Listening Comprehension as a Complex Skill and the Sub-Skills Involved in the Process of Speech Perception

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Abstract

The skill of listening comprehension (LC) has been studied and discussed by many scholars, who have made it quite clear that it is one of the most influential and important skills that we depend on in learning and communication. However, many language teachers and course designers belittle it as a passive skill among the other three universally understood skills; and if any concentration is given to it, it is far from being sufficient for real improvement.

Teachers rarely depend on any objective observation of what the process of speech perception really involves. Not only this, but what is mentioned in most of the discussions related to this issue underestimates the importance of the skills (or sub-skills) involved in LC (i.e. what the listener is expected to do as he listens).

This paper is intended to draw attention to the various skills (or sub-skills) of LC. They are those decisions made at the higher levels of LC, they relate to the listeneris ability to make certain judgments about the whole input or to reply to it.

The following taxonomy is based on a survey made of the LC sub-skills in the literature:

1.The Literal Level: This involves three main types of skills: phonological, syntactic, and lexical skills, in addition to other types related to literal identification.

2.The Inferential Level: This level is related to the comprehension of the text . It includes ; Inferential Skills such as : inferring the speaker's attitude, intentions, implications (i.e. implied ideas or details), thought, motivation, and purpose; in addition to the ability of predicting what he will say next, and inferring special, temporal and other logical relationships, as well as social and cultural setting; and Textual Skills, which involve grasping the development of text.

3. Critical Level: This level includes: making appropriate judgments about the message, the speakerís personality, and the topic.

4. Creative level: This includes handling verbal and non-verbal communication strategies and responding in the proper way, and the ability to identify immediately prompt words and hesitations and discard them.

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

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1. Introduction

Many linguists have defined communication as: the sending and receiving of information. Using metaphors when talking about verbal communication and allocating distinct roles to speakers and listeners, linguists often imagine a person " catching" the information that another person is "sending". Thus, communication starts with the transmission of ideas and ends with their reception by another person. The communicative act, which most linguists refer to as communication, contends that in any act of communication there must be present a code familiar to both sender (source) and receiver (destination). If the message is to be sent, it is to be encoded at the source and decoded or understood by the receiver.

Hormann (1979:18) gives a detailed discussion of the process of speaking (or encoding) and listening (or decoding). He defines encoding as, "The activity of the speaker which constructs and edits the message and sends it on its way"; while decoding is, "the activity of the listener which, in tern, makes sense out of the sound waves". The receiver of a message, Hormann (ibid:59-60) argues, must have the same repertoire of possible messages as the transmitter who selects the message. "This repertoire of possible information or available signs with their assignments of meaning is defined as code". There must exist an "implicit agreement between speaker and listener concerning the prerequisites for the codification" (ibid.). In this, communication is only possible to the extent to which these two repertoires overlap.

But what happens throughout the process of developing a fair knowledge of the language reaching to possible instances of communication? What exactly happens to the stimuli, i.e. the material listened to, during the process of perception from the instant of receiving the income up to developing an understanding of what it means?

These questions have been dealt with by many scholars, as we will see throughout the discussion to come; but what happens in real life classroom work (whether in teaching or testing Listening Comprehension(LC)) is far from being dependant on any objective observation of what the process of speech perception really involves. Not only this, but what is mentioned in most of the discussions related to this issue underestimates the importance of the skills (or sub-skills) involved in LC (i.e. what the listener is expected to do as he listens).This paper is intended to draw attention to the various skills (or sub-skills) of LC. We will first outline three main stages or levels of the process of speech perception, namely: the perception, the identification and categorization, and the recoding stages. Then, we will deal with other decisions made at yet higher levels of this process, some of which are closely related and complementary to those decisions made during the three stages. These decisions relate to the listener's ability to make certain judgments about the whole input or to reply to it. This ability refers to the skills(or sub-skills) of listening (i.e. the other decisions that the listener should be able to do during listening).

2.   Listening as an Active Skill

Listening is belittled as being a passive skill among the other three universally understood skills. But skill, as defined by Nasr (1972:186), is the "Ability to perform a particular task". Ability, as defined by Howe (1995:90), 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 has been defined in many ways that are not fundamentally different; e.g. Mudd and Sillars (1979:25) state that, it "has to do with your ability to hear a sound and interpret it"; Yagang (1993:16) defines it as, "the ability to identify and understand what others are saying". But these are too simple definitions to account for a complex process as listening. A more specific definition of listening needs further investigation.

But first it is important at this point to draw the boundary between listening and hearing. Fessenden et al. (1954:179) argue that listening is more than mere hearing. Henning (1966:31-32) compares listening to hearing, stating that listening is,

> ...a full-attention, continuing process while hearing is a momentary awareness, possibly marginal to the centre of attention, of a recognised auditory stimulus.

Widdowson (1978:59-60) argues that, in a communicative event, hearing refers to the listener's ability to recognise the language elements in the stream of sounds and, through his knowledge of the language system, relate these elements into clauses and sentences and understand the meaning of these sentences. Hearing is "the activity of recognising that signals conveyed through the aural medium constitute sentences which have a certain signification". Yet, to understand language as use the communicative function of the sentence has to be recognised. Then, listening refers to the ability to understand how a sentence relates to what has been said and its function in communication. It is "the activity of recognising what function sentences have in an interaction, what communicative value they take on as instances of use"(ibid.).

Thus, hearing is the physical recognition of sounds; whereas listening is a complex process that deals with receiving and processing aural information. Listening, therefore, is not a simple operation since it involves a set of operations.

Concerning this point, Howatt and Dakin (1974:93) give listening four headings, which are operated simultaneously; they are:

> ...understanding a speaker's, accent or pronunciation, understanding his grammar, recognizing his vocabulary and being able to grasp the meaning of what he says.

Putting it in a much similar way Rivers and Temperley (1978:63) define listening as,   ...

> an active process of constructing a message from a stream of sounds with what one knows of the phonological, semantic, and syntactic potentialities of language.

This definition puts emphasis on the decoding the message as the terminal point of the process with the reception of sound as the initial step; the phonological, semantic and syntactic possibilities acting as the instrumental medium to achieve the end.

As related to other language skills, the processing system involved in listening requires the listener to access and exploit the same strategies as those in reading in that they involve fundamentally similar processing strategies, due to their nature as decoding skills, thus having a close relationship. The following is an account of the relationship holding between listening and reading as two modes of language perception.

2.1 Listening and Reading

AL-Hamash and Rahim (1980:23) state that, "Listening and reading are related to the recognition of the vocal and written symbols respectively". Reading, according to Widdowson (1978:63), involves the recognition of what words and sentences mean as well as the recognition of the value that these take on in association with each other as elements in a discourse. Both listening and reading require the active involvement of the listener or reader in the process of understanding the message (Byrne, 1986:8). Therefore, as Dean and Bryson (1961:460) put it, reading and listening are alike in many fundamental ways; in both processes you receive a message and attempt to extract from it the intended meaning.

