CHAPTER II

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THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

“There’s nothing as practical as a good theory.”

Theoretical overview provides a theoretical background to the study. Borg and Gall (1974) says, “The most powerful a theory is, the more events can be explained by it.” Thus the theoretical overview provides a strong basis for the study conducted by the investigator. In this study the material preparation and its testing is based on the theories explained in this chapter. The theories also provide a rational explanation of the results. They give clarity and vividness to the study.

In the first chapter the investigator briefly discussed the importance of English language, the present status of English in the domain of education in India, the current scenario of English language teaching in the schools and the importance of listening comprehension. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this study aims at preparing and testing instructional material to develop listening comprehension. Specific information related to listening comprehension (LC) sub-skills and instructional material (IM) is expected to help in developing an appropriate frame for preparing IM for developing LC.

With the objective of constructing such a suitable research framework, this chapter examines first the LC, its principles, taxonomies of sub-skills of LC, etc. The various factors and principles of preparation of IM are also discussed.

2.1 GENERAL NATURE OF THE FOUR BASIC LANGUAGE SKILLS

The gift of articulate expression is a human prerogative and it is the most momentous of man’s achievements in his march towards progress and civilization. Language unlocks the human mind and extends its accessibility to a plethora of
information and entertainment. Language is man’s identity. It gives a definite configuration to his thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Byrne (1986) points out that “oral communication is a two-way process between speaker and listener and involves the productive skill of speaking and the receptive skill of understanding (or listening with understanding). Communication involves the productive skills of speaking and writing and the receptive skills of listening and reading which are interrelated. The following diagram illustrates how the four skills are related.

![Diagram of language skills]

(Byrne, 1986)

Full mastery of a language requires both the receptive and productive skills. Since all the four skills are important in communication, neglecting one skill and trying to develop the other would prove to be futile. Practice of one skill would not necessarily improve the other skills. Therefore conscious efforts need to be taken for the development of all the skills of language learning.

### 2.2 LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Listening is belittled as being a passive skill among the other three basic skills of language. But skill as defined by Nasr (1972) is the “ability to perform a particular task.” Ability as defined by Howe (1995) is “having sufficient power… a capacity.” This requires some activity from the performer, which means that no skill can be passive since
all skills require some kind of activity or effort. Listening, therefore, is an active process of constructing a message from a stream of sound with what one knows of the phonological, semantic and syntactic potentialities of the language.

Listening is a covert activity and has heavy processing demands (Rubin, 1995). Listeners need to attempt to make sense of information at the same time as they are internalizing that information. There is little time for listeners to reflect upon the information and have few opportunities to ask for repetition. Unlike reading, listening needs to deal with spoken language that is often unplanned and typically exhibits short idea units (Vandergrift, 2006). Listening takes place in real time and is ephemeral, thus a listener does not have the option of reviewing the information presented and has little control over the rate of speech at which the speech is spoken.

Purdy (1991) defined listening as “the active and dynamic process of attending, perceiving, interpreting, remembering, and responding to the expressed (verbal and non-verbal) needs, concerns, and information offered by other human beings.” Imhof (1998) described listening as “the active process of selecting and integrating relevant information from acoustic input and this process is controlled by personal intentions which are critical to listening.” These varying definitions of listening have all, to some extent, helped shape the focus of this study.

When listening is referred to during discourse, it tends to be connected automatically to comprehension. This is due to the fact that “comprehension is often considered to be the first-order goal of listening, the highest priority of the listener, and sometimes the sole purpose of listening” (Rost, 2002). Especially for L2 learners who are acquiring a new language, the term ‘listening comprehension’ typically refers to all aspects of listening since comprehension through listening is considered to be a
foundation for enabling learners to process the new language. Just as readers can be assisted in reading by the purpose they have for reading, listeners function differently in listening according to the purpose they have for listening.

An earlier categorization of listening function was proposed by Mills (1974). He categorized listening as responsive listening (agreeing with the speaker), implicative listening (identifying what is not being said), critical listening (evaluating the message), and nondirective listening (providing a sounding board for the speaker). Another categorization of listening was suggested by Devine (1982). He mentioned that similar to reading instruction, instruction in listening could be built around critical listening, accurate listening that needs a skill to pay attention, and purposeful listening that needs a skill to follow spoken discourses.

