

IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS IN A TERTIARY LEARNING  
ENVIRONMENT

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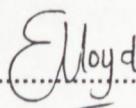
**IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS IN A TERTIARY LEARNING  
ENVIRONMENT**

BY ELME M. LLOYD

THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
MASTERS DEGREE IN TECHNOLOGY: EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL OF  
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DATE OF SUBMISSION: SEPTEMBER 1998

This is to certify that the content of this thesis is my own and that opinions  
expressed therein are my own and not necessarily those of the Technikon. This  
thesis has not previously been submitted for academic evaluation.

Signature: .....  .....

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## OPSOMMING

Voltoende luistervaardighede as 'n onmisbare kommunikasie-vaardigheid beïnvloed die leerproses positief. Toereikende luistervaardighede is baie belangrik vir lektore se lesings en studente se leerprestasie aan teknikons in die Wes-Kaap. Die standaard van opleiding in luistervaardighede van lektore wat Engels aan teknikons in die Wes-Kaap onderrig, kom ter sprake, want dit word as 'n noodsaaklike vaardigheid beskou. 'n Vraelys, voltooi deur lektore in Engels aan teknikons in die Wes-Kaap, het daarop gedui dat lektore moontlik oor gebrekkige opleiding in luistervaardighede beskik wanneer hulle studente in die leerproses ondersteun.

As vertrekpunte is inligting versamel oor hoe lektore waarderende en kreatiewe luister kan verbeter; watter onderwysstrategieë lektore kan gebruik om studente tot konstruktiewe luister aan te moedig; of werkwinkels aangebied word om luistervaardighede te verbeter; of opleiding vir die doel aan die bepaalde teknikons beskikbaar is; en of oudiovisuele materiaal gebruik word om meer effektiewe luister by studente te help kweek. Hierdie inligting is toe in ooreenstemming met die doel wat vir hierdie studie gestel is, verwerk.

Om die belangrikheid van luister in die leerproses te ondersoek, is daar 'n literatuurstudie onderneem met die doel om eerstens dieper insig in die belangrikheid van luistervaardighede in die leerproses te verkry;

tegnieke om luistervaardighede te verbeter; en om doeltreffende luisterstrategieë te bepaal ten einde lektore meer bedag te maak op doeltreffende luistervaardighede en die uitwerking daarvan op die leerproses.

Ten tweede het die literatuurstudie die belangrikheid van luistervaardighede in 'n opvoedingsperspektief geplaas en die toepaslikheid van die verskillende leerprosesse beklemtoon om 'n beter begrip van leer te bekom sodat studente daardeur in die leerproses ondersteun kan word. Verskeie leerteorieë word dan ontleed om die belangrikheid daarvan in die onderwys aan te toon, en die beginsels van taalverwerking word bespreek om die belangrikheid van kennis in die leerproses te beklemtoon.

Ten derde fokus die literatuurstudie op die verband tussen luister en leer en die invloed van verskillende leerteorieë op die luisterproses. Dit verskaf 'n beter begrip van die belangrikheid van luister in die leerproses en dui op metodes om toereikende luistervaardighede te onderrig, wat die lektore in staat stel om waarderende en kreatiewe luister te verbeter.

'n Ontleding van die vraelys wat aan die fokusgroep gestuur is, n.l. lektore wat Engels aan teknikons in die Wes-Kaap onderrig, het getoon dat hierdie lektore 'n behoefte het aan meer opleiding om studente toereikende luistervaardighede te help verwerf. Met die oog

op die verbetering van sowel lektore as studente se luistervaardighede word daar uit inligting wat deur middel van die vraelys bekom is, onderrigstrategieë uiteengesit vir gebruik deur lektore wat Engels onderrig.

Die gevolgtrekking word gemaak dat behoorlike opleiding in luistervaardighede noodsaaklik is vir lektore wat Engels onderrig aangesien dit sal verseker dat studente toereikende luistervaardighede verwerf terwyl dit ook met die leerproses kan help. Om die opleiding te verbeter, word aanbeveel dat lektore onderrigstrategieë soos waarderende en kreatiewe luister gebruik om studente-luister aan te moedig. Werkwinkels en indiensopleiding in luistervaardighede aan teknikons in die Wes-Kaap moet op 'n gereelde basis gehou word. Lektore behoort gereeld toereikende luistervaardighede aan die dag te lê om studente se luistergedrag te verbeter. Eweknie- en selfevaluering behoort gebruik te word om lektore se eie luistergedrag te ontleed sodat hulle as rolmodelle in luister vir studente kan dien. 'n Minder lektor-gerigte benadering behoort beter luister by studente aan te moedig. Groepwerk as 'n onderrigmetode kan selfs in groot groepe meer onafhanklike leer in 'n klassituasie laat plaasvind. Indiensopleiding in luister wat vir lektore aangebied word, behoort beide lektore en studente te bevoordeel en die gereelde gebruik van oudiovisuele toerusting kan studente en lektore se luistervaardighede verbeter.

## ABSTRACT

Adequate listening skills as an indispensable communication skill positively affect the learning process. Adequate listening skills are essential to lecturers' teaching and students' learning performance at technikons in the Western Cape. The standard of training/education in listening skills of lecturers teaching English at technikons in the Western Cape has raised concern, as it is considered a vital skill in the learning process. A questionnaire completed by lecturers teaching English at these technikons suggests a lack of adequate listening skills when assisting students in the learning process.

As points of departure, information was collected on how lecturers can enhance appreciative and creative listening; what teaching strategies the lecturer can use to encourage students to listen constructively; whether workshops are conducted to improve listening skills; whether training is available for this purpose at certain technikons; and whether the use of audio-visual material in a listening programme will assist in more effective student listening. This information was then processed in terms of the aims formulated for this study.

In order to investigate the importance of listening in the learning process, a literature study was conducted with the object, firstly, of gaining a greater understanding of the importance of listening skills in the learning process; of ascertaining techniques used to improve

listening; and of determining effective listening strategies to make lecturers more aware of effective listening skills and their effects on the learning process.

Secondly, in the literature study the importance of learning is placed in an educational perspective. This emphasised the relevance of the different learning processes for developing a better understanding of learning in order to assist lecturers and students in the learning process. Various learning theories were then analysed to indicate their importance in education, and the principles of language learning were discussed in order to highlight the importance of knowledge in the learning process.

Thirdly, the literature study focused on the relationship between listening and learning and the influence of the different learning theories on the listening process. This produced a better understanding of the importance of listening in the learning process and suggested that methods to teach adequate listening skills enable lecturers to enhance appreciative and creative listening.

An analysis of the questionnaire sent to the focus group, namely lecturers teaching English at technikons in the Western Cape, showed that these lecturers felt the need for more training/education in listening skills in order to assist their students in gaining adequate listening skills. On the basis of information obtained by means of the

questionnaire, teaching strategies for lecturers teaching English are outlined with the object of enhancing lecturers' and students' listening skills.

The conclusion is drawn that proper training/education in listening skills is imperative to lecturers teaching English as this will ensure students' acquisition of adequate listening skills while assisting in the learning process. To improve this training/education, it is recommended that teaching strategies such as appreciative and creative listening be used by lecturers to encourage student listening. Workshops and in-service listening skills training at technikons in the Western Cape should also be held on a regular basis. Lecturers should regularly demonstrate adequate listening skills in order to improve students' listening behaviour. Peer evaluation and a self-evaluation should be used to assess lecturers' listening behaviour in order to encourage them to act as role models in listening for their students. A less lecturer-centred approach would encourage improved listening behaviour in students. Group work as a teaching method could provide more independent learning and listening skill practice to students even when in large groups in a lecture room situation. In-service training in listening provided for lecturers and frequent use of audio-visual equipment could benefit both lecturers' and students' listening skills.

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## CHAPTER 1

### **OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY: AIMS, PROBLEM STATEMENT, CONCEPTS, RESEARCH FRAMEWORK, HYPOTHESIS, STUDY METHODS, OUTLINE OF STUDY AND RESEARCH PLAN**

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

A highly topical and important issue in the nineties in South Africa is the way that language is taught in tertiary institutions. This probably will continue to be an important issue in view of a national language policy providing for eleven official languages. There is much debate over questions in respect of the medium of instruction, language policy, the multilingual classroom, and language problems of students studying at tertiary institutions.

Barkhuizen (1995:19), a Rhodes University linguist, remarks that although English Second Language (ESL) teaching at tertiary institutions in South Africa is similar to the rest of the world, the practical application is different. He identifies the lack of facilities, especially electronic facilities, few textbooks, large classes, and the teaching by second language English speaking teachers as only some of the problems facing ESL teaching in South Africa. Marais (1995:5) refers to an additional problem, namely that with South Africa's eleven official languages it is impossible to teach all tertiary students in their mother

tongue.

Another major problem; that of inadequate listening skills, negatively affects the learning and teaching of English as a second language at tertiary institutions (Marais, 1995:6). This nationwide problem at tertiary institutions in South Africa, with technikons in the Western Cape as examples in the study, negatively affects the learning and teaching of English. The continual political and economic changes in the Western Cape and in South Africa might be distracting factors which could influence students' listening behaviour in a classroom situation. Multi-cultural classrooms and students from different educational backgrounds could cause emotional problems in that students might feel superior or inferior in a learning situation, which could have a negative effect on listening.

Steil (1984:13) states that in these confused and stressful educational times, a simple yet significant fact of education remains: students' learning success is directly linked to listening ability. Students' success in learning English is also related to their listening ability. Steil (1984:13) further emphasises that effective listening is not inherent. Knowledge, attitudes and behaviours which encourage effective student listening should be taught and reinforced. In a South African context, a proposed National Language Plan for South Africa, described in the LANGTAG report (RSA,1996:127), suggested that options for a language syllabus should be reviewed whereby second/third language

learners of English are provided with a system of credits for listening i.e. receiving recognition for oral/listening skills at a different level to that of writing skills in language. This proposed language plan would be in line with the NQF principles (National Qualifications Framework requirements, i.e. certification of skills, prior knowledge and formal education) of flexible credit accumulation and recognition of prior learning (RSA, 1996:127).