Recent studies, Rost (1990:8) explains, emphasize cognitive and meta-cognitive skills. They are those skills used to create "plausible expectations about the text", and to sense the type of inference needed to understand it. Although listening and reading are different decoding skills (i.e. aural vs visual), there are cognitive strategies common to both. Chela-Flores (1993:24) states that much of the research in LC and RC makes the assumption that, "after a word is identified, the cognitive processes and the mental representations elicited by these two modes of input are the same". Following the same line of argument, Dean and Bryson (1961:460), Rivers and Temperley (1978:213), Widdowson (1978:63), and White (1981:87-88) state that much of what can be said about effective reading and about communication as a whole can be applied to listening. As there is a purpose for listening (as discussed later) there is one for reading. And as there is a broad listening period to gain competence, Goodwyn (1995:22) states that reading effectively can only be achieved by a long reading period.

There are, of course, a number of differences between listening and reading which should be taken into consideration. One difference,

which Dean and Bryson (1961:12) point out, is the amount of unbroken and concentrated attention required for listening in comparison with that required for reading. Listening with an audience is an exercise that can not be repeated. If the reader's mind wonders off for a few minutes, it would be difficult for him to pick up the thread of ideas again. The reader on the other hand is capable of considerable control over input; he can recognize different visual signals or dwell on whatever part of the text he chooses (Rost, 1990:9). The reader, therefore, has more control over distractions; he may shut the radio off or move to a quieter place to read, while the listener must "develop enough concentration to overcome distractions" (Dean and Bryson, 1961:12). Thus, the difference in the processing modes between listening and reading is that readers recall more information and in greater details than listeners, while listeners recall proportionately more main ideas and do more inference work (Lund 1991 as mentioned in Lynch, 1998:11). In addition Dean and Bryson (1961:12), Rost (1990:9), and Lynch (1998:11) state that in speaking such features as the physical presence of the speaker, variation in pronunciation or dialect, pauses, false starts, etc, also affect listening either positively or negatively. The reader, on the other hand, has only the written text available to him.

3.   Reception and Perception of Speech.

Goh (1997:361) states that listening, as compared with other language skills, is the least understood. But this does not mean that it is still completely vague, for many physicians as well as linguists have tried to get as detailed a picture about its processes as possible.

Akmajian et al. (1987:494) and (1996:502) state that in the 1860s scientists known as "Localizationists" speculated that "the functioning of specific regions in the brain was responsible for language". In the twentieth century, Crystal (1987:260) and Garman (1990:75-76) state, the neurologists Paul Broca and Carl Wernicke

gave support for the theory of "Localization" and found that damage to a certain area in the brain correlates with the loss of a certain linguistic ability.

The discussion below is concerned with what some linguists have specified, through observation or research, as concerning this subject.

3.1 Processes of Speech Perception

Before getting into any detailed account of speech processes, we must take account of the set of terms available for use in describing speech perception. Garman (1990:305) gives us the following definitions of the most important terms:

> **perception** is probably best reserved for initial processing of the input; **understanding** is most usually regarded as the end product; **recognition** is used where the assumption of processing via stored forms in memory is strong; **interpretation** more usually carries with it the implication of creative processing, going beyond the strict properties of the signal; **comprehension** is as a frequently used term, which acts as a cover for both **interpretation** and **understanding**.

Another important point to be mentioned here is that all through the stages of speech comprehension there is one important element that governs all the processes of information recognition, namely, **memory.** Garman (ibid.:309) states that, it is "crucial to language use, in all aspects, and at all levels". Lado (1964:33) states that, to account for the process of **speaking-listening** we assume "a memory store within the nervous system of speaker-listener where each unit and pattern of expression and content is retained for instant use". It is

also assumed that the units and patterns are the same as those used by the linguist in describing speech. Therefore, each permitted sequence of sounds, phonemes, words, etc., has a counterpart in the memory system. An adequate memory span is a crucial element in the process of speech comprehension since, as Lado (ibid:38), it enables the listener to handle all the data that is received and that which is already stored.

The information processing stages that occur in the listener's brain have been researched and studied by a number of linguists. They all agree on the principle that the language processing and language understanding system used in listening involve and analysis by synthesis processing system which is normally carried out by an analysis of the stimuli that reach the processing system that the listener possesses and the synthesis of the available language and world knowledge to help the listener to. Thus, processing system are of two kinds depending on their direction: a "bottom-up" processing system, and a "top-down" processing system. These processing systems, as Norman (1969:70) argues, involve "going from initial stages of sensory transaction, through the extraction of critical features, to the recognition of input". Norman (ibid.:41), Goh (1997:365),   and Tsui and Fllilove (1998:433) state that any sequence of operations that start from the incoming data (or stimulus) developing through increasingly sophisticated analyses are called "data driven", "bottom-up", or "text based" processing. These types of processing systems, as the name implies, refer to the fact that if we draw a picture of the processing levels, placing the incoming data at the bottom of the picture with the increasingly sophisticated levels of analysis drawn in layers above, then the analyses proceed from the bottom to the top (the final recognition of input). But these systems of processing Norman (1969,41) do not take account of expectations, and since the human systems seem to be "guided by conceptualisation of the incoming information", it is necessary to consider processes that start at the top working down. These types of processing systems

are called "conceptually driven" or "top-down" systems. Goh (1997: 365) and Tsui and Fullilove (1998: 433) state that these types of processing systems require the use of the pre-existing knowledge to interpret the text and to create plausible expectations of what is to come next. Both types of processing systems (or directions of analyses) must take place simultaneously, each assisting the other in the completion of the job of comprehension.

3.2 Cognitive Decision During Speech Perception

During the processing systems mentioned above, a listener makes different types of decision simultaneously: phonetic, phonemic, syntactic and semantic decisions. These decisions are hierarchically related; they are made first at the lowest level, then the outcome provides a basis for further decisions at a next higher level and so on. To account for all the message without losing any part of it we must assume that all the decisions reached at the lower levels are tentative and subject to revision depending on the outcome of decisions made at some higher level. These decisions are stored in the memory system of the listener until the final decisions are reached (See Miller. 1962: 44).

The question of the types of discussions is re-considered by Akmajia et al. (1987: 436) and (1996: 403) who state that, as the signal is received it is handled by a set of capacities in which the decisions are made. The first capacity is the Speech Recognition Capacity which identifies as much about the speech sounds as it can from the sound waves. Then the signal is handled by the Syntactic Parsing Capacity which identifies the words by their sounds and analyses the structures of the sentences. Then the Semantic Interpretation Capacity puts the meanings of the words together in accordance with their syntactic relations. Then comes the Pragmatic Interpretation Capacity which selects a particular speech act or communication intent as the most likely. The different capacities

overlap both in time and in the brain activity; they do not necessarily come one after the other in the above order, since in actual speech, segments are physically continuous streams of sounds that are not broken down in discrete word units. The idea that we receive sentences as discrete or linearly ordered units, as Akmajian et al. (1996:406) argue, is only an illustration that results from the fact that, "in knowing a language we perceptually analyse a physical continuum into individual sounds(as well as words and phrases)".