A well-known categorization of listening has been introduced by Wolvin and Coakley (1993). Wolvin and Coakley identified five types of listening whose functions are correlated with general purposes of listeners: (1) discriminative listening, (2) listening for comprehension, (3) therapeutic (empathic) listening, (4) critical listening, and (5) appreciative listening. Ur (1984) is another researcher who classified listening by its function. She has distinguished listening as listening for perception and listening for comprehension. Such categorizations of listening on the basis of its purpose can assist listeners in developing listening strategies. It can also help listeners understand their own listening behaviors.

It is recognized by Wipf (1984) that listeners must discriminate between sounds, understand vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpret stress and intonation, understand intention and retain and interpret this within the immediate as well as the larger socio-cultural context of the utterance. Rost (2002) described listening
comprehension as a process of trying to understand what spoken language refers to in one’s experience or in the real world. In order to understand the spoken language, various types of knowledge must be applied to decode and interpret the incoming information. Buck (2001) concludes that the knowledge involved in the listening process is of two types: linguistic knowledge (i.e., lexis, syntax, semantics, and discourse structures) and non-linguistic knowledge (i.e., general knowledge of the world, knowledge of the listening context, and personal experience). Listening comprehension is therefore a complex operation integrating the distinct components of perception and linguistic knowledge. It is an active process in which individuals focus on select aspects of aural input, construct meaning and relate what they hear to existing knowledge.

All the views given above show that listening comprehension is a hard task, which demands a great deal of mental analysis on the part of the listener. In order to construct the message the speaker intends, the listener must actively contribute skills and knowledge from both linguistic and nonlinguistic resources. These include having an appropriate purpose for listening, social and cultural knowledge and background knowledge (Richards, 1985; Anderson and Lynch, 1988; Morley 1991).

To develop this complex but essential skill, pupils need much support from their teachers. They must be exposed to a variety of input sources in the form of listening opportunities embedded in social and academic situations. Besides, they should be provided with varying listening activities that enable them to employ different strategies and enhance their macro and micro listening skills (Underwood, 1989; Rost, 1990).
2.2.1 **TEACHING LISTENING**

As communicative competence has been underscored in language teaching and learning, listening has received increasing attention in language classrooms these days. As Morley (1999) describes “at one time, listening was assumed to be a passive activity, merits little classroom attention. Now listening is recognized as an active process, critical to L2 acquisition and deserving of systematic development as a skill in its own right.”

‘To teach’ means ‘to facilitate the learning’. Then, the role of the teacher is to provide the necessary support and guidance for the learners. The teacher needs to be active in creating pupil engagement through the manner in which he / she sets up tasks. The teacher should build up the pupils’ confidence by helping them listen better rather than by testing their listening abilities. This is to say that the teacher is expected to train pupils to plan for the successful completion of the listening task, to monitor their comprehension during a listening task, and to evaluate the approach and outcomes of a listening task.

Pupils will become more proficient in listening to English if: (a) they apply the strategies they use naturally in mother tongue listening rather than trying to follow the spoken language word by word, (b) they increase their knowledge of the cultural context in which the language is spoken, and (c) they accept that partial interpretation of what they hear is often sufficient for understanding (Underwood, 1989). Therefore, teachers need to provide planned and systematic opportunities for their pupils to learn how to develop these essential skills of listening comprehension.
To do so, the teacher has to make adequate preparation in the selection/designing of the listening materials and activities. He / she should provide learners with all the necessary help in a supportive manner. Teachers who plan and conduct listening sessions in a purposeful way will find that their pupils grow in confidence and soon begin to experience the pleasure that listening can bring.

Rost (2001) summarises the elements of effective teaching of listening as follows:

i. Careful selection of input sources (appropriately authentic, interesting, varied and challenging).

ii. Creative design of tasks (well-constructed, with opportunities for the learners to activate their own knowledge and experience and to monitor what they are doing).

iii. Assistance to help learners enact effective listening strategies.

iv. Integration of listening with other learning purposes (with appropriate links to speaking, reading and writing).

