not been well–defined. It has been changing from time to time. In some of the States in
India, English is not a compulsory subject. It is not necessary to study English to get through the high school examination. Hence the students are not serious about the study of the language (Anderson. 1988).

**Aims Are Not Clear**

The teachers who teach the language have little understanding of the aims of teaching the language. The only aim is to make the student pass the examination. The students depend more on memory rather than to master the skills of the language (Horwitz, 1991). The aim is on the pass percentage only.

**Teacher’s Competence**

All teachers of English are not similar in their capacity to teach the language. In other words they are not “fully competent”(Hymes, 1971) to do full justice to their assignment. The UGC Committee has remarked that “There is a shortage of Teacher” (UGC Report, Vol.3,7). This statement refers to not only the number but also the quality and competency.

In the high school level, most of the teachers who teach English have just passed school final examination through rural schools. They themselves do not know the correct usage and pronunciation and their
vocabulary is limited. It is awful to note that many teachers who did not offer teaching of English in their training period teach this subject. It is wrong to say that any graduate can teach English language to secondary level. Most of the teachers are not in a position to know the “latest developments in their subjects”(James,T,1995). On the other hand, considerable mass of teachers are not interested in improving competency and other relevant skills.

**Improper Methods of Teaching**

In most of the high schools of Tamilnadu the subject and language ‘**English**’ is taught by the science teacher since the teacher studied a Language paper in his Teacher Training Programme. So most of the teachers use translation method. They teach **English** through **Tamil** (First and the official language of Tamilnadu State). This translation method enables the pupils understanding the parallel and “equivalent terms of both languages”(Venkateswaren, 1995) whereas the different types of grammatical functions of those terms become big troubling–factors. Students are rarely allowed to express/ speak in the class which makes the process of learning, a dull one(Van.EK.J.,1976).
Over - Crowded Classes

Due to the ‘Mass Education Policy’ of the Government, “classrooms are over-crowded”(Susan.Birrell, 2012) In the government schools of Tamilnadu, a teacher is expected to manage 100 students. Within the time slice of the period (45 Minutes) a teacher is expected to check the attendance; verify the given home-work; keep up the discipline of the class, then the teacher is expected to give a general introduction to the topic followed by lecture/demonstration and feed-back. Hence teachers cannot pay “individual attention”(Tobin.K,1993) to students.

Unsatisfactory Supervision

Speaking practically, there is no supervision on the work of the English teachers. So teachers have no opportunity to get any guidance from experts(Garnham, F.1985). Symposium or seminars are not conducted for the teachers to update and enrich the subject knowledge.

Lack of Teaching – Aids

Most of the government schools do not have the facilities of Audio – Visual aids as, Linguaphone records, Filmstrips, Radio, Television and other latest tools to teach English. Even the schools that have some aids, do not make use of them(Truscott, 1999).
1.5. REMEDIAL MEASURES

As early as 1958, the Government of India, under a farsighted Prime Minister felt the need for urgent and positive measures to bring about an improvement in the teaching of English language skills. As in the words of V.K.Gokak, “A great deal of research had to be carried out into the particular problems of teaching English to Indian students and of reshaping the current course in high school and colleges” (12). The study group appointed by the Government of India to delve into the problems of the teaching of English reported that “New commissions and new courses are necessary to halt the deterioration of standards on the one hand and to introduce much needed improvements on the other” (Report, 26). The group felt that the three factors are mainly responsible for the success or failure of a teaching programme. Those three factors are as follows,

• Man

• Materials

• Methods (Stern.HH,1983)

Dickson correlates the teacher competence with some factors. According to him, “Teaching competency is a demonstrated repertoire of
competencies involved with teaching plans and materials, classroom procedures, interpersonal skills and learner’s reinforcement and involvement reflected in teacher behaviour”(ARUN .K. 37).