According to the views expressed above, the first types of decisions made during speech perception are related to the stream of sounds, moving on to the meaning of the words identified, then to the structure of the sequence of words grouped together. The results of this process are evident in the listener's ability to identify the sounds and the words of the language.

The following is a discussion of the decisions that are made at the different levels of the perception process.

3.2.1   Phonetic Decisions.

According to Clark and Clark (1977:195-200) research has identified speech sound in three stages: an auditory stage, a phonetic stage, and a phonological stage. During the auditory stage,

> ... listeners take in short stretches of the raw acoustic signal reaching the ear, make preliminary auditory analysis of the signal, and placing the result in an "auditory" memory.

This memory is characterized as lasting for a very short time (for a few seconds). This stage is selective in what it analyses and stores, and no speech segment is identified at this stage. During the phonetic stage, the listener starts to examine the content of the

auditory memory for " acoustic cues". He puts these cues together and identifies each pattern of cues as a particular phonetic segment. These identifications are placed in a categorical "phonetic" memory which preserves the identification of the sounds. Garman (1990: 186-188) states that acoustic cues rather than phonemic cues are used during initial speech processing simply because Since the rate of Phoneme's arrival at the ear exceeds the resolving capacity of the auditory system; this is due to the amount of sound input, which is great in actual listening. Acoustic cues are much smaller than phonemes and they can be easily processed within the time constraint, they also provide sufficient information for the subsequent identification of phonemes. Acoustic cues are processed independently by specialised cue-detectors which are sensitive to their occurrence in the signal. Then these cues are transmitted through the auditory system to some integrated component. This in turn assembles and interprets them in the form of distinctive sound classes or phonemes.

But the process of acoustic analysis is not that easy since in actual listening the amount of sound input is very great. Therefore, as Fry (1970: 48) argues, the listener does not identify, on an acoustic basis every sound that comes in; there are certain constraints on the message that the listener manipulates from the very beginning of reception in order to limit the possibilities which enter the acoustic processing stage. The listener begins constructing a probable phoneme string "determined by the acoustic processing, higher-order linguistic constraints and context in its widest sense". Acoustic processing has two functions:

> ... it furnishes the raw material .... upon which the listener bases his predictions of the phoneme string, and it also provides a running confirmation that the predictions have been fulfilled.

But speech perception, as Fry (ibid: 35) argues, cannot be accounted for in terms of acoustic analysis only. Speech perception is a form of " 'Pattern recognition' in which each pattern is an arrangement of acoustic cues." These cues help in identification of the stream of sounds in the early stages of process of speech perception.

> ... 'pattern recognition' in which the acoustic
> input provides 'cues' for the identification of
> sounds and words, but is not of itself sufficient
> for their recognition. 'Our perception of speech
> is influenced by the phonological system and
> hence the fruit of the language learning process'.

Recognition, as well be discussed in more detail later is the first step in the process of speech perception; it is the operation in which the listener perceives something and at once is able to place it in a category already established in his memory. The categorization is done on the basis of previous sensory experience. The sounds are perceived and placed each in the particular category which corresponds to the phonemes or phonological units of the language system. The recognition of speech sounds and the phonological categories are interdependent; the existence of one presupposes the existence of the other (ibid.: 32-33). Clark and Clark (1977: 195) state that, during the phonological stage " listeners consult the constraints English places on sequences of phonetic segments and adjust the preliminary identification to conform to these constraints". The product of this is stored in the short-term memory.

3.2.2   Syntactic Decisions

Fry   (1970:50) stresses that the identification of words from the stream of sounds is dependent upon "the listener's recognition (or prediction) of the grammatical structure of the utterance he is 'processing'". Johnson-Larid (1970:262) supports this by stating

that at certain times "the perceptual mechanism is more preoccupied with grammatical analysis than with monitoring the incoming sounds". He argues that linguistic perception involves a form of syntactic analysis, since the process of combining the meanings of words to form meanings of sentences depends in some way on syntax. Sentences are analysed into their grammatical constituents to yield the surface structure. The listener must have some knowledge of the lexical and grammatical words and distinctions; he should also be able to recognize grammatical words and affixes easily and to predict the coming structures (e.g. the occurrence of 'the' suggests a noun is to follow). Therefore, it is only by a full and adequate analysis of the surface structures of a sentence that the latent meaning can be grasped.

As the listener takes in the sentence (or word sequences) he processes the words themselves and takes account of the relations holding between them. This type of 'processing' or 'computing', is termed 'parsing'(Garman, 1990:312). There are two types of parsing processes in speech perception: "essentially syntactic" or "essentially semantic" or a mixture of the two. Syntactic parsing means the analysis of the words sequence into its parts of speech in order to form its internal structure. Semantic parsing means that the word sequence may be characterised as having a specific function. These two types of analysis, Harris and Colthert (1986:186) states, are carried out continually in the comprehension of spoken language.

3.2.3 Lexical Decisions

The listener makes use of his knowledge of the lexicon of foreign language in making the decisions about the meanings of the words in the structured sequence. But where does this knowledge comes from? Garnham (1985:43) and Harris and Coltheart (1986:135) state that, the term "mental lexicon" is used to refer to the internalized system of knowledge about words to which the listener or reader goes

back to in making his decisions about meaning. This mental lexicon contains the same kinds of information that are found in any good dictionary, although the organization of the information may be different. Harris and Coltheart (ibid.:135-136) state that,

> ... the representation of a word in the mental lexicon is referred to as that word's lexical entry: this entry contains semantic, phonological and orthographic information about the word. In order to understand a word, the reader or hearer must gain access to the semantic information contained in the word's **lexical   entry**. This process is known as lexical access.... In understanding spoken language, **lexical access** is achieved by using information from the acoustic representation of a word.

The listener, makes use of the auditory word-recognition system which contains word-detector system (or word detectors) that identify the spoken forms as they relate to his mental lexicon. Garnham (1985:43) states that the lexical entry also contains information about the word's part of speech. This implies that both syntactic and lexical decisions co-occur all through the speech processing process. Garnham (ibid:69) explains that,

When the words in a sentence have been recognized and their syntactic categories retrieved from the mental lexicon, the language understanding system   must compute the structural relations between those words, so that it can go on to determine the message that the sentence conveys.   According syntactic and lexical decisions are closely related. They overlap during the process, one leading to the other, until more decisions about meaning are reached.