2.2.2 Principles of Teaching Listening Comprehension

As has been noted by Rost (2002), listening is essential to language development. Yet, it has been very challenging for L2 learners to learn to listen. To help learners to become skillful listeners, the following principles have been identified in many studies (Ur, 1984; Dunkel, 1988; Underwood, 1989; Funk & Funk, 1989; Vandergrift, 2006):

i. Listening should receive primary attention in the early stage of English as a second language instruction.

ii. Expose the learners to different listening experiences and maximize the use of material that is relevant to the learner’s real life.
iii. Maximize the use of authentic language.
iv. Vary the materials in terms of speaker’s gender, age, etc.
v. Provide a purpose for listening. Always ask pupils to listen with a purpose and allow them to show their comprehension in a task.
vi. Set the stage for listening. Take steps to develop prior knowledge or background knowledge before the listening activity.
vii. The rate of delivery of the speech should be in accordance with the language ability of the learner.
viii. Provide for follow-up experience to listening activities. Check comprehension often and provide feedback.
ix. Use methodology that promotes positive learning habits. Language material intended to be used for training listening comprehension should never be presented visually first.
x. Listening comprehension lessons should ‘teach’, not ‘test’.

2.2.3 Obstacles to Effective Listening Comprehension

Underwood (1989) lists the following obstacles to effective listening comprehension:

i. Lack of control over the speed of delivery of speech.

ii. Not being able to get things repeated.

iii. Listener’s limited vocabulary.

iv. Failure to recognize the ‘signals’.

v. Problem of interpretation due to lack of contextual knowledge.

vi. Inability to concentrate.

vii. Established learning habits, such as a wish to understand every word.
2.2.4 THEORIES AND STRATEGIES OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Understanding how one comprehends oral texts is essential in a study like this. During a real listening situation, a listener listens to spoken language in the form of acoustic signals. Acoustic signals are internally processed by the listener to make them meaningful utterances. This internal procedure consists of a series of cognitive activities and conversational conventions, which cannot be directly observed. Thus interpreting those internal operations becomes difficult. However, it is essential to build up certain ideas about the process on the basis of our understanding pertinent to communicative competence.

Background knowledge is very essential in the classroom to understand not only listening comprehension processes but also for reading and understanding the text. In this section, we shall discuss prior knowledge in the form of schema theory and how this knowledge is used by a listener during comprehension processes.

2.2.4.1 Schema Theory and Listening Comprehension

Considerable attention has been devoted in recent theories of second language acquisition, to learners’ background knowledge. One of the important theories of learning is called schema theory, which has been used in many studies as it has a unique impact. This is because of its influence on perception and learners’ memory. The significance of schematic knowledge is now widely acknowledged in foreign language teaching and many researches in the schema-oriented area of English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching have been carried out.

The term “schema”, that is, mental configuration, can be traced back to the work of Gestalt psychologists. In 1932 schema theory was introduced by Frederic Bartlett
during his works on constructive memory, Bartlett (1954) carried out a series of experiments, which explored the influence of prior knowledge in comprehension process. That is, comprehension and memory are basically influenced by the learner’s existing prior knowledge and are not accumulated individually in one’s memory. They are built up with parallel prior experiences in the form of generic structures, which he called as schemata. The schemata (generic knowledge structure in memory) knowledge structure consists of knowledge about the world (thus it is called world knowledge), topics, objects, people and situation. This knowledge is built up in a person’s mental store when he / she goes through frequent exposure to parallel experiences.

Furthermore, Bartlett (cited in Landry, 2002) considered schemata or schemas to be structures of knowledge stored in the long-term memory. Moreover, Rumelhart (cited in Landry, 2002) has illustrated schemata as “building blocks of cognition” that are used in the process of understanding sensory data, in repossessing information from memory, in organizing aims and sub-goals, in allocating resources, and in leading the flow of the processing system. What is more, Rumelhart claimed that if our schemata are unfinished and do not offer an understanding of the incoming information from the text we will have troubles processing and understanding the text.

There are various efficacious ways of defining schema. Schema theory is a theory of how knowledge is obtained and processed. It concerns the pre-existing or prior knowledge that is stored in our mind (Nassaji documented in Al-Issa, 2006). Prior knowledge in the listener’s mind entails the contribution of schematic knowledge when performing listening tasks. Yule (2006) has maintained that “a schema is a general term for a conventional knowledge structure that exists in memory.” Generally, schematic knowledge refers to the socio-cultural background knowledge. Edwards and McDonald
(1993) maintain, “Schema theory suggests that knowledge level is a much more important predicator of listening than are other variables.” Taylor and Crocker (1981) have noted, “A schema is a cognitive structure that consists in part of the representation of some defined stimulus domain. The schema contains general knowledge about that domain, including a specification of the relationships among its attributes, as well as specific examples or instances of the stimulus domain.”