Furthermore, adequate listening skills are essential both to students' learning and lecturers' teaching performance, and will be thoroughly researched in this study. The focus will be on first-year students, whose mother tongue is not English and studying English for the first time as a subject at technikons in the Western Cape, as they experience problems when learning and comprehending English in a class environment as described in the LANGTAG report (RSA, 1996:127).

## 1.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is to determine whether there is a need for designing a teaching plan for lecturers teaching at tertiary institutions, specifically technikons, and to identify support in teaching listening skills to first-year students. Before a teaching plan can be designed for lecturers, the following questions need to be addressed:

- what teaching strategies can the lecturer implement to encourage students to listen constructively, i.e. to listen with insight and be able to follow learning instructions?

- are workshops conducted to improve listening skills of lecturers and students?
- is training available for the improvement of listening skills?
- will the use of audio and video tapes, films, and other media as tools in a listening program assist students in more effective listening?

In the light of the above, the following aims can be formulated:

- to emphasise the history of listening and learning as a field of study;
- to stress the importance of adequate listening skills in teaching or learning English;
- to indicate the relationship between listening and learning;
- to design teaching strategies for lecturers so as to guide students to productive, appreciative and creative listening.

### 1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the USA, listening is regarded as one of the determinants of literacy in the country. In 1978 the US Congress added speaking and listening as basic subjects to be taught in public schools. Unfortunately there is little or no emphasis on the teaching of listening in South Africa, yet listening skills are vital because they help determine how people relate to others in order to learn (Van der Merwe, 1991:12). There is an urgent need for effective listening skills in the present teaching learning situation in all South African educational institutions.

Lecturers could use many different ways to enable students to listen effectively, and consequently to learn optimally. It is unfortunate that listening is typically thought of as the responsibility of the listener. When students do not listen effectively, lecturers need to re-evaluate the experiences they provide for students in which listening is an essential component (Swafford & Paulos, 1993:401).

The following questions could help lecturers plan lessons in which listening is of prime importance.

- Do students have the necessary information (background knowledge/ purpose for listening) that will enable them to learn new concepts orally?
- What kind of learning experience can lecturers provide to help build the students' background knowledge?
- How can the lecturer sequence those experiences so that students can use their new knowledge as they listen?
- What strategies would be effective for activating students' background knowledge?
- What kind of questions would be appropriate to facilitate listening?
- What would be the best time to ask questions?
- What clues are available in textbooks (eg. illustrations, context clues) to help students to learn as they listen?
- What kind of activities could be used to summarise what students learn from listening?
- What kinds of activities can be used to get students actively

involved with concepts after listening is completed?

A great deal of students' time is spent on listening during lectures (Brown, 1987:3). Wolvin (1984:17) adds that even up to 90 % of class time in high school and colleges is spent in listening to discussions and lectures. Indeed, listening is so integral to the learning process that Wolvin (1984:18) further remarks that listening is the critical factor in the attrition and retention of college students. Among the students who fail their examinations, deficient or inadequate listening skills have a stronger influence on students' achievements, than reading or academic aptitude (Wolvin, 1984:18).

#### 1.4 CONCEPTS

Definitions of the various concepts will be given where relevant in the study. Definitions will be formulated for concepts such as listening and learning.

#### 1.5 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The study will be limited to listening skills of lecturers and students with specific reference to the acquisition of English as learning medium, used mainly by African speakers at technikons in the Western Cape.

#### 1.6 HYPOTHESIS

There is a presumption that lecturers teaching English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape have not had sufficient

training in listening skills to enable them to assist students in mastering effective listening, that is listening for understanding, towards the ultimate goal of effective learning.

## 1.7 STUDY METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The study will comprise, firstly, a comprehensive literature study. As relatively limited information is available in South Africa on the subject, it was necessary to utilise foreign sources which will be made applicable to the South African situation. Secondly, questionnaires completed by lecturers in English at the Cape Technikon and Peninsula Technikon, respectively, will form the basis for information on lecturers' and students' listening skills, and thirdly, will be followed by a relevant discussion with students. The processed information will be presented in chapter five and consequent conclusions and recommendations in chapter six. The questionnaire will focus on the necessity of adequate listening skills when teaching English as a foreign language at tertiary level, with special reference to the following:

- the influence of adequate listening skills on the learning process of students mastering English as a foreign language;
- the extent to which some tertiary institutions, in this instance technikons mentioned, meet the needs of lecturers in the acquisition of listening skills;
- the extent to which the technikons provide audio and visual materials for improving the listening skills of lecturers teaching

English as a foreign language.

The discussion with students studying English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape will focus on the importance of effective listening in a classroom situation to enable students to optimise their learning experience.

### 1.8 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

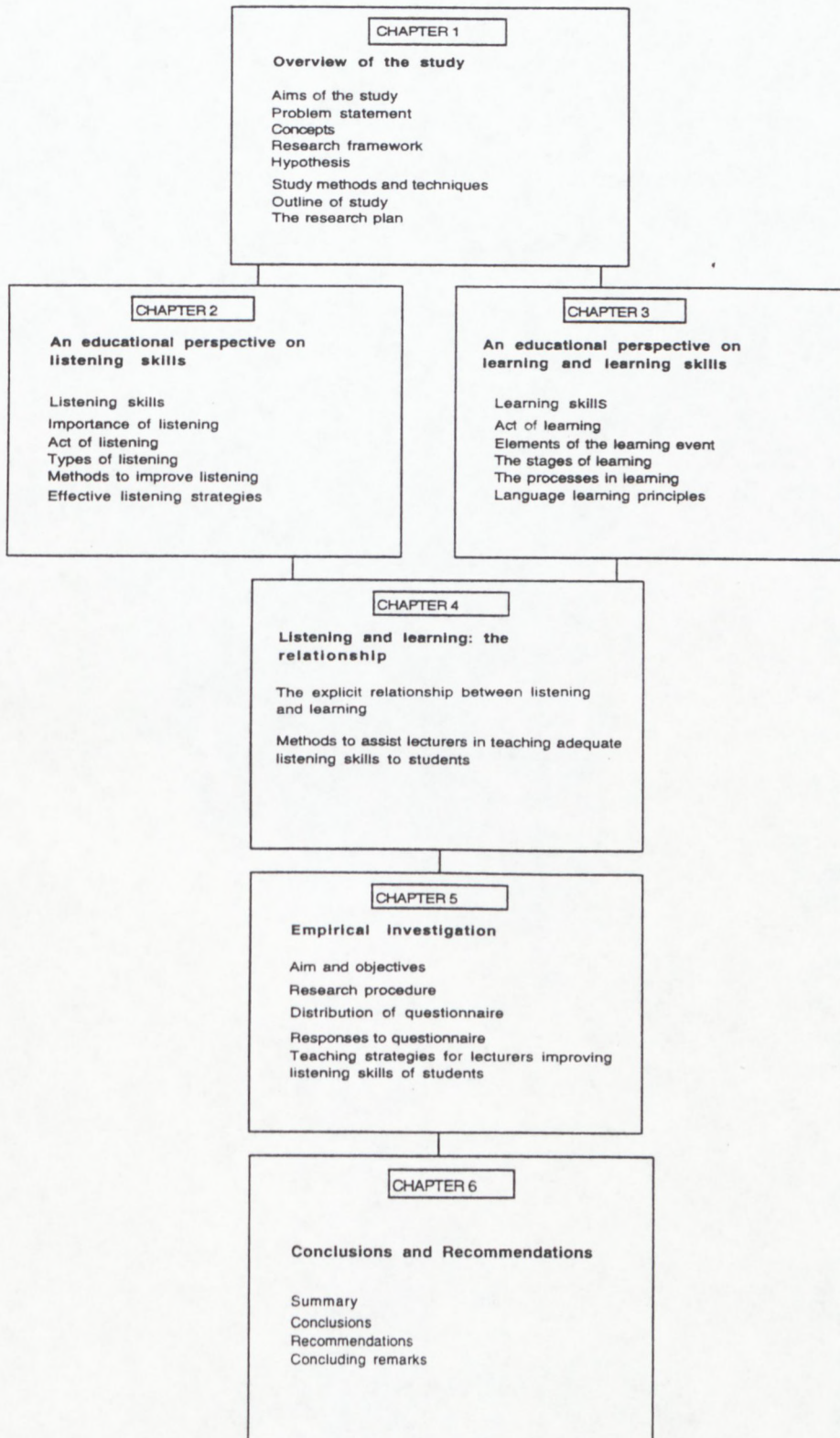
Chapter one contains a brief discussion of the influence of inadequate listening skills on the learning process, states the study's aims, gives the research framework and formulates a schematic research plan.

In chapter two, a literature study includes the discussion of listening and learning skills, their effects on students and lecturers and puts the above in an educational perspective. Chapter three covers an examination of learning and learning theories and features a discussion of the educational implications of the different learning theories on listening skills. In chapter four an explanation is given of the relationship between listening and learning and the implications of this relationship. In chapter five the results of an empirical study will be discussed in order to establish the importance of adequate listening skills when teaching or learning English as a foreign language at tertiary level.

As a result of the research, conclusions will be drawn and specific

recommendations made in chapter six in regard to shortcomings and problem areas in the acquisition of listening skills when learning English as a foreign language. Finally, a lesson plan and suggested workshop programme in listening skills will be drawn up to assist lecturers teaching adequate listening skills to students at technikons in the Western Cape. The research plan for this study can schematically be formulated as follows:

## 1.9 THE RESEARCH PLAN



## CHAPTER 2

### AN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON LISTENING SKILLS

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Listening, as an integral part of the communication process, is an important skill and should therefore receive special attention in language education at any level. Throughout a lecture/lesson, students are required to listen, and listening, often dominates the lecture/lesson time (Swafford & Paulos, 1993:401). Little research on listening in the classroom since the 1950s and 1960s has been done, nor has listening received substantial attention in textbooks and professional journals, even though educators believe that listening is important for the development of oral language, reading and writing (Swafford & Paulos, 1993:401). The emphasis on reading and writing has therefore crowded out attention to listening. Swafford & Paulos (1993:401) further believe that listening deserves to receive attention of lecturers and researchers as a necessary, integrated part of the learning process.

To ensure that active listening becomes an integral part of the learning process, lecturers should plan carefully to encourage active listening, which will be further discussed in chapter 4. In this chapter listening and listening behaviour will be discussed and their effects on students and lecturers will be put in an educational perspective.