1.6. Syllabus and Listening Skills

Though listening is fundamental and essential skill, it is almost a neglected skill in the classroom and English syllabus as well (Lynch, T.C., 1998). English language skills have become the order of the day. Every student coming out of school is expected to “execute communicative skills in English in a fair way but the reality is not”(Stoddard, 1994). The main problem for this is the syllabus. There is “ample space for reading in school syllabus”(Yang Wenfen, 2010). One can evaluate students based on their answer written in the answer sheets. Oral evaluation is conducted very rarely which attributes speaking skills but listening skill is completely forgotten. So lack of practice over decades spoils students career because corporate selection tools involve 55 to 70% listening skills(Baird, 2001)

There are many stages in the recruitment process(James,T. 1995) such as Telephonic interview, profile interview, voice neutralization test, group discussion, presentation, stress interview, H.R. interview and board
interview. In all the stages, Listening is the important component. As referred in the report of ASSOITES (Association of IT Enabled Services) 85 per cent graduates are not employable and more and more number of graduates are produced every year without employability skills” (ASSOITES Journal, 2006) so the employable factors are not so bright for our candidates. There should be some scientific method to identify our students’ problems with listening skills (Grice, H.P. 1995) and those barriers should be eradicated thoroughly otherwise there will be a big mass of grandaunts without job because of lacking this skill set.

1.7. TECHNOLOGY IN IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS IN ENGLISH

We are in the position to set a trend for ELT in this 21st century. The vision of the 21st century presents an admixture of both challenges and opportunities. The electronic era is very much on the anvil. Pupils should have access to information technology and more sophisticated devices and systems. ‘Time’ magazine voted the personal computer as the ‘Machine of the Year-1982’, breaking away from the convention of the man of the year award. Eric Ashby has identified four revolutions in education. He says that,
The first revolution excursed when societies began to differentiate adult roles and the task of educating was shifted, in part from parents to teachers and from home to the school…the second was the adaptation of the written word as a tool of education…The third revolution came with the invention of printing and the subsequent wide availability of books…The fourth revolution is portended by developments in electronics notably those involving the radio, television, tape recorder and computer’ (18).

Ashby says that, “Any technology, which increases the rate of learning, would enable the teacher teaching less and the learner learning more” (25). The development and use of a modern “educational technology is viewed in different ways by different people” (Jeff Benedict, 2013). It is acclaimed as the basis of revolution in the educational system aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of teaching at different levels.

1.8. NEED FOR THE STUDY

The current scenario requires to design a new method, which promises to change the process of teaching and learning of language skills (Skehan, 1996). Every teacher is aware that ‘Change’ is the only
word, which is permanent in the avenue of language teaching. As in the words of Sarvappalli Radhakrishnan,

A good teacher must know how to arouse the interest of the pupil in the field of study for which he is responsible, he must himself be a master in the field and be in touch with the latest developments in his subject, he must be a fellow traveller in the exciting pursuit of knowledge(12).

In the educational applications of computer assisted classroom, one can see the emergence of technology, which is more powerful than any teaching aids we have been accustomed to use hitherto. For the first time, we have the teaching materials which can adapt in real time to the needs of the individual student(Shiffrin and Schneider, 1979). This is tremendously exciting prospect whatever the criticisms that are leveled against the present day students in relation to their academic standards, surely none would deny that they are considerably better informed than the generations that preceded them largely as a direct “consequence of exposure to computers from an early age” (Gardiner, RC.2010). An effective use of computer will be extremely necessary for the “class room teacher who has to do away with the age–old tendency of lethargy
conservatism and aversion of using hardware for teaching” (Mac Intyre, 1994)

The National Policy of Education of 1986 (Report of NPE, 4) has pointed out the several efforts which has been made to use technological aids like computer and television for improving the quality of teaching. With the introduction of ‘CLASS’ (Computer Literacy And Studies in Schools) the teachers need to be trained in how to make the best use of an unfamiliar tool like computer for the teaching of not only subjects like Mathematics and Science but also English which is considered as a thorn in the flesh by most of the students. So we are in need of a research to explore the potentialities and relative effectiveness of a new medium like computer in developing listening skills.