Schema is a technical word used by cognitive proponents to describe how a person processes, arranges and stores information in his brain. In general, there are three main types of schemas - formal schema, content schema and cultural schema. Formal schema is defined as knowledge of language and linguistic conventions, containing knowledge of how texts are structured and what are the key characteristics of a particular genre of writing. Content schema refer to the background knowledge of the content area of a text, or the subject a text talks about such as knowledge about people, the world, culture, and the universe. In other words, they refer to the familiarity of the subject matter of the text. The third type of schema is cultural schema. It is also called abstract schema or story schema. It is defined as the pre-existing knowledge about cultural elements of the language being acquired. This theory is grounded on the belief that every act of understanding includes one’s knowledge of the world (Al-Issa, 2006). From the above definitions, we might conclude that schema is the pre-existing knowledge gained through experiences stored in one’s mind. It is an abstract structure of knowledge. Plainly, schema theory claims that all knowledge is organized into units, within these units of knowledge, or schemata, is stored information.

Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) claim that there are three stages of processes which takes place during comprehension of spoken and written text. First a message is parsed in
the Short-Term Memory (STM) to recognize the basic image. Then the basic image or representation is transformed as propositions and finally a cognitive representation of the situation is stored in the Long Term Memory (LTM) in the form of schemata or scripts for future use.

Now we shall consider the relationship between LC and schemata, based on the three levels of comprehension. When a listener listens to a spoken text, linguistic understanding triggers appropriate schemata which facilitate the comprehension process; this permits listeners to exploit their knowledge formation, which comprises linguistic knowledge and world knowledge to put up larger elements of meaning. Generally, successful comprehension has an intimate relationship with appropriate interaction of the text (for the listening oral text). During interaction the listener uses linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge to construct meaning. In these processes, the oral text, in the form of stimuli, activates the schemata of the listener (Brindley & Nunan, 1992). Many researchers (Chiang and Dunkel, 1992; Jensen and Hansen 1995) confirm the effective role of schema in the LC processes. During LC processes, productive inferences are based on shared background knowledge. If a listener has no relevant background knowledge, he/she may encounter a dilemma in understanding the text fully due to less or no productive inferences. For example, if there is difference or deficiency in schemas or background knowledge of people it will be easy to misunderstand each other. When a person says “I like riding”, referring to horse, another may think he is saying he likes riding a bicycle! (Landry, 2002).

According to schema theory, the process of comprehension is guided by the idea that input is overlaid by the pre-existing knowledge in an attempt to find a match. The listeners must relate input materials to their background knowledge, so that the new input
is mapped against some prior schema. All aspects of the previously existing schema must be compatible with the new input.

Schema theory has a big impact on second language acquisition. It provides a way to think about the representation of some structures of complicated knowledge. It has concentrated attention on the role old knowledge plays in acquiring new knowledge, and has highlighted the specific techniques in the listening process in L2.

Application of schema theory in teaching listening has revealed that comprehension relies significantly on the listeners’ successful activation of their prior knowledge (schemata). Krashen (1981) also makes this point by saying “understanding is prerequisite to acquisition. Thus, the more context or background we can provide the more acquisition will take place.” Psycholinguists conducting research on listening also encourage teachers to help pupils construct more schemata in their memory to achieve better comprehension in listening (Ya-jun, 2007). It can be concluded that it is urgent for ESL/EFL teachers to supply suitable schema building techniques to effectively reach the goal of building and activating learners’ schema.

In English listening class, the content schema must be activated in order for the learners to access their prior knowledge. It is the responsibility of the teachers to assess the learner’s level of background knowledge on a particular topic before the learners listen and any deficiency in schema should be taken care by remedial lesson for developing better comprehension.

In conclusion, schema theory is described as the theory of the individual’s prior knowledge which is classified into different types. There is no doubt that schema has positively affected the educational field. Particularly, schema theory has great impact on teaching strategies of listening comprehension and listening process. Therefore the
knowledge of schema theory is of a specific importance to teachers who are accountable for recommending materials for listening instruction. It is recommended that teachers concerned should be aware of this theory before deciding on which listening materials and strategy are to be used in L2 classrooms.

**2.2.4.2 Listening Strategies**

Listening strategies are techniques or activities that contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input. Listening strategies can be classified, based on how the listener processes the input, into two: top-down and bottom-up strategies.