Baharati et al. (1996:10-11) argues that syntax uses language

coding devices while semantics uses word knowledge, they believe that,

> ... syntax is not studied to identify an innate autonomous level, but rather to relate it to semantics and word knowledge to accomplish the overall tasks of communication of information.

It is important to maintain this sequence or chain of decisions since, as Johnson-Larid (ibid.:267) states, sentences have structures and meanings and this makes them units that can be remembered more easily than the same set of words in a random order. But sentences are small elements in real discourse and we usually remember their sense rather than their syntax. When a sentence is perceived it is recalled with complete precision for a very short interval; during this time memory acts as an echo box so that it is even possible to recall its intonation. This gives evidence that verbal material is re-presented in acoustic form in short-term memory. The forms of syntactic structures are "normally lost to memory within a few seconds"; what stays of the sentence is the semantic elements that may reinforce the syntactic structures in the long-term memory. The listener, Johnson-Larid (ibid.) argues, implicitly sets up an abbreviated not especially a linguistic model of the meanings of the sentences in a discourse; recall is then an active reconstruction of what remains of the model.

3.3   Level of Speech Perception

The above decisions constitute a small part of a set of stages that happen take place during speech processing. They work together through these stages to reach more important levels until the final decisions are reached (i.e. the final comprehension of the message).

A significant point to notice is that the listener does not and cannot listen to everything with the same precision and attention. He

usually has a particular purpose for listening and he listens for the points he wants to know, since, as Byrne (1986:18) states, the message is often presented in a detailed form, with certain information more than is needed by the listener to get the idea of the message. Geddes (1981:78) discuss the purpose for listening and states that the listener usually selects only what is important for his purpose and leaves out the rest. Ur (1984:15) supports this view and asserts that the listener has a "switch off" mechanism by which he chooses what he needs to listen for from what he hears. This means that as the listener starts listening to the message, he makes a kind of selection to the information he is listening to, and during the later stages he makes other selections until he gets what he needs from the information presented.

The fact that listeners differ in their cognitive abilities and in the amount of concentration on the message that they have does not mean that the strategies that they use to process the information are different. Many researchers have specified the stages of speech perception in mainly the same way. We, therefore, have an agreement on the processes by which the incoming stimuli are processed; what differs is the labeling that the researchers give to these stages. The following is a categorization of the stages as chosen to label them depending on the principle behind each as discussed in the literature.

3.3.1   The Reception Stage

Fessenden et al. (1954:71-72), Rivers and Temperley. (1978:63), Rivers (1971:126), Mudd and Sillars (1979:28), and Finocchiaro (1989:95-96) state that the first stage is that of a perception of sounds.

In this stage the listener receives the message from the source, makes the proper phonetic decisions on it and starts selecting what he needs from the flow of speech. According Rivers (1971:126) states

that it is a stage of perceiving that there is a systematic message rather than accidental noise and she calls it the "sensing stage". It is a stage in which some order and segmentation is forced to what is heard, a stage of rapid impression, only roughly identified and differentiated, and it is relatively passive and receptive. This stage depends on echoic memory (which lasts for a few seconds), so the actual items heard should be interrelated in some meaningful way with other items if they are to be retained. Rivers (1968:141-142) states that this stage is called the filtering stage, in which the listener selects what is important and leaves out the rest. Mudd and Sillars (1979:28) state that, filtering starts from the early stages when sounds are perceived and continues with all the succeeding stages. This stage is rapid because the listener is already familiar with the phonemic system, the morphophonemic rules, and the broad syntactic categories. This filtering of the message is part of the decision the listener makes in the process; it helps, to ignore the redundancies in the message.

Much of what is experienced auditoraly does not therefore pass on to the second stage. The redundant items then pass from echoic memory and cannot affect interpretation.

3.3.2   The Identification and Categorization Stage

Rivers (1971:127) calls this stage: identification through segmentation and grouping stage. It involves segmenting at various levels as the phonotactic, syntactic, and lexical collocation rules of language are applied. In this stage the listener uses the decisions reached at the previous level and begins to identify and group the words and ideas into groups or categories for the coming stages. Bruner (1957), as reported in Hormann (1979:68), states that speech perception "involves an act of categorization.... we stimulate an organism with a suitable input, and the organism reacts by sorting the input into a class of things or events". This sorting of the input is based on an identification of all of its items; when identified, the items

can be easily grouped and ordered.

This stage, as Rivers (1971:127) states, is active and detailed; it processes the signal it is receiving sequentially, and interrelates the segments it has already identified and those it is identifying within the structure of the utterance.

Rivers and Temperley (1978:63) state that the listener assigns the units he recognizes from the stream of sounds categories and attributes to them functions in relation to other units until an intelligible message may be constructed from what he hears while he does so, he anticipates the gist of what is said, holding segments already identified in his immediate memory, readjusting his interpretation of earlier segment in accordance with the final message as he understands it. At this stage memory is still auditory, but because of the initial grouping which is tentatively meaningful, the auditory segments (or chunks) are more easily retained. This power of retention makes it possible to suspend the judgments where there is ambiguity of structure; the listener can hold the perceived segments in his mind until the necessary adjustments are made(See Rivers, 1971:127).

3.3.3   The Recoding Stage

This stage overlaps with the preceding one in that there is still some operations of readjustments with earlier interpretations. Rivers (1971:128) calls this stage: the rehearsal and recoding stage. This stage takes place before what is perceived enters into long-term memory storage. It takes place simultaneously with the ongoing interpretative process. Rehearsal refers to the process of recalculating the material through the cognitive system as it is related to what has been preceded and what follows. Without rehearsal the auditory material in the memory fades very rapidly and the listener would not be able to follow the line of thought. Recoding

means that the listener makes his own coding of the material (i.e. he does not store it in exactly the same way as it is perceived); he recodes it in a more easily retainable form until he has reached his final decisions about its meaning.

Finocchiaro (1989:95-96) calls this stage the understanding of the communicative expression and syntactic structures, which leads to the final interpretation of the message. She (ibid.) points out the process by which speech is stored into long-term memory, it is as follows: receiving the message and placing it temporarily in short-term memory; selecting the main idea (the gist or essence) of what we is heard; and storing the essence in long-term memory.

To sum up the whole process of speech perception in simple words we can put it as follows: the listener takes in the sound stream and perceives it by identifying it as being meaningful to him (not nonsense). This in turn means that he is selecting what is important to concentrate on. This selection minimizes the stimuli he has perceived which is segmented and ordered into categories that are retained in his short term memory system. He starts readjusting the incoming stimuli to the segments in view of what has been said and in anticipation of what may come next until the message is understood.