## 2.2 LISTENING SKILLS

### 2.2.1 OVERVIEW

The groundwork for the recognition of listening as a specialist discipline was established in the late 1940s by the pioneering works of the “fathers of listening” namely James Brown, Ralph Nicols and Carl Weaver (Feyten, 1991:173).

From the mid-50s to the late 1970s, researchers focused on the pedagogical aspects of listening. The researchers on listening concentrated mainly on comprehensive and critical listening. Farra (1983:30,36) illustrates two major turning points in the understanding of listening: the emphasis on **empathic listening** (that originated with Carl Rogers in the 1960s) and, more recently, the emphasis on **relational listening** that stresses the importance of the entire environment to listeners.

On the basis of an examination of the literature on listening, Feyten (1991:174) claims that listening is central to all learning. Feyten’s statement could be true, but is an oversimplification in that it fails to explain how the hearing-impaired succeed in learning through other means than listening. Feyten (1991:174) also states that more than forty-five percent of total communication time is spent on listening while speaking accounts for thirty; reading sixteen percent; and writing, nine percent. This statement implies incorrectly that people always listen while others talk. Listeners could easily be distracted and therefore

could feign listening.

Brown (1980:39) suggests for students up to about the sixth grade, listening is the most efficient learning mode. Sixty percent of students' classroom time in elementary school is spent on listening. From then on, students learn to make use of other modes, their listening ability begins to deteriorate and drop by the time they enter college - which can create problems since the author cited above, claims that the lecture system which draws heavily upon listening skills, remains the most common in higher education.

In conjunction with Brown's (1980:39) view of students' listening behaviour, Barker (1981:102) claims that college students averaged 53 % of their waking hours listening, 17 % reading, 14 % writing and 16 % speaking (fig. 2.1). Given students' burdensome reading and written assignments, it seems probable that people in a non-educational environment average a higher percentage of their waking hours listening. Baker's statement could be doubtful because most people don't listen, or at least, not at full stretch.

Tubbs & Moss (1987:179) show a different breakdown of the communication functions in fig. 2.2 which claims that listening is used as a method of taking in information and is used far more than reading and writing combined; and is therefore a vital communication function.

Fig. 2.1 Listening activity during waking hours (Barker, 1981:102)

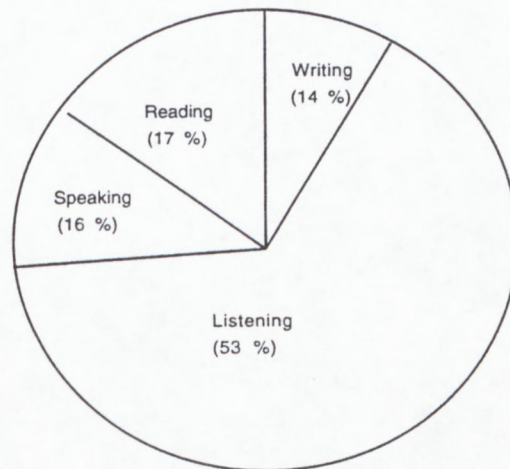
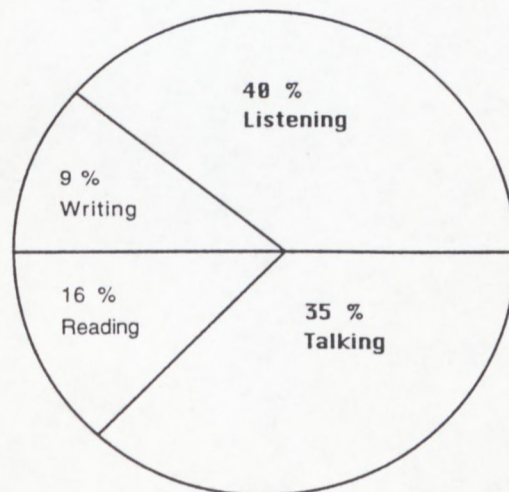


Fig. 2.2 Listening activity in terms of the verbal communication process (Tubbs & Moss, 1987:179)



Schematic models like these are problematic in that they lead to the question of how much actual listening is taking place at tertiary institutions. It is clear from figs. 2.1 and 2.2 that even allowing for some variance of the time people spend communicating, the greatest portion of time is spent in listening, although the authors cited earlier are not taking in account the actual time that real listening is taking place.

These schematic models are not totally applicable to situations at technikons in the Western Cape because of the unique circumstances at these technikons. In a fast changing South Africa with multi-cultural classrooms, students studying at technikons in the Western Cape could easily be distracted by social and political situations around them and could therefore experience difficulty to focus entirely on the subject matter which could lead to inadequate listening.

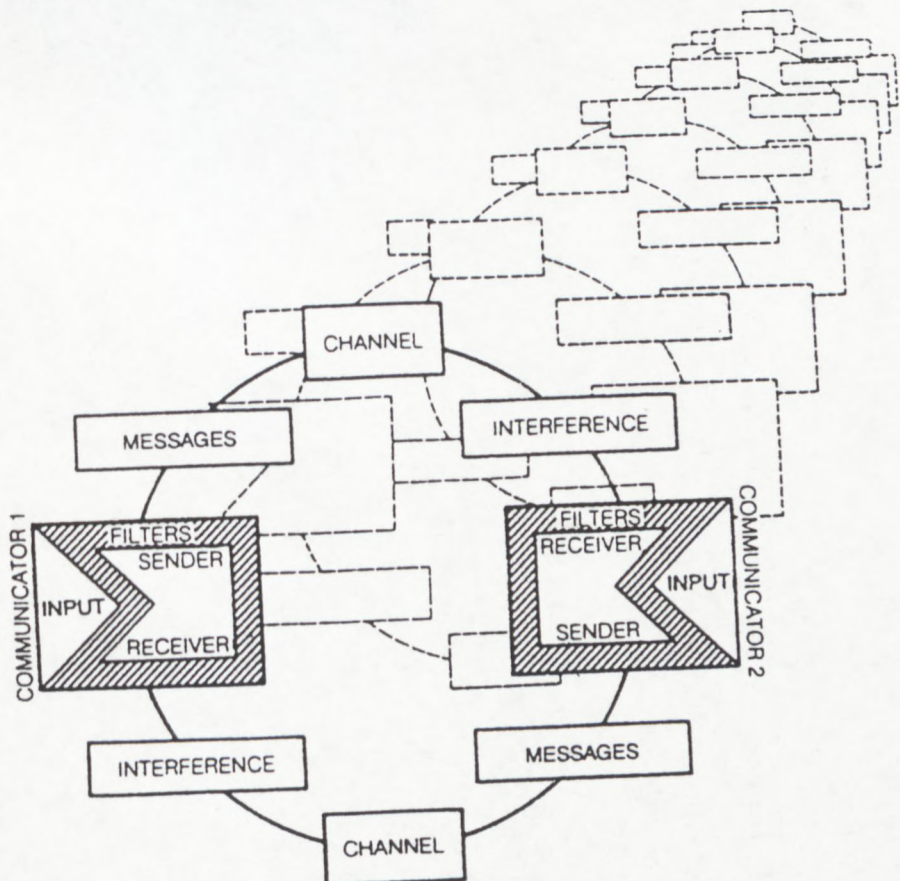
Brown (1980:10) states that one's listening ability lies at the very heart of all growth, from birth through to the years of formal education. However, Brown's comment makes no provision for the fact that the hearing-impaired can hardly be said to rely on their listening ability to better their learning skills. Despite such generalisation, it is clear that the better those learning skills are developed, the more productive one's learning efforts become.

As much as listening is the foundation of formal education, it is also the foundation of language acquisition (Brown,1987:3). This statement emphasises the importance of formal education but does not allow for distance learning which is almost entirely dependant on written material. Listening could therefore be only one, although a very important one, of the foundations of formal education and language acquisition and should be therefore especially encouraged at technikons in the Western Cape.

## 2.2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING

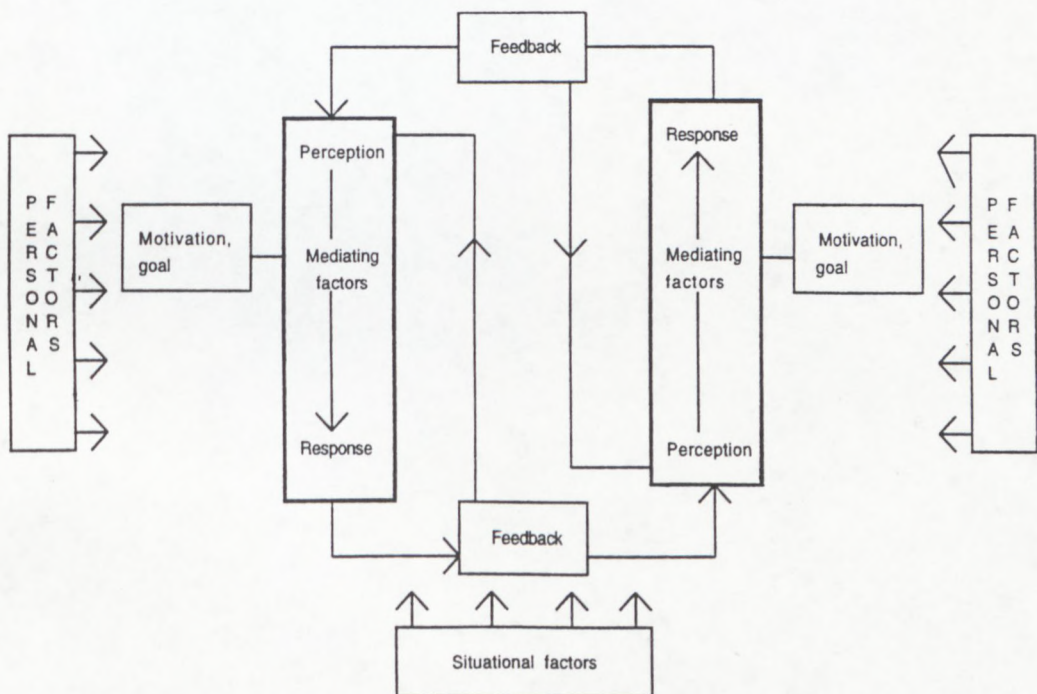
According to the model (fig. 2.3) used by Tubbs & Moss (1987:181), the most basic human communication event is a linear, one-way process between two people. For the communication cycle to be complete, the receiver (person receiving the message) must provide the desired feedback, for example responding verbally (through words) or nonverbally (through gestures, for example a nod of the head) to the sender's message. Without effective listening, successful feedback becomes impossible and the communication process is a failure. Effective listening thus becomes a vital element in human communication.