Top-down strategy refers to utilizing schemata (background knowledge and global understanding) to derive meaning from and interpret the message. This is a listener-based strategy in which the listener taps into background knowledge of the topic, the situation or context, the type of input, and the language. This background knowledge activates a set of expectations that help the listener to interpret what is heard and to anticipate what will come next. Top-down strategy includes: listening for the main idea, predicting, drawing inferences, summarising.

Bottom-up strategy refers to deriving the meaning of the message based on the incoming language data, from sounds to words, to grammatical relationships, to meaningful units. To do this the learners need to know the code, how the sounds work and how they string together and how the codes change in different ways when they are string together. In bottom-up strategy, the learners rely on their linguistic knowledge to recognise linguistic elements (vowels, consonants, words, sentences) for the construction of meaning. This is an input-based strategy in which the listener relies on the language in the message, i.e., the combination of sounds, words, and grammar that creates meaning.
Bottom-up strategy includes: listening for specific details, recognising cognates and recognising word order patterns.

Richards (1990) suggests that top-down strategy develops the listener’s ability to do the following:

i. Use key words to construct the schema of a discourse.

ii. Construct plans and schema from elements of a discourse.

iii. Infer the topic of a discourse.

iv. Infer the outcome of an event.

v. Infer unstated details of a situation.

vi. Infer the sequence of a series of events.

vii. Infer comparisons.

viii. Distinguish between literal and figurative meanings.

ix. Distinguish between facts and opinions.

Richards (1990) also suggests that bottom-up strategy develops the listener’s ability to do the following:

i. Retain input while it is being processed.

ii. Recognise word divisions.

iii. Recognise key words in utterances.

iv. Recognise key transitions in a discourse.

v. Use knowledge of word order patterns to identify constituents in utterance.

vi. Recognise grammatical relations between key elements in sentences.

vii. Recognise the function of intonation in sentences.

It should at this point be noted that LC is neither top-down nor bottom-up processing alone, but an interactive, interpretive process where listeners use both prior
knowledge and linguistic knowledge in understanding messages. The degree to which listeners use one strategy or the other will depend on different aspects like their knowledge of the language, familiarity with the topic, or the purpose for listening.

2.2.5 **TAXONOMIES OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION SUB-SKILLS**

To understand LC fully another important aspect that has to be considered seriously is the taxonomies of LC sub-skills introduced and interpreted by different scholars (Freedle and Caroll, 1972; Valette, 1977; Munby, 1978; Richards, 1983; Lund, 1990; Buck, et. al., 1997). While the taxonomies of listening skills help us understand the mysterious listening comprehension process, it also sheds light in listening pedagogy (Buck, 2001). In the second language (L2) LC classroom, these sub-skills play a primary role. Currently it is understood that there are three chief purposes of taxonomies of sub-skills: for setting the objective, teaching LC and designing the test. These three purposes are correlated with the proficiency level of the learners. The primary benefit of application of this system in teaching LC is that the teacher can easily check the progress (since sub-skills are incremental) of the learners and if there is any break down in the progress it can be located by the teacher and proper remedial treatment can be implemented.

Many scholars and linguists have classified the general and specific sub-skills of LC. A brief discussion of these different categories will help capture the nature of the complexities of LC.

Freedle and Caroll (1972) have drawn up an impressive list of LC skills. They group those skills into three major headings: (i) plain sense comprehension, (ii) interpretation, (iii) evaluation and application. Valette (1977) categorizes taxonomy of
LC skills into five levels: (i) mechanical skills, (ii) knowledge of the language, (iii) transfer, (iv) communication and (v) criticism. Aitken (1978) provides details of varieties of skills, which are essential to correlate fundamental linguistic processing to broader communicative circumstances. Willis (1981) proposes a considerable number of micro-skills of listening. Richards (1983) enlists thirty three conversational micro skills and eighteen academic micro skills. Boyle (1984) also recommends a number of LC skills. Apart from this, scholars like Powers (1986) and Rost (1990) suggest a large number of LC skills and label them as enabling skills and enacting skills. Rost’s categorization of the skills into perception, interpretation and response indicates a kind of correlation with the Anderson’s (1985) information processing models: perception, parsing and utilization.

2.2.5.1 Taxonomy of Sub-skills of Listening Comprehension recommended by Buck et. al. (1997)

The ability to process
- faster input.
- low frequency vocabulary.
- text with higher vocabulary.
- more complex structure.
- longer segments.
- text with a higher information density.