This is generally the processes of speech perception as far as any listener is concerned (i.e. what happens when speech is received and processed by any human being). In EFL learning the process by which the learners perceive and understand the spoken form of the language they are studying is not much different from what any listener does in order to perceive and understand his own native language. The difference lies in the sound system, the grammatical structures, and the meanings of words that the learner listening to the a foreign language has to cope with and handle. Rivers (1971:130-133) gives a very comprehensive account of what the learner of foreign language does to understand second language speech. As the

learner receives the message he attempts to identify and select what he needs from it then tries to segment it into meaningful groups. The learner depends on his competence in the foreign language which enables him to segment the stream of speech into meaningful groups and categories. He makes use of the knowledge he has about what he does to speech in his own native language and of the visual images introduced during speech to supply clues to meaning; this means that he depends on another type of decoding system (i.e. that of the visual and kinesic signal system). The first stage of speech perception, as we have discussed earlier, is rapid since the stimulus has to be identified and segmented quickly before its echo disappears from the short-term memory. This initial selection that the learner performs is normally related to syntactic groupings.

In the early stages, Rivers (ibid.) argues, the learner should be encouraged by his teacher to repeat to himself the segments he has apprehended, "first as stretches of sound, then in an attempt at syntactic grouping". The effort of repetition forces the learner to segment the sound in some fashion, the auditory image is retained longer, and the learner has the time to relate segments and to readjust his interpretations. The learner should be trained to make the right decisions, since once he makes an incorrect segmentation the sound image is lost and adjustments by conjuncture and inference must be made. At the next stage, the learner must identify more precisely and interrelate the segments he is holding in his short-term memory meaningfully into larger groupings so that he would not lose what he has retained. The learner should be trained to listen purposefully; he should be able to identify the various clues to syntactic interrelationships, which have been listed. This would enable him to concentrate on the lexical content of the message, he makes use of his knowledge of reality to supply meaning when his knowledge of the foreign lexicon fails him. Next comes the recoding for retention stage. Some suggest that the information perceived is "retransformed for storage and is mostly recalled in simple active declarative sentences".

The learner needs practice in detecting the main relationships, and in abstracting the important forms from the complications of the surface form and reducing the relationships to more basic forms of expression. If the learner cannot decode and recode what he listens to, he will start converting what he hears into a simplified form in his native language; this means that he would learn to translate and re-translate the forms to understand them and never develop his ability in comprehension.

4.   Listening Comprehension Skills (Sub-skills)

As mentioned earlier, when discussing listening and reading, being to comprehension skills, they work in the same fundamental way. Therefore, the first thing to review in this section is the comprehension skills already specified for RC, thought to be applicable to LC, then a taxonomy of LC skills is outlined.

4.1   Reading Comprehension Skills and their Application to Listening Comprehension

4.1.1 Ekwall and Shanker (1985) and Related Taxonomies for Reading Skills

Ekwall and Shanker (1985:2-8) discuss the skill of reading in terms of two categories: Recognizing and Analysing words, and understanding Words and Ideas; the following is a brief discussion of each:

1.   **Recognising and Analysing Words**: This category is subdivided into: sight words, and words that require word-analysis skills. Sight words are those that the reader knows by sight and does not have to analyse each time they are read. These are of two types: basic sight words and other sight words. Basic sight words are those that are of very high utility in the text. Other sight words are those

that are instantly or easily recognized by the reader, and that are not of very high utility in the text. The words that require word-analysis (or word-attack) skills are those that are unfamiliar to the reader. Word-attack skills are those that the reader uses if he do not instantly know a word; they must use one or more of the categories of these skills which are:

1. Configuration clues: They are the overall characterization of how the words look (i.e. the shapes of the words of the language).

2. Context clues: They are either semantic clues which come from the meaning of words as they are used in sentences, or syntactic clues which come from guessing which words come next. The latter type is based on syntax or the way the readers is used to string words together. It can overlap with the former type which are based on the reader's lexical repertoire.

3. Phonetic analysis: This refers to the sound symbols or to the phoneme-grapheme relationships.

4. Structural analysis: This refers to the analysis of large meaning-bearing parts of words including syllabification, the readers' ability to derive meaning from words, and to handle morphemes.

5. Dictionary skills: These are such skills as alphabetizing letters, locating words, using guide words, and using preferred spelling.

6. Study skills: In addition to the above main categories, some study skills can be considered word attack skills, e.g. one study skill is learning how to look up a word or topic in an encyclopedia, when a student uses an encyclopedia to look up the pronunciation of a word then the study skill becomes a word analysis skill.

2. Understanding Words and Ideas: Word meaning (or

vocabulary) is a skill of understanding words or ideas. In order for the reader to understand or read with meaning, he must either recognize the read words instantly or use word-analysis skills on them.

This categorization has given reading a set of sub-skills which the reader has to possess in order to understand the read words which are the focus of attention here. In listening we apply the same categorization as the above to the skill with some alterations in the sub-skills themselves and of course the medium used to receive the words. We can view listening in terms of the two main categories just discussed (i.e. Recognizing and Analyzing Words and Understanding Words and Ideas). As we apply the above categorization of reading skills to listening, the "Sight Words" in the first category may be replaced by words that are easily or instantly recognized by the listener as soon as he hears them. As far as word-analysis skills for listening are concerned, context clues and structural analysis are the same as those for reading. The differences lies in the configuration clues which become the overall characteristics of how words are heard, the phonetic analysis which concentrates on the phonological features of utterances, and the dictionary skills which do not work for listening since the listener is not as free to look up words as the reader is are who has both the presence of the passage and no time limits, two factors not usually available for the listener.

Up to now the concentration has been on words, their recognition and understanding, but there is much more to reading and listening than the control of words. It is not enough for a reader or listener to understand or recognize the words that make up the passage read or listened to. The reader or listener needs to get what is behind the lines or utterances; he needs to understand why a certain word is chosen instead of another, what is communicated by the passage, and he must have something to say about it. Therefore, comprehension is not merely a matter of knowing what words mean; it is a matter of

retrieving the message: the ideas, insights, feelings, etc, of the writer or speaker. Therefore it is necessary to consider the other skills that the reader or listener needs to have in order to understand a passage.

Ekwall And Shanker. (ibid:16) report Davis' (1972) summary of one of the earlier sub-skill analysis for reading by Gray (1919), they are:

1. To read for the purpose of giving a coherent reproduction.
2. To determine the central thought or the most important ideas of a selection.
3. To select a series of closely related points and their supporting details.
4. To secure information which will aid in the solution of a problem.
5. To gain a clear comprehension of the essential conditions of a problem.
6. To discover new problems in regard to a topic.
7. To determine the lines of argument which support the point of view of the author.
8. To determine the validity of the statements.

Ekwall et al. (ibid.) state that perhaps the best known study of possible comprehension sub-skills is offered by Davis (1944) in which he listed the following sub-skills based on his examination of the literature:-
1. Knowledge of word meanings.
2. Ability to select the appropriate meaning of a word phrase in light of its particular contextual setting.
3. Ability to follow the organization of a passage and identify antecedents and references in it.
4. Ability to select the main thought of a passage.
5. Ability to answer questions that are specifically answered in a passage.
6. Ability to answer questions that are answered in a passage but not

in the words in which the question is asked.