Computer can prove effective not only because it involves more than one sensory of learning, but also because it leads to more learning (Brown and Yule, 1983). Scottish Council for Educational Technology has drawn our attention to what it calls ‘TECHNOLUNACY’ where by as many different media as possible are invoked as being essential to a particular learning package for no better reason than that they exist. Hence the researcher feels the need for this study to assess the effectiveness of the
computer aided instruction in teaching listening skills at school level. Because of the above said conditions and facts, the researcher has decided to execute the research in the following title, “Multimedia based teaching to hone Listening Skills of Higher Secondary School Level Students – A Study”

1.9. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

India is a fast growing country and concentrates in over all development. India’s Knowledge capital is globally known and appreciated. Education policy makers initiated all sorts of researches to bring change in class room atmosphere (Simmons,1994). Pioneer institutions like IIT, IIM have started SMART classroom as modernised method of teaching. Due to the recent influence of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization(Sharon,2008), accreditation takes place in all the education institutions to assure quality teaching. This research is involved in using computer to teach listening skills. So the finding of this research will give a clear picture to the educational practitioners to design curriculum for skills development. If the teacher recognizes that computer is there to help them to improve the teaching –learning process,
their acceptance of these teaching devices will be assured (Sheen, 2004). The present study by the investigator is a sincere attempt in this regard.

One can see that the production and availability of hardware or machines is much ahead of the software. Computer is available but the teaching materials for which these machines have to be used are scarce. Neither can one produce one’s own software in areas such as computer-aided instruction in teaching English language skills. The software programmes developed by the researchers in computer will serve as instructional aids at the school level. This will also enable the English language teachers to know how an instructional programme could be best designed with multi media through multiple media.

1.10. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Working with computer is a process of endless experimentation, where one is discovering new tricks and possibilities all the time. The more one works with computer, the more one realizes how enormous the potentials are in terms of content, technique and flexibility.

Investment in computer in schools has to be backed up by investment in software and investment in staff, if they are to become effective aids in the class room. Hence the problem under the present study i.e.
“Multimedia based teaching to hone Listening Skills of Higher Secondary School Level Students – A Study” is to develop a lesson package to teach and test as well. In addition to this work points out the efficacies of the use of computer in teaching listening skills.

1.11. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The following statements are the definitions for the words mentioned in the title of the research i.e., “Multimedia based teaching to hone Listening Skills of Higher Secondary School Level Students – A Study”

Multimedia based teaching

Investigator means the term ‘Computer’ for ‘Multimedia based teaching. It includes a combination of software text, audio output, desktop text output, and interactivity content forms. Computer is used to process data and retrieval, is used to display or access information through content processing devices, such as computerized and electronic devices. Computer also describes electronic media devices used to store information and content. Multimedia is distinguished from mixed media in fine art; by including audio, for example, it has a broader scope. The term "rich media" is synonymous for interactive multimedia. Hypermedia can be considered as one particular multimedia application. In this
research, the researcher creates an audio file as content for listening skills. This audio can be played only in computer and taken in a specified audio output. The term involved in this research engulfs the gadgets such as an audio CD, computer and speakers.

**HONING**

The researcher means this word ‘Honing’ as development of certain skills through systematic practice. It gives meaning as developing at surface level and expands its meaning as practicing a particular content step by step and mastering the skills. This word also certifies the consistency of progress in learning language skills.

**LISTENING SKILL**

The researcher uses this term to mean language skills involved in the communication perspectives. It is known that communication skill is an ‘umbrella term’ and creating a text and test passage in CD is a time consuming process. So the researcher wants to create an audio lesson package to teach and test Listening skills of the students.
HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL STUDENTS

This research is conducted on the listening skills of students studying Plus two (+2) i.e. Higher Secondary Level.

A STUDY

Investigator refers the term ‘A- Study’ means this research.

1.12. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The title of the research study is “Multimedia based teaching to hone Listening Skills of Higher Secondary School Level Students – A Study” and its objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the conditions of listening skills in a conventional class.

2. To identify the Listening barriers in a conventional class.

3. To conduct Pilot study to design a tool to test Listening skills

4. To develop a computer based audio lesson using multimedia kit.

5. To make an evaluation after computer based comprehension test.

6. To find out the effectiveness of computer in mastering listening skills in English.

7. To make suggestions as related to the major findings in the research
1.13. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

The title of the research is “Multimedia based teaching to hone Listening Skills of Higher Secondary School Level Students – A Study”. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses are made. The hypotheses are as follows:

1. There is no significant difference between the learning of listening skills with other language skills.

2. There is no significant effectiveness between conventional instruction method and Computer based Comprehension to teach listening skills.