The ability to scan short segments to determine listening purpose.
- to synthesise scattered information.
- to use redundant information.
- to use word matching strategies.
- to resist superficial word associations.
- to recall names.
- to make text based inferences.
- to use background knowledge to make inferences.

2.2.5.2 Taxonomy of Sub-skills of LC proposed by Munby (1978)

i. Discriminating sounds in isolate word forms.

ii. Discriminating sounds in connected speech.

iii. Discriminating stress patterns within words.

iv. Recognising variation in stress in connected speech.

v. Recognising the use of stress in connected speech.

vi. Understanding intonation patterns and interpreting attitudinal meaning through variation of tone.

vii. Interpreting attitudinal meaning through variation in pitch, range and pause.

Furthermore, Munby (1978) specifies the following set of skills of LC:

i. Ability to follow the general trend of what is said.

ii. Ability to understand specific details.

iii. Ability to check a specific piece of prior knowledge against what is said.

iv. Ability to understand the speaker’s intentions.

v. Ability to understand the speaker’s attitude.

2.2.5.3 Lund’s Taxonomy (1990)

Lund’s listening framework not only gives us a clear picture of what the listener does, but also provides the teacher with a guidance of effective presentation of the instructions. In Lund’s Taxonomy, the two key elements are listener function and listener response. Listener function is defined as the aspect of the message the listener attempts to
process. The concept of the message here includes external messages such as settings, roles, participants and physical cues, as well as internal messages such as linguistic code and semantics. Listener response is defined as what the listener does to demonstrate successful listening. The nature of the listener response is related to or suggested by the listener function. The following are the list of two categories:

**Listener Function**

1. **Identification**

   The listener focuses on the aspect of the code itself, rather than on the content of the message. It covers the terms such as recognition and discrimination.

   - Discriminating the minimal phonemic pairs or intonation patterns.

   - Recognizing familiar words, place or person’s names.

2. **Orientation**

   It means to provide the visual contexts or other external messages to help the listener to process the message.

   - Determining the context that the conversation is taking place (e.g. airport or shopping mall).

   - Determining the type of speech (e.g. debating, complaining or gossiping).

3. **Main idea Comprehension**

   It means understanding the main idea of the speech.

   - Understanding a lecture well enough to summarize the main point.

   - Understanding directions well enough to arrive at the correct location.

4. **Detail Comprehension**

   It means focusing on the specific information.

   - Following a series of precise instructions.

   - Identifying the detailed points of a main theme.
v. **Full Comprehension**

This is a combination of the previous functions. In other words, the listener can completely understand the speech.

vi. **Replication**

The objective of the listener here is to reproduce the message, such as dictation and oral repetition. The listener attention is focused on reproduction of the message instead of the depth of comprehension, as write down what the speaker exactly says.

**Listener Response**

- **Doing** - The listener physically responds to a command.
- **Choosing** - The listener selects from alternatives such as pictures, objects or graphics.
- **Transferring** - The listener receives the information in one form and transfers it into another. For instance, the listener draws a picture from what is heard.
- **Answering** - The listener answers the questions about the text.
- **Extending** - The listener provides the text that goes beyond what is given. For example, the listener provides the ending to the story heard.
- **Duplicating** - This corresponds to the “replication” function. The listener reproduces or repeats the text in the same or other modalities.
- **Modeling** - The listener orders a meal after listening to a model order.
- **Conversing** - The listener engages in face-to-face conversation.

These classifications of sub-skills are of great help to teachers, material designers and test developers of LC. The practical value of these sub-skills in the field of LC teaching and testing is remarkable. The investigator adopted these sub-skills to prepare
the instructional material, so that it is easy in the classroom, to operate three functions: progress can be checked, problem region can be located for remedial treatment, and assessment can be made while maintaining construct validity.

It is recommended that teachers and course designers concentrate on the sub-skills involved in LC and develop them gradually through exercises based on a thorough analysis of the skills involved, to ensure the exact sub-skills are being exercised. In addition, IM should be made in a way as to make use of almost all the sub-skills of LC, if we are to guarantee development of LC.

2.2.6 PHASES OF ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP LISTENING COMPREHENSION

The teaching of LC in classrooms has three phases of activities: pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities.