7. Ability to draw inferences from a passage about its contents.

8. Ability to recognize the literary devices used in a passage and determine its tone and mood.

9. Ability to determine a writer's purpose, intent, and point of view, i.e. to draw inferences about a writer.

After a thorough statistical analysis of these sub-skills, Davis (ibid.) states that, all, except numbers 2,3,and 4, can be measured, and that number 5 to 9, although important, account for only a small part of the overall skill of comprehension.

4.1.2 Nuttall's (1982) Categorization of Reading Skills

Nuttall's (1982: 65-ff) discuss reading sub-skills in detail and group them into main categories: word-attack skills (basically concerned with the word and its meaning), text-attack skills (1) (mostly related to handling the cohesive devices to undergraduate the text), and text-attack skills (2) (which goes beyond what is in the written text into its interpretation as a piece of discourse). The word-attack skills relate to the knowledge and control over the lexical items in the text; this includes: inferring meaning of words, control over morphological information, deciding on the importance of words, knowledge of idiomatic expressions, and such skills related to the word. Text-attack skills (1) involve: understanding sentence syntax, recognizing and interpreting cohesive devices, interpreting discourse makers, and such related text features.

Text-attack skills (2) involve: recognizing functional value and the significant sentences, tracing and interpreting rhetorical organization, recognizing and the presuppositions underlying the text, recognizing implications and making inference, making predictions, and making integrations and applications.

4.1.3   Other Categorizations of Reading Skills

A different way of considering reading skills is to categorize them in terms of levels that are hierarchically ordered from basic to more complicated. Gary (1960) and AL-Jubouri (1976), for instance, specify three levels. In AL-Jubouri's (ibid) model the lowest level is what he calls skills of literal identifications which involves getting the direct meaning of a word, phrase or sentence. The second level comprises skills of interpretation. These involve drawing inferences from the context of the text, supplying meaning that is not directly stated in it, following its structure, making generalization, making comparisons, reasoning motives, discovering relationships, judging cause and effect relationships, and predicting out comes. The third level is called skills of critical evaluation which involves passing personal judgements on the quality of information in the text, recognizing the writer's attitude, tone, and mode, identifying his techniques, as well as seeking out and expressing new ideas, and suggesting future application of the writer's ideas.

Other researchers in reading, such as Ferguson (1973) suggests four main levels of reading comprehension skills. These have the same hierarchy of levels as the above in addition to a fourth level which goes beyond the implications derived from the material to providing creative judgments and responses2 .

4.1.4   Common Skills (Reading-Listening) Irvine-Niakaris (1997)

As far as categorization of LC levels of sub-skills is concerned, we can apply the above categorization of RC levels of sub-skills to it. This is so due to the established fact (as mentioned above in 2.1.1) that much of what can be said about RC can be applied to LC since they are both decoding skills involving the same rules of perception and processing of messages. Given that the sub-skills for listening closely parallel those for reading, as Field (1998: 112) maintains, breaking

listening into its skills, as those adopted for reading by (Grellet 1981, and Nuttall 1982), supports the same diagnostic approach as that which regards efficient reading as dependent on a set of sub-skills which are the bases for a developmental programme. Thus listening sub-skill specification provided a detailed list against which many breakdowns in understanding can be amended.

To prove the strength of the commotion between the levels and sub-skills involved in RC and LC, a useful categorization of comprehension sub-skills (i.e. for both RC and LC) is presented by Irvine-Niakaris (1997: 17) based on the communicative teaching proposals put forward by Canale and Swain in (1980), later revised by Canale in (1983), which are originally based on the conception of communicative competence as offered by Hymes (1972). Communicative competence comprises:

1.   Linguistic competence (dealing with the knowledge of form);
2.   Sociolinguistic competence (dealing with the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts);
3.   Discourse competence (dealing with cohesion and coherence);
4.   Strategic competence (dealing with the knowledge of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies).

Irvine-Niakaris (ibid)states that according to these competencies, LC and RC have the same following sub-skills:

1.   Linguistic competence involves the student's (listeners or reader) ability in the recognition of a wide range of basic grammatical structure (including word forms, prepositions, etc.), as well as his ability to understand specific grammatical items to comprehend the gist of the message or specific information that it contains.
2.   Sociolinguistic competence involves the student's ability to do such things as making collocations, or guessing words in context

using such clues as synonyms, antonyms, punctuation, discourse marks, etc. These two obviously relates to the literal discussed above.

3. Discourse competence involves the student's ability to make connection between parts of the text.

4. Strategic competence involves the student's ability to maintain the flow of communication by asking for clarification when he lacks a particular word or misunderstand a phrase or sentence.

This shows how close RC and LC are in terms of the competencies and abilities required of the student. There are, however, many specifications and lists of skills involved in LC that are separate from RC. Some attempts have grouped these into special categories the most useful categorizations proposed by Rost (1990).

4.1.5 Munbey's (1978) Listening Skills

Munbey (1978:123-126) specified the following set of skills for listening:

1. Discriminating sounds in isolate word forms.
2. Discriminating sounds in connected speech.
3. Discriminating strew patterns within words.
4. Recognizing variation in stress in connected speech.
5. Recognizing the use of stress in connected speech.
6. Understanding intonation patterns: neutral position of nucleus and use of tone, in respect of fore variances.
7. Understanding intonation patterns: interpreting attitudinal meaning through variation of tone or nuclear shifts.
8. Interpreting attitudinal meaning through pitch variance, pause, or tempo.

Furthermore, Munby (1978:126-129) offers a taxonomy of language skills and specifies the following set of skills that work for

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both listening and reading:

1. Deducing the meaning and we of unfamiliar lexical items, through understanding word formation and contextual clues.
2. Understanding explicitly stated information.
3. Understanding information in the text, not explicitly stated, through making inferences and understanding figurative language.
4. Understanding conceptual meaning such as a mound and quality, definiteness and indefiniteness, etc.
5. Understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances with or without explicit indicators.
6. Understanding relations within the sentence.
7. Understanding relations between parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices of repetition, synonymy, antithesis, etc.
8. Understanding relations between parts of a text through grammatical cohesion devices of reference, comparison, substitutions, ellipsis, time and place relaters and logical connectors.
9. Interpreting text by going outside it using reference or by interpreting data in the text depending on experience or knowledge of the world.
10. Recognizing indicators in discourse.
11. Identifying the main point or important information in a piece of discourse.
12. Distinguishing the main idea from supporting details by differently primary from secondary significance the whole from its parts, a process from its stages, category from exponent, statement from example, fact from opinion, and proposition from its argument.
13. Extracting salient points to summarize the whole text, a specific idea or topic in the text, or the underlying idea or point of the text.
14. Selective extraction of relevant points from a text, involving

the coordination of related information, the ordered rearrangement of contrasting items, and the tabulation of information for comparison and contrast.