Fig. 2.3 The Tubbs Communication Model (Tubbs & Moss, 1987:181)



Barker (1981:103) portrays the communication process in his model of interpersonal interaction (fig. 2.4) as a more complex process. This model, which allows for a two-way process, takes in account the goals of both interactors (sender and receiver), the influence of personal and situational factors and the fact that feedback comes from both the interactors' responses to allow for the influence of emotions, as well as cognition or feelings.

#### 2.4 Model of Interpersonal Interaction (Barker, 1981:103)



The communication process is an active and dynamic process between listeners and speakers. The listener uses different strategies to comprehend the meaning of the speaker's message. One of these strategies is to gain the meaning of the speaker's message (Tubbs & Moss, 1987:181). Another strategy is to gain sufficient background

knowledge of the speaker. Jacobs (1993:97) points to the important role that background knowledge plays in comprehending the speaker's message. Jacobs (1993:97) further argues that a spoken or written text does not in itself carry meaning. A text only provides directions for listeners or readers as to how they should retrieve or construct the intended message from their own previously acquired knowledge. There are three different types of background knowledge that the listener could use; namely **encyclopedic knowledge**, **knowledge of those involved in the discussion**, and **contextual knowledge** (Jacobs, 1993:97).

#### 2.2.2.1 Encyclopedic knowledge

This is the knowledge of general rules for interpreting social actions. These rules described by Jacobs (1993:98) are used to focus on a situation which, is a meaningful act and occurs repeatedly in any culture eg. a religious service. Knowledge of these social rules could facilitate a correct interpretation to the listener of the meaning of the speaker's message. Knowledge of the significant differences in cultures at technikons in the Western Cape, could assist in better understanding of a speaker's intended message and should therefore be encouraged.

#### 2.2.2.2 Knowledge of those involved in discussion

This is the background knowledge shown by those of the same culture and language when taking part in a discussion. When the listener

listens to a foreign language speaker speaking English, there will not be immediate or natural shared knowledge between the two as in the case of listening to a native speaker speaking English. It is therefore necessary for the listener to gain sufficient background knowledge of the cultural implications implicit in a foreign tongue, so that the meaning of the speaker's message can be understood clearly (Jacobs, 1993:98). The differences in languages that are spoken at technikons could also lead to insufficient listening and understanding because a natural shared knowledge of students of the same culture and language will not be automatically present in a multi-cultural classroom.

#### 2.2.2.3 Contextual knowledge

A further factor is that communication takes place in a given context. The context is crucial to an understanding of the language, since it is the context that will offer cues to narrow down the possible meanings of the language (Jacobs, 1993;99). Again, the multi-cultural classroom could also cause confusion because the teaching situation in English language class will not necessarily provide a total understanding of the context .

#### 2.2.3 THE ACT OF LISTENING

Listening must not be confused with hearing. Hearing is merely a physical experience, whereas listening is a complicated process of absorbing, judging and acting on what one hears (Simoncelli,

1994:13). One reason for misconceptions about listening stems from the misuse of the term. Listening is a complex process involving four elements, namely hearing, attention, understanding and remembering (Tubbs & Moss, 1987:182; Wolvin & Coakley, 1982:25).

### 2.2.3.1 Hearing

This first element in the listening process is the automatic physiological process of receiving aural stimuli. Three events take place if hearing occurs successfully. First, the receiver identifies sounds correctly and discriminates between and among speech sounds. Second, the receiver places these sounds in a meaningful order or sequence so that they may be recognised as words. Third, the receiver recognises words in a pattern that reflects a particular language, in this case English, which then helps to convey the message from the communicator to the receiver (Tubbs & Moss, 1987:182).

Another aspect of hearing is the speaker's rate of speech. The average native speaker using English produces between 100 and 150 words per minute (Tubbs & Moss, 1987:182). However, research on compressed speech shows that most people are able to comprehend speech rates up to 400 or even 500 words per minute (Goss, 1982:9). The ability to process information four times faster than the average person speaks, could become a disadvantage while listening because only a quarter of our listening capacity is taken up and the rest becomes spare time. This problem should be particularly considered

in a Western Cape technikon situation because, with students' different ability in English, some students will be able to comprehend information much faster which could lead to boredom and inadequate listening in a classroom situation.

#### 2.2.3.2 Attention

Attending to stimuli in the environment requires focusing one's conscious awareness on specific stimuli. Goss (1982:9) quite rightly points out that a listener is able to exercise considerable voluntary control of what is heard. The phenomenon whereby a listener attends to certain stimuli while filtering out others, is called **selective attention**. If students are encouraged to concentrate on the teaching material, more effective listening will take place.

#### 2.2.3.3 Understanding

This is the most complicated element in the listening process and is also referred to as auditing (Tubbs & Moss, 1987:183). Understanding usually refers to the process whereby meaning is assigned to the words that are heard, and they closely correspond to the meaning intended by the person sending the message. If the focus is more on the listening effort, in trying to understand the intended meaning conveyed by the speaker whilst temporarily withholding the tendency to judge or finally evaluate that message, the receiver could considerably improve the ability to listen more effectively (Tubbs & Moss, 1987:183).

#### 2.2.3.4 Remembering

Most listening tests, to some extent, test how much is remembered from what has been heard and understood (Tubbs & Moss, 1987:184). There are two types of memory, short-term memory which allows one to cope with about five items of information at one time, and long-term memory which allows a person to store and retrieve information for a longer period of time (Tubbs & Moss, 1987:184). Active listening is a technique for rehearsing material in the short-term memory. Thus, active listening is most effective when learners periodically test themselves on how much has been remembered (Tubbs & Moss, 1987:184). Active listening in learning situations at technikons in the Western Cape should be encouraged. Research summarised by Barker (1981:104) indicates that immediately after something is heard, only half is remembered. Eight hours later only 35 % will be remembered and two months later a mere 25 %. This could be true in a usual or normal listening situation but not necessarily the case in a technikon situation in the Western Cape because of the sosio-cultural diversity of the groups which includes English, Afrikaans, Xhosa and Zulu as well as some other minority language groups.

Despite numerous research studies and efforts to win recognition for the field, consensus on a definition of listening has not yet been reached. Listening is more than simply hearing or perceiving aural stimulation and more than mere comprehension, as it was assumed in the 1950s (Feyten, 1991:174). Feyten (1991:175) agrees with Wolvin

& Coakley (1982:25) that the process of listening is the process of receiving, attending to, and assigning meaning to aural stimuli. Many researchers have resorted to adapting typical definitions of reading comprehension to the listening process (Mead, 1986:509). Lundsteen (1971:24) defines listening as the process where spoken language is converted to meaning in the mind.

Many definitions also include the process of responding. Rhodes (1987:22) defines listening in terms of four related activities:

- Sensing or taking in verbal and non-verbal messages;
- Interpreting or the process of understanding;
- Evaluating or distinguishing fact from opinion and agreeing or disagreeing with the speaker; and
- Responding or using verbal and non-verbal cues in reaction to a message.

Rhodes (1987:36) found the responding activity to be particularly important in determining the speaker's success in getting a point across and argues that the response stage is especially crucial for judging the success of the listening act as a whole.

#### 2.2.4 TYPES OF LISTENING

Feyten (1991:175) distinguishes four different types of listening, namely:

- Discriminative, which allows a listener to distinguish fact from

opinion;

- Comprehensive, which helps the listener to understand a message;
- Therapeutic, which enables the listener to evaluate and then to accept or reject a message; and
- Appreciative, which serves to gain a sensory impression.

Tubbs & Moss (1987:186), although giving a similar classification to Feyten's, distinguish between four types of listening, namely:

- Pleasurable listening, which includes entertainment, like films, plays, television, music etc. Although one may benefit intellectually or professionally from this type of listening, such gains are by-products and are not the main reason for engaging in pleasurable listening. This point assumes that all pleasurable listening is for the purpose of pleasure but the authors fail to mention the pleasure of the intellectual or professional kind.
- Discriminative listening, which is a more serious type of listening and is primarily used for understanding and remembering situations that involve listening to instructions, listening in the classroom, listening during working hours, and many others.
- Critical listening, which is usually employed when one suspects a biased source of information. Critical listening enables the listener to detect unethical persuasive devices such as propaganda employed by a communicator. In analysing all supporting materials, i.e. examples, quotations and statistics, it is crucial to

first identify the speaker's point of view and then evaluate the method of support used to prove it. This point creates some speculation on whether it is possible that one initially doesn't grasp the point of view but is alerted to it by the method. Supporting materials do not in themselves constitute an argument and may even generate a fallacy.

- Empathic listening, which as the term suggests, is when the listener tries to demonstrate empathy for the speaker. Empathic listening can also be described as "listening between the lines", a heightened awareness and interpersonal sensitivity to the entire message a person may be trying to communicate. Empathic listening implies a willingness not to judge, evaluate, or criticise but rather to accept and understand.

Comparing the two different classifications on the different types of listening postulated by Feyten (1991:175) and Tubbs & Moss (1987:186), respectively, it is clear that there is a fundamental similarity in that both authors distinguish discriminative listening which is useful in tertiary institutions such as technikons in the Western Cape where discriminative listening is significant for adequate learning to occur. There are also distinct differences in the above-mentioned classifications of listening. Tubbs & Moss' (1987:186) classification of discriminative listening corresponds more with Feyten's (1991:175) comprehensive listening rather than his discriminative listening.

The difficult task for the listener is to determine which skills are most

important in which situation. For example, in the case of empathic listening, Tubbs & Moss (1987:193) provide some guidelines on how to use this type of listening:

- emphasising listening rather than talking;
- following the other person's exploration rather than leading a person to areas on things one should be exploring;
- clarifying what the other person has said about feelings and thoughts rather than asking questions or telling the person what to think, see or feel;
- responding to the feelings implicit in what the other has said, rather than the assumptions or content that have been talked about;
- responding with empathic understanding and acceptance rather than with discomfiture, distanced objectivity, or over-identification.