2.2.6.1 Pre-listening Phase

This stage is considered a kind of preparatory step, which is supposed to be essential and supportive to the main task. The pre-listening activities are expected to help fine-tune listeners before attempting the actual pedagogical listening task in the classroom. The principal function of these activities is to establish a framework for listening, so that, learners do not approach the listening practice with no points of reference. This perspective is clearly in line with the use of ‘knowledge schema’ and the establishing of a context. Schema theory provides strong evidence for the effectiveness of pre-listening activities which includes the outline for listening and the purpose or context of listening.
Chastain (1988) has argued that pre-listening activities can be considered as the most crucial aspect in the listening process because other activities depend on the extent to which the teacher has been successful in activating the pupils’ background knowledge and directing them to reach the goals of activity.

Underwood (1989) has listed pre-task activities as: discussion about the topic, looking at pictures, list of items, guiding questions, reading a text, predicting, making list of possibilities. So, the aim for providing pre-listening activities is to activate pre-existing knowledge embedded in learner’s mind.

**Purpose of Pre-listening activities – Plan for the listening task**

The following are the purposes of pre-listening activities:

i. To set a purpose or decide in advance what to listen for.

ii. To decide if more linguistic or background knowledge is needed.

iii. To decide whether to use top-down or bottom-up strategy.

iv. To make pupils aware of the type of text they will be listening to, the role they will play, and the purpose for which they will be listening.

v. To provide opportunities for group or collaborative work or class discussion activities.

**Pre-listening activities**

i. Reviewing vocabulary or grammatical structures.

ii. Predicting the content of the listening text.

iii. Constructing semantic webs.

iv. Looking at pictures, maps, diagrams or graphs.

v. Going over the directions or instructions for the activity.

vi. Doing guided practice.
2.2.6.2 While-listening Phase

This phase relates directly to engagement with the text, and the activities are performed during or immediately after listening. The key aim of this phase is listening to the text or input, comprehending it, and performing tasks. Listeners who participate actively in the listening experience are more likely to construct clear and accurate meaning as they interpret the speaker’s verbal message and non-verbal cues. During the listening experience learners verify and revise their predictions. They make interpretations and judgments based on what they hear.

**Purpose of While-listening Activities – Monitor comprehension**

The following are the purposes of while-listening activities:

i. To focus learners’ comprehension of the speaker’s language and ideas.

ii. To focus learners’ attention on such things as the speaker’s organisation pattern of language.

iii. To encourage learner’s critical reactions and personal responses to the speaker’s ideas and use of language.

iv. To verify predictions and check for inaccurate guesses.

v. To decide what is and what is not important to understand.

vi. To encourage learners to check and monitor comprehension as they listen.

**While-listening Activities**

i. Filling in graphs and charts.

ii. Listening with visuals.

iii. Following a route on a Map.

iv. Listening for gist.

v. Searching for specific clues to meaning.

vi. Completing cloze-test exercises.
2.2.6.3 Post-listening Phase

This phase is related to practice and reinforcement and these activities are most effective when done immediately after the listening experience. This phase offers learners an opportunity to connect what they heard to their own ideas and experience, and encourage interpretive and critical listening and reflective thinking. It also provides opportunities for teachers to assess the learner’s comprehension, and clarify their understanding and to extend comprehension beyond the literal level to the interpretive and critical levels. Post-listening activities let the learners, progress from dependency to independency stage. The two main functions of post-listening activity are consolidation and extension.

**Purpose of Post-listening Activities – Evaluate comprehension**

i. To evaluate comprehension in a particular task or area.

ii. To evaluate overall progress in listening and in particular types of listening tasks.

iii. To decide if the strategies used were appropriate and modify if necessary.

**Post-listening Activities**

i. Answering Questions.

ii. Debates.

iii. Summary Writing.

iv. Role Play.

v. Assignments.
Generally, the aim of teaching listening skills is to provide comprehensible, focused input and purposeful listening tasks that develop competence in particular listening abilities. Good listening instruction creates conditions for meaningful learner involvement, outcomes, and evaluation. Likewise, good tasks designed for listening development will account in advance for variables that are likely to affect pupil learning. Therefore the role of the teacher in providing appropriate pre-, while-, and post-listening activities is of paramount importance.