3. There is no significant difference between the achievements of the groups in terms of the variations in the exposure to the computer.

4. There is no significant difference between the achievement of the groups in using computer assisted instruction in learning listening skills in English in terms of variables like rural and urban.

5. There is no significant difference between the achievement of the groups in using computer assisted instruction in learning listening skills in English in terms of variables like Tamil medium and English medium.
6. There is no significant difference between the achievement of the groups in using computer assisted instruction in learning listening skills in English in terms of variables like boys and girls.

1.14. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The constraints of the availability of the computerized language laboratory, time slice and cooperation of the institutions to conduct the study, forced the researcher to limit the study to a manageable sample. Due to the above said factors the researcher decided to conduct the research only in Higher secondary schools in Chennai district.

1. The experimental study is conducted on 100 Students of Higher secondary level schools in Chennai District.

2. The above said 100 students are put into the variables which are mentioned below.

a. **Gender** (50% boys & 50% girls)

b. **Medium of instruction** (50% students of Tamil Medium & 50% students of English Medium)

c. **Locality** (50% of rural area & 50% of urban area).
1.15. METHOD AND PROCEDURE OF THE RESEARCH

The present research is planned in the following stages,

1. A detailed conventional instruction was given on nuances of Listening skills.
2. A Pilot test is conducted to test the level of listening of the sample.
3. Classroom listening level identified.
4. Listening skills testing tool designed using multimedia kit.
5. Computer enabled audio lessons were planned.
6. Lesson package was created and designed to teach and test listening skills.
7. Students were taught the operation of the computer and the particular lesson package.
8. The lesson was saved in the server and students were learned and took the test in computer (Both learning and testing done by Computer)
10. Results of the five tests, against variables.
11. Analysis and interpretation of the data
1.16. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THIS STUDY

The investigator wanted to analyse the various strategies of teaching English language skills in India, particularly in Tamilnadu. As a teacher of English language, she wanted to implement Multimedia assisted based instruction to develop the most fundamental skill i.e. listening, because listening skills evaluation cannot be executed just like other skills. Since many researches proved the worthiness of computer as an effective tool, the investigator wants to create an optimal lesson to teach and test listening skills in English. So this study involves using computer to demonstrate audio lesson and test listening skills in English language which is the need of the hour.

1.17. ORGANISATION OF CHAPTERS

The present study, “Multimedia based teaching to hone Listening Skills of Higher Secondary School Level Students – A Study” is divided into five chapters.

The first chapter deals with the various features of importance of communication, communication process, listening skills, conditions of current English classroom, remedial measures, syllabus and listening skills, technology in improving listening skills in English, need for the
study, scope for the study, statement of problem, operational definition of terms, objectives of the study, Hypothesis of the study, limitations of the study, method and procedure of the research, distinctive feature of the study and organization of chapters.

The second chapter is divided into three major divisions, Section - A, Section – B and Section – C. Section – A gives additional vivid details on listening skills, its importance, its types, deterrents to the listening process, developing active listening skills. It deals with definition and functions explained with suitable examples. Section – B gives elucidation of details of the term computer, its usefulness as a teaching – aid, its introduction to classroom, summary on Teaching – aid and its varieties and functions and the computer. Section – C contains a review of related literature, and it gives a detailed account of similar researches conducted in the same field at International and National Levels.

The third chapter deals with the choice of method, plan and procedure, various methods involved in the collection of data, development of tool, opinion of the Jury, selection of samples for the construction of tool, details of the sample, administering the test,
creating CD containing lessons for listening skills. This include lesson followed by a test to answer some questions.

The fourth chapter deals with the interpretation of the data obtained from the listening skill tests. The results are supported by tables, charts, pie diagrams and other relevant figural forms. Necessary graphical representations are also added.

The fifth chapter deals with the summary of findings, result outcome, suggestions, recommendations, scope for further research and investigation in the same area followed by conclusion. This fifth chapter is followed by Works Cited which is a complete list of resources referred in the preparation of this thesis. Appendices is the last component of this thesis that comprises relevant documents involved in this research.