Empathic listening requires very careful and focused listening and is one of the major techniques in improving listening skills in a communication situation and a sound knowledge of emphatic listening skills is needed to improve listening in general (Tubbs & Moss, 1987:193). This statement could be seen as rather uncritical; if the listener empathises too much with the speaker, it could hamper critical listening. In a Western Cape technikon situation, empathic listening could easily distract listeners and prevent critical listening which is essential in a learning situation.

Weissglass (1990:357) refers to a different kind of listening, namely constructive listening where the listener aims to enable the speaker to express feelings and construct personal understanding. Constructive listening differs significantly from the kind of listening engaged in by most educators. The profession promotes conversational or argumentative listening and interruptions are commonplace. Even educators who are good listeners, rarely listen carefully to students' feelings (Weissglass, 1990:357). The best way to learn constructive listening is where two people (a dyad) take turns listening to each other for a fixed amount of time (Weissglass,1990:359; Rhodes,1987:37). Lecturers teaching English to technikon students in the Western Cape Province could use dyads to improve students' listening skills in that it provides an opportunity to express emotions in a multi-cultural classroom which might lead to better understanding among students.

#### 2.2.5 METHODS TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS

Most of the experts agree that the first step to becoming a better listener is to develop an awareness of the problem of listening. The second step is the desire or motivation to behave differently. This second step is disputable in regard to how students see a problem if they don't know there is one and what incentive there is to alter listening behaviour. The third step is to change, or activate new behaviours (Tubbs & Moss, 1987:193; Steil, 1983:9). Before attempting to correct a listening problem, it is important to identify the

specific facets of the problem (Smith, 1987:1). The disadvantage in methods like the above is that they mostly assume that students are passive and capable of listening.

#### 2.2.5.1 INEFFECTIVE LISTENING AND LISTENING PROBLEMS

Tubbs & Moss (1987:194) state that ineffective listening may take any of the forms described below:

- Micro-sleep - no matter how hard one listens, attention will lapse periodically. Micro-sleep is a brief lapse of attention lasting from one to two seconds during which a person is oblivious to surroundings even though one may appear to be awake.
- Daydreaming - it occurs periodically due to the differential between speed of thought and rate of speech. Most first language English speaking people speak at about 125 to 150 words a minute. It implies that listening takes place at a faster rate than speaking does. The rate at which one listens varies from 250 to 500 words per minute. The time lapse between speaking and listening gives one the opportunity to daydream or to consider what one is going to say in return. Sometimes, this time lapse causes listeners to realise only later that they have failed to hear part of what was said.
- Feigning attention - students and other listeners often assume a listening posture while mentally reviewing personal problems or daydreaming about social activities. This feigning of attention could become a habit.

- Lazy listening - listening only to what is easy to understand is another excuse for poor communication.
- Anger - it can act as an emotional block to hearing the message, thus obstructing any possible gain that the listener might make.
- Environmental factors - environmentally related noises, e.g. industry and traffic noises; interruptions and often physical discomfort are problems over which the listener has little or no control. This point is not entirely true because one can listen in spite of discomforts although complete listening could be hampered in such situations. If the speech was unclear because of distractions, the listener should ask questions at the conclusion of the speech. Clarifications and verifications are essential components of what is called interactive listening.

Some other catches in faulty listening are thinking ahead for a response before hearing the full speech, framing remarks with which to embarrass the speaker because one disagrees with the message, or preparing to ask questions before having heard the full context of the speech (Tubbs & Moss, 1987:194).

It is important to be aware of and to understand the problems occurring during inadequate and ineffective listening in order to apply and use effective listening strategies in a communication and learning situation which will be discussed in the next point.

## 2.2.6 EFFECTIVE LISTENING STRATEGIES

In support of Barker (1971:17), Carl (1983:290) states that serious listening can be divided into two subcategories:

- Critical listening - it involves a variety of skills to distinguish between facts and opinions, between emotional and logical arguments and detecting bias and prejudice;
- Discriminative listening - it involves evaluating the speaker's argument and recognising propaganda. Carl's (1983:290) statement incorrectly assumes propaganda for a cause one does not believe in. Employing emotions typically used in propaganda, stops people from thinking logically. Discriminate listening according to Carl (1983:290) further involves drawing inferences and making judgements. In a technikon situation in the Western Cape, discriminate listening is highly important in that students need to evaluate the lecturer's argument and need to be made aware of the dangers of propaganda considering the changes in the political atmosphere in multi-cultural classrooms in the Western Cape area.

Carl's (1983:290) classification of listening differs from that of Tubbs & Moss (1987:186) in that the latter's classification of critical listening applies more to Carl's classification of discriminate listening than to her concept of critical listening. Feyten's (1991:175) classification of discriminate listening corresponds to Carl's critical listening rather than to what she terms discriminate listening.

To listen seriously, Carl (1983:291) suggests the following aids for the listener:

- Mentally review the main points as the speaker talks. Repeat them to yourself. This suggestion could cause problems because when repeating major points the listener could lose track of what will be said.
- Note the adequacy with which the speaker supports the main points. Listen for support systems like explanations, emotional appeal and illustrative development. Learn to be critical, particularly of the persuasive speaker, weighing and evaluating the speaker's words.
- Focus on key words to help retain supporting points.
- Anticipate what the speaker is going to say next.
- Pretend that the speech is to be reported to a friend or immediate employer.
- Think how the information can be used.
- Question the speaker's ideas.
- Make mental trips back to the beginning parts of the speech.
- Allow the speaker to express thoughts without any interruptions.
- Take notes. Record only key words and phrases.
- Interpret nonverbal behaviour for deeper understanding of the message.

The student, in this instance studying English at a technikon, could benefit from the strategies suggested by Carl (1983:291) to achieve serious listening. The first one among those mentioned above might

be problematic for slower listeners, because the repetition and reviewing of several main points during a lecture situation can cause a problem in retaining such information. For the inexperienced listener, the application of all the suggested listening strategies might be too arduous and should therefore only be seen as techniques or tools to assist in achieving adequate and serious listening skills.

Tubbs & Moss (1987:194-196) suggests the following steps to become an effective listener:

- Pay attention - before one can react appropriately to what a person says, one must pay attention. Most people tend to think of themselves as better listeners than they really are. A determined effort to pay attention has been found to considerably improve a person's listening. In addition, Tubbs & Moss (1987:194) pointed out that those who are otherwise good communicators may not be necessarily good listeners.
- Listen for the main points or ideas - to improve one's listening, the maintaining of motivation to pay attention by listening for the specific main idea in a message is an important way to be able to improve listening.
- Use of spare time - it is suggested that the spare time available to one (while the mind is working faster than the speaker's speech rate) may be used in extra thinking about what the speaker is trying to say.

Nichols & Stevens (1957:570) suggest firstly that one anticipates the speaker's next point. Secondly, one should mentally rehearse or review the points that the speaker has already covered. Thirdly, one should listen for the validity and quality of examples, statistics and testimonials the speaker uses. Fourthly, a listener should listen between the lines for what the speaker doesn't say but may be communicating nonverbally by the tone of voice or even by means of visual cues. This spare time that is available to the listener can be used to improve understanding and retention of a speaker's message.

Tubbs & Moss (1987:196) point to the following basic guidelines for effective listening as a practicable approach for any serious listener:

- Do not take listening for granted.
- Do not jump to conclusions before hearing all of a speaker's message.
- Do not become defensive about own thoughts and ideas.
- Do not be afraid to deal with feelings or emotions.
- Do not become preoccupied with words; listen for ideas and feelings.
- Do not initially criticise, evaluate or moralise.
- Do not get too excited about a speaker's points until there is a thorough understanding of the points.
- Do not confuse what one hears with what one wants to hear.
- Do not assume that meanings are absolute.
- Do not be overwhelmed by emotional reaction to words, ideas,

appearance or delivery.

Good listening manners are essential for successful listening (Carl, 1983:291; Curtis, 1986:19). The responsibility for understanding the messages lies with the listener and the recognition of this responsibility is an essential part of good manners. The listener should ignore the speaker's faults like poor eye-contact and distracting gestures. The listener should overlook negative aspects of voice quality, rate, and volume of speaking. It is wise to concentrate on the content of the message rather than the delivery of it.

Carl (1983:291) suggests further that the listener can reinforce the message by showing interest and approval. To do this, the listener should indicate, by facial expression and posture, interest in what the speaker has to say. The listener should take a seat where it is possible to easily hear the speaker. The listener should move away from inattentive and noisy students in a classroom situation, so as to minimise distraction.

Communication involves participation and mutual concern by both speaker and listener. A recognition of listener responsibility is an essential part of good manners when listening.

In support of good listening manners, Carl (1983:291) outlines some of the main nonverbal ways to demonstrate interest and attention as a

listener. First, the listener should be there to listen to the speaker. It implies an investment in time to listen adequately. Second, a relaxed body posture is likely to convey the message and make the speaker feel comfortable. Third, physical openness means facing the speaker. Fourth, sufficient eye-contact is necessary to notice the important facial messages sent by the speaker. Fifth, appropriate facial expressions like a friendly relaxed expression, demonstrates interest in the speaker and the message. Finally, nodding the head in confirmation shows interest rather than agreement on everything the speaker says. It is important to sharpen awareness of nonverbal communication in the listening process and lecturers should encourage this awareness in students studying at technikons in the Western Cape.

Another way in which effective listening could be assured is through the implementation of metacognition which is the awareness of and conscious control over skills like listening and reading. (Nieman,1993:281). The following metacognitive skills could be implemented when listening during a learning situation:

- Disclose the aims of listening assignments to enable students to establish already known material.
- Encourage the students to monitor the learning material during the listening process.
- Provide enough time for evaluating the material after the listening assignment is completed.

These listening strategies could be useful at Western Cape technikons to improve and assure effective listening in a classroom situation when learning English.

### 2.3 SUMMARY

In this chapter an attempt was made to emphasise the importance of listening and to clarify the question of what listening is. The different types of listening were discussed, including hearing, attention, understanding and remembering and it was finally suggested that most people, lecturers and students in particular, could benefit by improving their listening behaviour.