**2.3 INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL (IM)**

Instructional materials are the resources, the means with which we attempt to achieve our goals, viz., the teaching (for teachers) and the learning (for learners). Generally these resources for teaching and learning, i.e., IMs, are prescribed course books, workbook or practice book, teacher’s book, etc. Besides these, we can also include teaching aids such as charts, maps, audio-cassettes, audio and video CDs and even computer software as they also act as means of instruction. Therefore, IMs for LC means the resources with which we attempt to teach and learn LC.

**2.3.1 IMPORTANCE OF IMs IN A LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

Since IMs incorporate within them the objectives and content for a specific class or a specific group of learners, and provide learning experiences through exercises and activities which are arranged and presented in a principled order of sequence, it is not at all surprising that they are very important. Teachers need the support of the materials to carry on day-to-day teaching of language. They also need the direction that IMs provide. That is, IMs help teachers to be clear about what to teach, how much of it to teach, through what activities, in what order or sequence to teach it, and how to organise their
classroom time through the number of lessons that the IMs provide. IMs are inevitable for both the teachers and the learners in a language classroom and their importance are listed below:

**Importance of IMs for Teachers**

i. IMs act as support to teachers, by providing the language input which they can use in the classroom, to expose their learners to the language.

ii. IMs mediate between the aims and objectives prescribed to be achieved and the actual achievement of them which happens in the classroom.

iii. IMs supply to the teacher the exercises and activities to give to their pupils for them to engage in, as practice material which will lead them to learn the language.

iv. IMs provide information for the teacher as to what are the methods to be used for a particular section and what skill to focus on.

**Importance of IMs for Learners**

i. IMs act as concrete exposure to the language to be learnt.

ii. They also instruct them to do specific things in specific ways so that they practice and use the language and learn it in the process.

Candlin and Edelhoff (1982) emphasise the ‘twin aims’ that IMs are supposed to fulfill. The first aim is to provide the language input, data or what we call ‘Language Exposure,’ which is very valuable in learning the specific language. The second aim is that it should promote language learning by offering appropriate and adequate activities, tasks and exercises which challenge the competence of the learner.
2.3.2 **DESIGNING IMs**

IMs are designed with a lot of care, systematically and in a principled way, so that when teachers teach, and learners learn with them, there is the maximum possibility that learning would take place. The systematic steps that designers of IMs follow in the production of language materials are:

i. Selection of the language input that would best realise the objectives of language learning.

ii. Choice or writing of texts as language input and the designing of activities, exercises, drills, etc., that would convert the language input into effective learning experiences for learners.

iii. Organisation of all these into learning units or lessons suitable for a classroom.

iv. Grading and arranging all these in the most appropriate manner, from simple to complex, with a view of prompting learning in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

Morley (1991) has explained that in developing listening materials and activities, the following three important features of listening need to be taken into account:

i. Listening is an act of information processing which involves the listeners in various communicative modes.

ii. Broadly speaking, real-world spoken communication serves two linguistic functions; an interactional and transactional function.

iii. The cognitive processing of spoken language involves simultaneously activation of both top-down and bottom-up processes to construct the intended meaning.
2.3.3 **EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF IMs**

Considering the immense contribution that IMs make towards the teaching and learning of language, we can say IM is an important part of teaching. IMs are responsible for providing all the inputs and activities that are needed for teaching and learning that has to take place in a classroom.

It should also be noted that learning of language depends not just on what inputs are made available to the learner in the form of materials, but, equally, on what the learner brings to bear on those inputs and how teachers seek modifications to the materials to include learner’s needs.

IMs are an extremely important part of teaching, only we have to get them in the right perspective and recognize their status in equal terms with the other two important aspects of teaching, namely, the teacher and the learner. Language learning would then be an interactive and dynamic process, between the IMs, the teacher and the learners within the context of each classroom.

The appeal of IMs can be traced, in part, to their inherent pedagogical strength which ensures objective based active learning and its provision for language exposure. The audio materials help in providing exposure to the language and authentic language can be brought into the classrooms. It helps to evoke language production from learners. IMs are found to be active partners in the process of teaching a language.
2.4 CONCLUSION

The theoretical overview helped the investigator to understand the promise of IMs in developing LC. The general nature of four basic skills of language, aspects of LC, processes and strategies and taxonomy of LC were discussed. The significance and design of IMs were also discussed. This theoretical review helped the investigator to build up the study and also learn about how IMs can be prepared and incorporated for developing LC. Thus it was decided to prepare IM for developing LC and test its effectiveness in the present study.