4.1.6   Rost's (1990) Listening Skills

One of the useful categorization of listening sub-skills is that proposed by Rost (1990:152-153) in which she offers the following three categories of skills each subsuming further sub-categories:

1.   Skills Emphasizing Perception: These involve recognizing prominence within utterances, including the sub-skills of: perceiving and discriminating sounds in isolated word forms, discriminating strong and weak forms, identifying uses of stress and pitch in connected speech, and adapting to speaker variation.

2.   Skills Emphasizing Interpretation: These involve:

a.   Formulating a prepositional sense for a speaker's utterances, which includes the sub-skills of deducing the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items, and inferring the information that is not explicitly stated.

b.   Formulating a conceptual framework that links utterances together which includes the sub-skills of : recognizing indicators of discourse constructing a main idea or theme in a stretch of discourse and distinguishing main points from supporting details, predicting sub-sequent parts of the discourse, identifying elements in the discourse that help form schematic organization, maintaining continuity of context to assist in predictions, and selecting clues to complete schematic prediction.

c.   Interpreting plausible intention (s) of the speaker in making the utterance, which includes the sub-skills of: identifying a frame that suggests the speaker's intention towards the hearer,

recognizing changes in prosodic gestures (e.g. pause, tempo, pitch range, etc.) identifying the speaker's contraction, inadequate information, and ambiguity, and differentiating between fact and opinion, and identifying was of metaphor, irony, and other conversational features.

3.   Enacting Skills: These involve utilizing representations of discourse to make appropriate responses, which includes the sub-skills of: salient points from information given for use in a task, reducing the transcoded information from spoken source to other forms (often written forms such as dictation or note-taking), identifying needed clarifications of topics and ideas, integrating information from text and other sources, and providing appropriate feedback to the speaker.

Despite the systematic way in which these worked out, it still suffers from in applicability for the purposes of this study. Skills are not classified in the appropriate detail, nor is there a full explication of what each sub-skills involves.

4.2   Categorizations of Listening Comprehension Skills

As mentioned above, there are other lists of listening skills and sub-skills, though most of them are not ground as they are in Rost or Munby. A survey has been done of these in the literature in order to specify them; the following is a proposed categorization of the skills and sub-skills of LC:

4.2.1   The Literal Level

This involves three main types of skills: phonological, syntactic, and lexical skills, in addition to other types related to literal identification:

1.   Phonological Skills: These include the following sub-skills:

a.   Control of the phonological system to discriminate the words that sound similar, or words and phases that differ in one phoneme (See Morley, 1976:ix; Finocchiaro and Sako, 1983:104; Sullivan and Zhong, 1989:37).

b.   Knowledge of the different intonation patterns and was of word and sentence stress, pitch, etc., which give clues to meaning and social setting (See Yagang, 1993:16 report of Willis 1981; Goh, 1996:366).

2.   Syntactic Skills: These include the following skills:

a.   Recognition of basic grammatical structures, indicators of structure, sentence patterns sentence types (by identifying the clues to question forms, negation, coordination, or subordination), and of the constituents of phrase structure (such as prepositions, articles, auxiliaries, etc.) (See Rivers, 1971:131; Sullivan and Zhong, 1989:34; Irvine-Niakaris (1997:17).

b.   Focusing on whole or parts of sentences, and attending to grammatical relationships with their patterns of contraction, word reduction, elision, assimilation, blending, phrasing, etc. (See Morley, 1976:ix-x; Baltaglia and Fisher, 1982:xi).

c.   Recognition of specific grammatical structures within a particular setting, and making the appropriate syntactic choices (See Foley, 1984, 1985:iii; Howe, 1995:98).

3.   Lexical Skills: These skills involve getting the direct meaning of words, phrases, and sentences, which require:

a.   Ability to concentrate on specific words and make appropriate choices to what they mean by depending on their context and other clues in the text. (See Baltaglia and Fisher, 1982:xii; Finocchiaro and Sako, 1983:104; Evans, 1984:49; Foley,

1984:iii; Sullivan and Zhong, 1989:37; O'Dell, 1987:156; Mc Dowell and Hart, 1988:4; Boyle, 1993: ; Howe, 1995:98; Goh, 1996:366; Irvine-Niakaris, 1997:17).

b.   Categorizing words and word grouping and to recognize their functions (Rivers, 1971:131).

4.   Other Skills: These involve the recognition or recall of main ideas, details, sequences, cause and effect relationships, and of character's traits. These require:

a.   Concentrating on and comprehending specific pieces of the message (i.e. certain details, ideas, etc.) depending on the purpose for listening (See Foly, 1984, 1985:iii; McDowell and Hart, 1988:4; Sullivan and Zhong, 1989:4, Yagang, 1993:16; Howe, 1995:96; Irvine-Niakaris, 1997:17).

b.   Comprehension of the gist of what is said (i.e. detecting the main ideas and relationships from complications of surface forms and reducing them to more basic forms of expression (See Rivers 1971:139; Foly 1984, 1985; iii, O'Dell 1987:156, Sullivan and Zhong 1989:34, Irvine-Niakaris 1997:17)

c.   Identifying and retaining points and rejecting irrelevant information (Willis 1981 as mentioned in Yagang, 1993:16).

d.   Ability to organize and sequence information and ideas (Howe 1995:94).

4.2.2   The Inferential Level

This level is related to the comprehension of the text. It includes the following:

1.   Inferential Skills: These involve all the types of inferences or guesses that the listener makes to understand the message. It includes the following sub-skills:

a.   Infer the speaker's attitude, intentions, implications (i.e. implied ideas or details), thought, motivation, and purpose; and

expect and predict what he will say next. (See Fessenden et. al. 1954:72-73, Rivers 1971:131, Wang 1971 as reported in Paulston and Bruder 1976:128, Willis 1981 as reported in Yagang 1993:16, Baltaglia and Fisher 1982: xii, Dukel and Pialorsi 1982: viii, Evans 1984:49, Foley 1984, 1985: iii, Mc Dowell and Hart 1988:4 Hubbard and Sweetman 1993:40).

b.   Infer special, temporal and other logical relationships, as well as social and cultural setting (See Sullivan and Zhong 1989:41-43, Hubbard and Sweetman 1993:41).