As a final word on listening, it would be worthwhile to keep in mind this ancient proverb: "It is significant that we have two ears but only one mouth, so that we might listen twice as much as we speak" (Tubbs & Moss, 1987:196).

## CHAPTER 3

### **AN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON LEARNING AND LEARNING SKILLS**

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

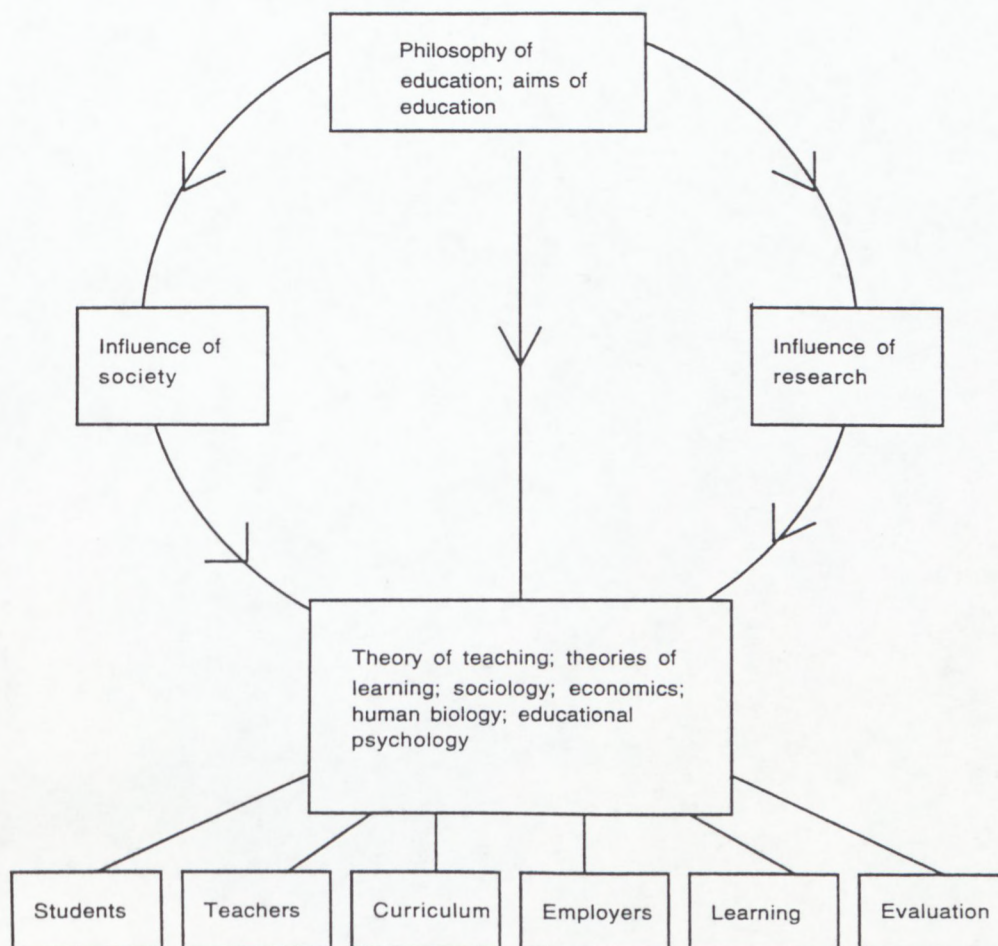
The different listening phases and the various types of listening discussed in chapter 2 support the suggestion that teachers and students could benefit by improving their listening behaviour in a classroom situation and especially students studying at technikons in the Western Cape area. It is also essential for the purpose of this study to look into the concept of learning and learning theories to be able to understand the relationship between listening and learning. In this chapter attention will be given to an overview of learning, the act of learning, learning theories and the educational implications of learning.

#### 3.2 LEARNING SKILLS

##### 3.2.1 OVERVIEW

From an educational perspective it is important to understand the relationship of learning in the whole spectrum of education. Fig. 3.1 illustrates this relation and may assist in the understanding of the factors influencing teaching and learning. Learning is the primary reason for the existence of schools and tertiary institutions.

### 3.1 Place of learning in a perspective of education (Carroll,1987:496)



Human beings are inseparable from learning (Gagné, 1988:1). Without learning, people would not know their names, their parents and where they live. People are therefore creatures of learning. Learning is a continuous process from the moment one is born to the end of one's life. The dependence of learning mainly on environmental circumstances implies a great responsibility for all members of the human race. The realisation that learning is largely dependent on events in the environment with which the individual

interacts, makes it possible to view learning as a phenomenon that can be examined closely and understood profoundly (Gagné, 1988:1).

A clear view on the act of learning is important to understand the process of learning, which will be discussed next .

### 3.2.2 THE ACT OF LEARNING

Many attempts have been made to define learning. In terms of education, learning has been treated as the way in which a student modifies or extends behaviour in the light of experience, i.e. adaptation. Learning has also been associated with a conscious intellectual effort when any subject matter is to be mastered (Carroll, 1987:496; Ommagio,1986:13).

Mwamwenda (1989:121) argues that learning refers to the change in a subject's (human and animal) behaviour in a given situation through repeated experience in that situation, provided the behaviour change is not related to the temporary state of the subject, e.g. fatigue, drug taking and maturation where human beings are involved. Changes in behaviour due to fatigue and drug abuse would therefore not qualify as learning outcomes. Certain behaviours may not be the product of learning, but rather maturation or the normal biological development of a person like walking and seeing. By definition, learning generally involves change of behaviour in response to what one has experienced, and this may be shown in either the way a person thinks

(cognitive), acts (psychomotor) or feels (affective) (Mwamwenda, 1989:121).

Gagné (1985:20) defines learning as a change in human disposition or capability that persists over a period of time and is not simply attributable to processes of growth. This change must be more than temporary; it must be capable of being sustained over some period of time and yet be distinguishable from the kind of change that is attributable to growth, such as a change in height or the development of muscles through exercise. Gagné (1985:20) shares the opinion that learning takes place when behavioural changes that are not related to normal growth, occur over a period of time.

For the purpose of this study, the general view of Gagné (1985:20) gains relevance through Biggs & Tefler (1987:49) who conclude that learning is the acquisition of skills or information through interaction with the environment. With the latter focus, learning may be defined as the occurrence of behavioural changes in people when skills/information are obtained in a given situation through repeated experience whilst engaged in interaction with the environment.

### 3.2.3 ELEMENTS OF THE LEARNING EVENT

Gagné (1985:23) introduces four elements in the learning event, namely the learner, the stimulus, memory and the response situation.

— The learner. Although it would be possible for the learner to be an

animal, this study will concentrate on the human being. Learners possess sensory organs, through which they receive stimulation; a brain, by means of which signals are transformed; and muscles, by means of which they demonstrate what they have learned.

- The stimulus. It contains the event(s) that will stimulate the learner's senses.
- The input to learning. It refers to the content 'recovered from the learner's memory. Such content has an already organised form which has resulted from previous learning activities.
- The response. The action that results from these inputs and their subsequent transformations is called response. Responses are often described in terms of their effects rather than their appearances. For example, a response might be the movement of the finger rhythmically over a small area of the scalp, but it may often be more useful to refer to the act of scratching the head.

Gagné (1985:23) uses the above four elements to conclude that learning takes place when a stimulus together with the contents of memory, affects the learner in such a way that one's performance changes from time to time, from what it was prior to being in that situation, to what it became some time after being in it. The change in performance prompts the conclusion that learning has occurred.

### 3.2.4 THE STAGES OF LEARNING

The learning process according to Biggs & Tefler (1987:70) has three

broad stages which will be described below, namely attending to particular stimuli in an environment occupied with activity; processing the information presented by the selected stimuli; and storing it so that it may be used later.

- Attending. A great amount of information is registered through the five senses, but is registered only briefly. A person can only attend to a limited number of things in the environment and therefore selects from a sensory register in order to attend to only one train of thought at a time.
- Processing. When the mind is made up to attend, rehearsing of information takes place by repeating it over and over again; or coding takes place, by linking it to something already known. Whether rehearsing or coding occurs, it is consciously done in the working/short-term memory.
- Storing. After processing, storing of the information in the long-term memory is needed in such a way that it can be recalled to consciousness when required in future.

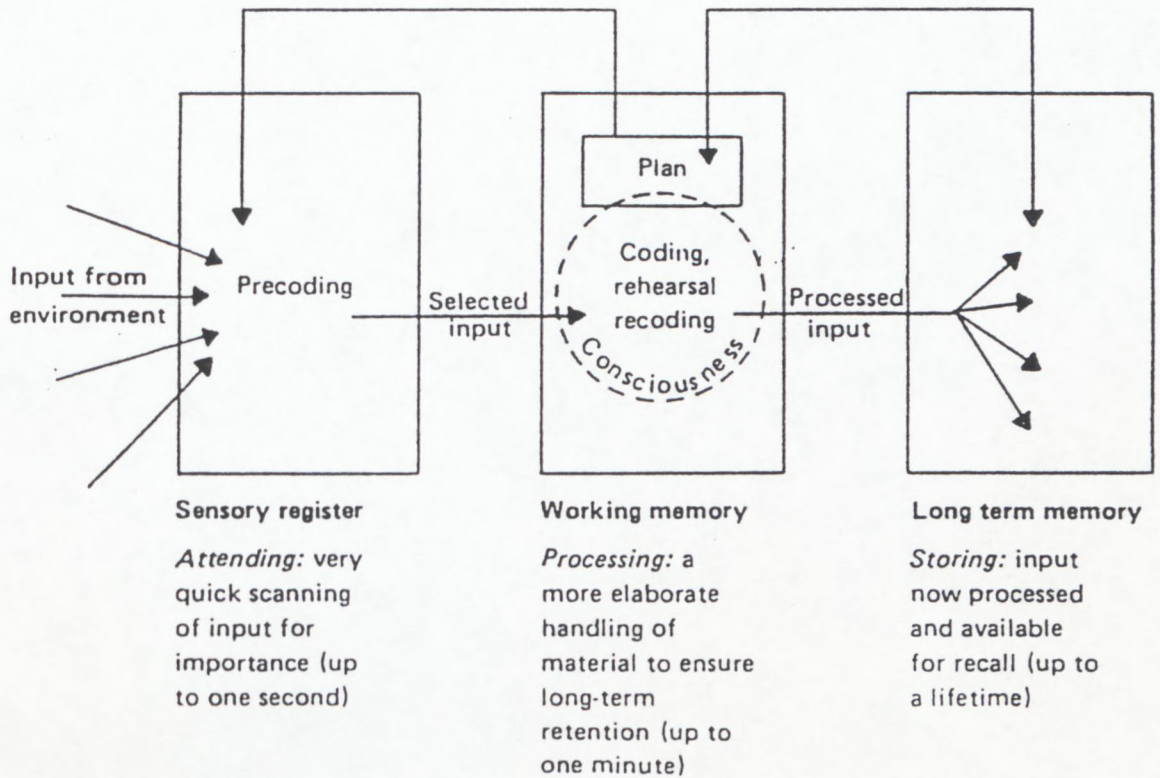
Each of the above stages requires that information be held long enough for the process in question to be carried out, thus involving three levels of memory.

Psychologists are divided into two main schools of thought on how to describe these levels. Biggs & Tefler (1987:71) point to the structural scholars (i. e. Atkinson and Shriften in 1968) who refer to these stages

as three “holding tanks” or storage systems in which attending, processing and storing are carried out; and the other school (i.e. Craik and Lockhart in 1972) emphasise the process of memorising rather than methods of storing.

Biggs & Tefler (1987:71) use a model of learning and memory to explain that the three stages of attending, processing and storing involve different time scales, namely ultra-short, short and long-term memory. In fig. 3.2 the three stages in learning and memorising are illustrated. These three stages could be seen as a three-part system. The sensory register is the stage where selection is carried out by a process called precoding. The working/short-term memory contains a plan where coding, rehearsing and processing take place. The plan is assembled momentarily from the long-term memory and is in a continual state of reshuffling. After being processed in the working memory, material is then stored in the long term memory (Biggs & Tefler, 1987:72).

Fig. 3.2 Three stages in learning and memorising (Biggs & Tefler, 1987:72)



### 3.2.5 THE PROCESSES IN LEARNING

Gagné (1985:27) on the other hand, sees learning as a set of processes. A more detailed explanation, as shown in fig. 3.3, of aspects like the sensory register, short and long-term memory, storage and retrieval is needed to understand the flow of information in the information-processing model which will be discussed.

#### 3.2.5.1 From sensory register to short-term memory

From the environment, the learner receives a stimulus that activates receptors in the body and is transformed to neural information. Initially,

this information is transformed into patterns for stimulation, a process called selective perception which enters some structure(s) called the sensory register, where it persists for a brief interval. Selective perception depends upon the learner's ability to attend only to certain contents of the sensory register while ignoring others (Gagné, 1985:28).

#### 3.2.5.2 Short-term memory storage

The transformed information then enters the short-term memory where it remains for a very limited period, up to two seconds. Once this limited capacity has been exceeded, old items are pushed out as new items are added to the short-term memory. Like Biggs & Tefler (1987:73), Gagné (1985:28) also mentions the ability of the short-term memory to rehearse or carry out silent, mental repetitions of information. Gagné (1985:29) also states that the rehearsal of information extends the capacity of the short-term memory to store items for longer time intervals.

#### 3.2.5.3 From short-term memory to long-term memory

The most critical transformation of information occurs when it leaves the short-term memory and enters the long-term memory. This process is called encoding. The information available in the short-term memory is now transformed into a conceptual or meaningful mode. The process of encoding takes many forms, e.g. form of tables, diagrams or detailed images of the information being learned. One of

the characteristics of encoded material (for entry into the long-term memory) is that it is semantically, or meaningfully organised (Gagné, 1985:29).

#### 3.2.5.4 Storage in long-term memory

Information in encoded form is stored in long-term memory. Gagné (1985:30) points out that storage is permanent and does not suffer loss through time. However, it is evident that what is stored may become inaccessible for a number of reasons. One of the reasons is that interference between newer and older memories may block the accessibility of stored information.

#### 3.2.5.5 Retrieval

In order to be verified as learned, information must be retrieved from the long-term memory. The retrieval process requires certain cues to be provided, either by the external situation or by the learner (from other memory sources). Recall of what has been learned may be demonstrated within a short time after the internal events of the learning has taken place. This process sometimes requires a reconstruction of the events remembered, rather than simply a reinstatement of them. When the recall of what has been learned involves application to a new situation, transfer of learning occurs (Gagné, 1985:30).

#### 3.2.5.6 Response generation

The next transformation along the route of information flow is accomplished by the response generator. This structure determines, first, the basic form of human responding, second, the pattern of the performance and third, the sequence and timing of the movement involved in the action to be accomplished. This process ensures that an organised performance will occur which is externally observed, e.g. when a motor skill such as writing with a pen is acquired, then this performance may be exhibited (Gagné, 1985:30).

#### 3.2.5.7 Feedback

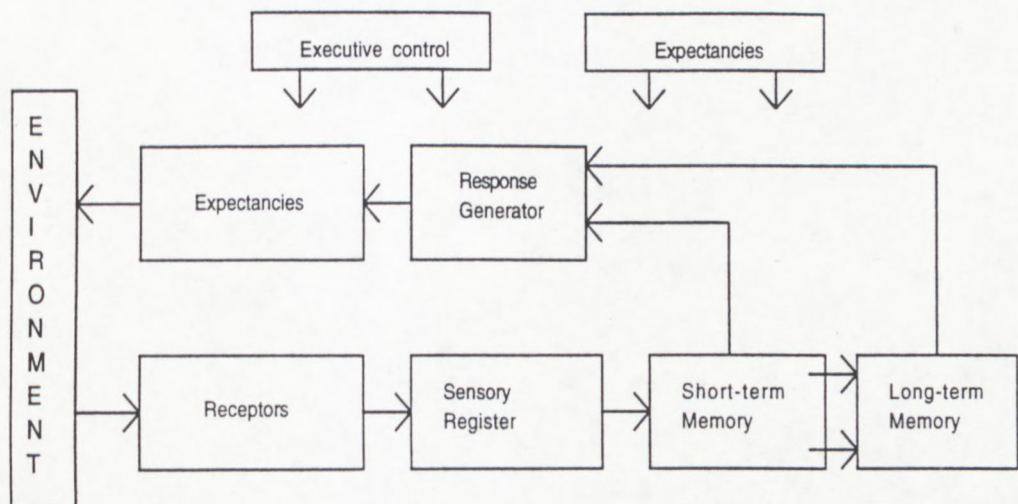
Feedback is provided by observation of the effects of the learner's own performance. This is the event that provides the learner with confirmation that learning has accomplished its purpose. Although feedback usually requires an external check from the environment, its major effects are internal ones that serve to fix the learning, to make it permanently available. This is called reinforcement (Gagné, 1985:31).

In fig. 3.3 processes such as the executive control and expectancy processes are listed. Both these processes have been largely acquired by the individual in previous learning. The executive control processes determine the learner's approach to one or more ways in processing information - attending, storing, encoding and retrieving information. These processes may also control what is rehearsed for

the short-term memory and what is retained in the long-term memory. The expectancy processes are a subclass of the executive control processes. They represent the specific motivation of the learner to reach the goal of learning that has been set for oneself (Gagné, 1985:31).

Up to this point, the events of learning have been concerned almost entirely with the internal structures of learning and memory, and with the processes they mediate. External events are also important because external stimulation is necessary to start information flow in the information-processing model of Gagné (1985:32), shown in fig. 3.3.

Fig. 3.3 Information-processing model (Gagné, 1985:32)



Learners who respond to stimuli in order to learn must first receive stimulation. This kind of external stimulation is fairly well known.

Increases in the intensity of stimulus, such as those made by bright lights or loud sounds are usually used for command of attention (Gagné,1985:32). External stimulation can be used when attention is needed for listening. A lecturer using audio visual material could benefit from this kind of external stimulation when attention is needed in a learning situation. Such a method could be useful in technikons in that an external stimulus could stimulate listening in a classroom with different competency levels in English.

The explanation of the different learning processes provides a clearer view on how learning takes place and sets a basis for comprehending learning theories as they relate to listening skills and the impact they have on the education process.

### 3.2.6 LEARNING THEORIES

To many educators the problems surrounding learning theories and the impact of these theories are not their complexity, but their apparent redundancy. The educator fails to see the need for theories on learning when the facts about learning seem to become apparent through everyday experiences in the classroom and elsewhere (Carroll, 1987:497).

A society which places such a great value on education and schooling, requiring the individual to attend school for long periods of time, must find the means to make education attractive and meaningful to the

individual learner (Carroll, 1987:497; Belasco,1981:14). Many attempts to develop a comprehensive theory for learning have been made since the advent of psychology as a discipline at the beginning of the century. It seems, though, that there is no single theory of learning which commands universal support and which can provide total solutions to educators (Carroll, 1987:497; Dunkel, 1986:99). Some of the most important learning theories will be discussed here in order to find a suitable theory to account for the necessity of adequate listening skills in the learning process, which will be addressed in chapter four.

In the first half of the century there were two major groups of learning theories - behaviourist and cognitive - and a third group of lesser prominence, which stems from theories of motivation, personality and social psychology (Mwamwenda, 1989:121). Theories which were based on different schools of thought in psychology, namely behaviourist, cognitive and Gestalt views of learning, will be briefly discussed below.

#### 3.2.6.1 Behaviourist view

The behaviourist view of learning is based on a stimulus and response (S-R) model which proposes that learning occurs on the basis of association between the stimulus and the response as well as the presence of some form of reinforcement. Four theories attracted to this view are outlined here: classical conditioning, operant conditioning,

connectionism and social learning (Mwamwenda, 1989:122).

#### 3.2.6.1.1 Classical conditioning

The Russian psychologist, Ivan Pavlov, taught dogs under controlled laboratory conditions to salivate in response to the sound of a bell. First, he provided a basic reflex: a stimulus (food) is presented and a reflex response (salivation) occurs unconditionally. Second, a new stimulus is used (bell), just prior to the presentation of food. This sequence, bell-food, is repeated several times. The dog at this stage is salivating in response to the food and will continue this behaviour even without food, hearing the bell. The bell becomes a conditioned response. If the bell is presented continually, without being backed up or reinforced by food, the salivation response fades or extinguishes. Pavlov reasoned that whatever has been learned can be unlearned by animals and human beings (Biggs & Tefler, 1987:145). Although Pavlov drew no educational implications from this theory, it is relevant to the lecturer in the sense of attaining knowledge of human behaviour in general.