2.   Textual Skills: These involve grasping the development of the text, which require:

a.   Making connections between the parts of the text (Irvine-Niakaris 1997:17).

b.   Recognizing discourse markers (e.g. Oh, Well, Now, etc.), and cohesive devices (e.g. and, which, such as, etc.) (Willis 1981 as reported in Yagang, 1993:16).

c.   Identifying the exponents that serve a particular listening function within the message, and understanding usage of certain expressions (i.e. idioms) (Baltaglia and Fisher, 1982:xii).

d.   Handling variation of style, tone, and forms of speech according to assessments of situation, purpose and topic. This includes the ability to handle stylistic features such as interpreting figurative or rhetorical language, analogy, irony, humour, etc., (Howe, 1995:95)

4.2.3 Critical Level

This level includes the following sub-skills:

a.   Making appropriate judgment about the message, the speaker's personality, the topic. This includes making assumptions, drawing conclusions, and making evalutions. (See Feasenden et. al., 1954:72-73; Baltaglia and Fisher, 1982:xii, Dunkel and Pialors; 1982:x; Sulliran and Zhong, 1989:34; Hubbard and Sweetman, 1993:40; Howe, 1995:94).

b.   Judging how the purpose of the interaction is achieved (See Fessenden et. al., 1954:72073; Rivers, 1971:132; Foley, 1985;iii; Hubbard and Sweetman, 1993:40).

4.2.4   Creative level

This includes handling verbal and non-verbal communication strategies and responding in the proper way, and the ability to identify immediately prompt words and hesitations and discard them (See Rivers, 1971:131; Howe, 1995:94; Irvine-Niakaris, 1997:17).

The foregoing levels and their skills are arranged together in (Table 1) on the following page.

5. Some Recommendations

1.   It is recommended that LC be concentrated on as an active skill, i.e. it should be given more attention in the syllabus and more time should be allocated for practice.

2.   It is recommended that teachers and course designers concentrate on the sub-skills involved in listening, and develop them gradually through exercises based on a thorough analysis of the texts involved to show the sub-skills being exercised (See Appendix).

3.   In addition to concentrating on the gradual development of the complexity of the texts used, the students should know and practice more and more complex sub-skill as they develop, and also be given a complete feedback on their development.

Table (1) The skills and Sub-skills within the levels of Listening Comprehension

Literal level	Inferential level	Critical level	Creative level
1. Phonological skills: control of the phonological system, sound discrimination, intonation stress, etc. 2. Syntactic skills: control of the grammatical structures, focusing on whole or parts of sentences, recognition of specific structures in particular settings. 3. Logical skills: getting the direct in easing of words, phrases, and sentences which requites: control of word meaning, concentration of specific words, infer meaning of words from content, knowledge of word groupings. 4. Other skills: recognition of recall of main ideas, details sequences cause and effect relationships and of character's traits which requires: concentrating on specific information, comprehending the gist of what is said, identifying relevant point and rejecting irrelevant points.	1. Inferential skills: inferring information about speaker's attitude, intentions, motivation, thought, and inferring special, temporal and other logical relationships between participants, as well social setting. 2. Textual skills: grasping the development of the text which requires: making connections between parts of text, recognizing discourse markers and cohesive devices, identifying the exponents serving a linguistic function and handling different styles, tones and figurative language.	1. Making appropriate judgments about the message or speaker's personality, tops, etc., making assumptions, drawing conclusions, making evaluation. 2. Judging how purpose of interaction achieved.	Handling verbal and non-verbal communicative strategies, identifying hesitation and prop words and making appropriate responses.

Appendix

An Unexpected Visit

On the evening of December the 23rd we were waiting in the front room which looked very nice and warm. We only use it when people come or perhaps in summer for it's too cold, but now we had the fire going in the open fireplace. We were waiting for a farmer and his wife who lived in Cornro. My wife had been evacuated there during the war, and since our marriage they have sent a chicken every Christmas and I've given them a bottle of sherry. It was past seven, I thought they were late. A few minutes later we heard sounds outside the front door, "that's them"; "No!" I said, without knowing why and it wasn't. It was a determined little woman pushing her face forward. "Does Gordon Riddow live here" It wasn't so much a question as a statement, and it was said by my sister Mona from Canada. I hadn't seen her for ten years; afterwards she said I just stood there shaking my head. I went outside and saw Oscar, he had a hat on, a camera around his neck, a new black coat, and black gloves. I shook Oscar's hand " Why didn't you write, or phone, or send a telegram?" "I wanted to" Oscar said, "but your sister didn't let me". I looked into the taxi half expecting to see my father and mother inside. " I bet you're surprised" Mona said excitedly. "Why didn't you let me know when you got to London?" "We didn't want you to go into any trouble" Mona said. I took them into the front door, Mona lit a cigarette. "You don't look like your pictures, Carol" Mona said, "you've lost weight" she said to me, "It suits you. The last time I saw you, you were fat. I thought you had heart trouble". Then the children were introduced. "This is your uncle Oscar and your aunty Mona, they've come all the way from Canada,. "How was the trip?" "Terrible!" Oscar said, "we had to change twice on the train, you know it took longer to come down here from London than to fly from Montreal all over to England, why do you live so far away?"

The Items and Sub-Skills Tested

Items   Sub-Skills

1. The story takes place ....   Recognition or recall of the main
A. on a summer evening.   idea, getting the direct meaning of
B. on a cold day.   words, and inferring temporal
C. on a warm night.   relationships.
D. just before Christmas.
2. The family use the front room ..... Recognition or recall of details,
A. as their living room.   and getting the direct meaning
B. when they have visitors.   of words.
C. only in summer.
D. only in winter.
3. They were waiting for.....   Getting the direct meaning of
A. some friends.   words, and discovering
B. some relations.   relationships.
C. some business acquaintances.
D. their children.
4. When they heard someone at   Recognition or recall of the main
    the front door the narrator ....   idea, and getting the direct
A. knew their guests had arrived.   meaning of words
B. thought their guests had arrived.
C. knew it was someone else.
D. felt it was someone else.
5. The narrator's sister ....   Drawing inferences.
A. had visited the house before.
B. had forgotten where he lived.
C. was sure it was the right house.
D. didn't recognise him.
6. When he saw his sister, the   Getting the direct meaning of
    narrator said.....   words.
A. "Hello!"
B. "What a surprise!"

C.   "Why didn't you writeo"
D.   nothing.
7.   Oscar and Mona had not   Reasoning motives.
     telephoned because ....
A.   Oscar didn't want to .
B.   Mona didn't want to.
C.   they didn't know the number.
D.   they weren't sure if they could
     come.
8.   Oscar and Mona arrived .....   Recognition or recall of details.
A.   on foot.
B.   in their car.
C.   by taxi.
D.   by bus.
9.   Mona ....   Recognition or recall of the
A.   knew the narrator's wife well.   main idea, and getting the direct
B.   had only seen photographs of her.   meaning of words.
C.   thought she looked thinner.
D.   had been worried about her health.
10. Oscar and Mona complained   Getting the direct meaning of .
     about the journey because ..... words.
A.   it was such a long flight.
B.   the narrator's house was difficult to get to.
C.   they got on the wrong train.
D.   they got wet travelling.

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