#### 3.2.6.1.2 Operant conditioning

The second form of conditioning is known variously as trial-and-error learning, instrumental learning, and operant conditioning. Skinner, a psychologist, carried out many experiments which might be equated to human beings, using animals such as rats and pigeons. According to Skinner, a person's behaviour can be controlled through

reinforcement. In order to sustain a particular desirable behaviour, the frequency of reinforcement (a stimulus which increases the probability of a response reoccurring) must be increased, whereas to suppress undesirable behaviour, reinforcement must be decreased and finally eliminated. There are two major forms of reinforcement, namely continuous reinforcement (when rewarding an organism every time it makes a correct response) and intermittent or partial reinforcement (when rewarding an organism after it has made more than one correct response). Continuous reinforcement is advantageous in the sense that it accelerates the acquisition of new behaviour or learning. The disadvantage is that when reinforcement is discontinued the newly acquired behaviour may become extinct. Intermittent reinforcement is useful in that behaviour lasts longer and the disadvantage is that it is less effective for initial learning, when an organism needs constant reinforcement (Biggs & Tefler, 1987:146).

Operant conditioning has educational implications, some of which are similar in nature to those of classical conditioning. Mwamwenda (1989:133) argues that if the teacher/lecturer is thought of as the person responsible for student learning, and learning is defined as a change in behaviour, then a primary function of a teacher/lecturer is to alter student behaviour. Students are likely to learn effectively when their responses are rewarded, which makes operant conditioning significant in an educational sense. This leads to the argument that if listening can be taught, this learning experience can change a

student's or lecturer's listening behaviour, which will be further discussed in chapter 4.

#### 3.2.6.1.3 Connectionism

Thorndike, an American educational psychologist, was a pioneer in the study of animal psychology (Mwamwenda, 1989:133). He is associated with the theory of connectionism, or stimulus response (S-R), which argues that learning means establishing links or bonds between two or more events. Thorndike argues that animals learn by trial and error rather than by establishing an understanding of the relationship between different objects in a given situation. This argument was extended to human learning, which Thorndike said is governed by reward and punishment (Mwamwenda, 1989:133).

Thorndike's theory of connectionism has educational implications. The emphasis on reinforcement is similar to that in Skinner's theory. Learning occurs as a result of reinforcement, and therefore it is imperative that lecturers use reinforcement while interacting with students in a classroom situation (Biggs & Tefler, 1987:155).

Gagné (1985:36) refers to connectionism as chaining, which is the connection of a set of individual associations (S-R) in sequence. Of importance to acquiring these chains, each individual stimulus-response association must be previously learned. One cannot expect a chain such as opening a door with a key to be learned in an optical

way unless the learner is already able to carry out the S-R that constitute these links. Memorising verbal chains/sequences (eg. formulas, letters of the alphabet and rhymes) has an educational value in the sense that time can be saved by recalling a formula rather than referring to a written source (Gagné, 1985:36).

#### 3.2.6.1.4 Social learning theory

Bandura (1977) is one of the social psychologists who has played a leading role in the field of human behaviour (Mwamwenda, 1989:143). Social learning is based on what a person learns in the environment while interacting and observing others. Such learning assists the person in becoming socialised, so that what the person does, is congruent with the norms and expectations of the society. As a lecturer interacts with the students, they can learn from the lecturer about aspects like self-discipline, listening skills and altruism. While it is beneficial for the lecturer to inform students how to be kind, generous, studious and hardworking, it is far more effective to be a living example to the students (Mwamwenda, 1989:143). Learning by observing and imitating others is an effective method of learning and teaching which could also be effective when teaching listening skills. Multi-cultural students from deprived environments studying at technikons in the Western Cape could particularly benefit from positive role models in a classroom learning situation.

### 3.2.6.2 Cognitive view of learning

The behaviourist view of learning places emphasis on the stimulus-response (S-R) model and on the importance of reinforcement so that learning can occur. The cognitive view of learning emphasises insights, thinking, meaningfulness and organising of information for learning to occur. The cognitive view maintains the view that a learner is capable of controlling the learning activity and has an inherent capacity to learn (Mwamwenda, 1989:147). Some of the concepts presented by cognitive psychologists such as Bruner, Ausubel and Gagné will be examined in the next point.

Bruner, as cognitive psychologist, has shown interest in how learning occurs and how teachers/lecturers can facilitate learning (Mwamwenda, 1989:147). Among other things, Bruner is also associated with discovery learning, where any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectual form to any child at any stage of development. He believes that discovery learning is advantageous in a number of ways. First, it enables a learner to increase the ability to learn related material; second, it increases interest; third, it contributes to lasting retention of information; fourth, it trains students in important thinking operations such as comparing, interpreting and criticising and fifth, it trains students to learn. According to Mwamwenda (1989:148), discovery learning can be seen as one of the methods in teaching learning, rather than the only one. This approach also calls for ample time, which technikon timetables do not provide.

Reception learning (when students are presented with all possible information on a given topic in its final form) was developed by Ausubel, an American educational psychologist in 1978 (Mwamwenda, 1989:148). Reception learning is also referred to as meaningful or verbal learning or the subsumption theory. Ausubel was one of the first modern cognitive psychologists to concentrate on “meaningful learning”. For meaningful learning to take place, the learner must be ready and willing to learn and the new learning material must be potentially meaningful, which means that it should have the potential to be related to what the learner already knows. Learning can be made meaningful through the use of “**advance organisers**” which include general concepts, by giving an overview of the subject matter, by means of lesson outlines, by drawing attention to similarities and differences, and by reviewing earlier related work (Mwamwenda, 1989:148).

Compared with discovery learning, meaningful learning results in less frustration and fewer errors, and is a time-saver because information is presented in its complete and final form. Gagné (1985:37) is responsible for developing a theory of learning known as the **conditions of learning**. According to Gagné (1985:37) there are eight types of learning which occur hierarchically, that is, the lower order ones are achieved before the higher order ones. These types of learning are signal learning, S-R learning, chain learning, verbal association, discrimination learning, concept learning, rule learning

and problem-solving based on higher order rules as illustrated in fig. 3.4.

Fig. 3.4 The eight types of learning as proposed by Gagné (1985:37)

Problem-solving
Rule learning
Concept learning
Discrimination learning
Verbal association
Simple chaining
S-R learning
Signal learning

Gagné (1985:37) outlines three principles in his theory of learning, namely outcomes of learning processes, of learning, and of conditions of learning. Outcomes of learning are intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, motor skills, attitudes and verbal information. Thus, lecturers can facilitate effective learning by motivating students and equipping them with the necessary background in terms of concepts and information before presenting them with new problems and information. Students at technikons can especially benefit from this because a thorough background of classroom information in a

classroom with students with diverse proficiency in English could better the learning ability of all students.

#### 3.2.6.3 Gestalt view of learning

The Gestalt theory originated in Germany and was developed by three Germans, Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Kohler and Kurt Koffka, whose main interests were perception, awareness and insight. Gestalt means configuration, pattern or organisation. The Gestalt psychologists were interested in perception and behaviour as a whole. Gestaltists argue that a given object is understood not by analysing one aspect at a time, but by having a global picture of it. For example, a series of dots are seen not as dots but as a pattern of configuration. Gestaltists are interested in the “aha” experience which comes about when one arrives at a solution to a problem after having given it some thought. The “aha” experience or insight occurs as a sudden solution to a problem in a way which can readily be repeated during a similar event in the future and which has some transfer to new situations (Child, 1986:90).

On the basis of this theory a number of laws of learning were developed: the law of similarity (similar parts together are seen as forming a group), the law of closure (the tendency to complete incomplete figures), the law of pragnanz (in a given situation the focus is only on a certain aspect and the rest forms the background) and the law of proximity (parts that are close in time and space tend to be

perceived together) (Mwamwenda, 1989:149). The implications of these laws of learning on the listening process will be discussed in chapter four.

Wertheimer was the founder of the Gestalt school and was later followed by Koffka, Kohler and Lewin. Kohler is remembered for his study of apes in the Canary Islands. His study led him, like other gestaltists, to believe that insight is important in problem-solving. Wertheimer also argued along these lines and pointed out that lecturers ought to stress insight when students are presented with problem-solving assignments. On the other hand, a foreknowledge of basic elements is essential for insight to occur. Information obtained by insight can be remembered for a longer time-span (Child, 1986:91).

Each of the above-mentioned learning methods contain certain implications for listening and learning which will be discussed further in chapter four. This thorough knowledge of the different learning theories has created a clear perspective of learning and has shown the educational implications of each theory in a classroom situation.

### 3.2.7 LANGUAGE LEARNING PRINCIPLES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

It is also essential at this point to identify a workable approach in terms of learning. Snarski (1995:36,37; Krashen,1973:63) argues that an approach most commonly used in language teaching in the United

States and throughout much of Europe, is learner-centered. In this approach the teacher/lecturer is no longer the focus of the class, but becomes the facilitator, ensuring that the activities run effectively and providing the expertise when needed. The basis of this approach is a set of fundamental principles of language learning. These eight principles and their implications will be discussed below:

#### 3.2.7.1 (Second language) learning is a developmental process

Learners use existing knowledge to make all incoming information comprehensible (Snarski, 1995:37). Gagné (1985:99) discuss external and internal conditions of learning in much the same way. In order to grasp external knowledge, a learner must have certain internal knowledge or background knowledge as discussed in chapter two. The teaching implications of this principle are for lecturers to reconsider what, if anything, they have been taking for granted concerning students' background knowledge (Snarski,1995:38). Students at technikons in the Western Cape come from vastly different backgrounds and experiences. It is essential to ensure that ample opportunity is given in class to discover what learners understand when describing a concept.

#### 3.2.7.2 (Language) learning is an active process

Learners should be actively using new information (Gagné,1985:100). In terms of language learning, this means practising vocabulary and grammar with great frequency for it to be internalised. Gagné

(1985:100) like other educationalists claims that repetition is the key to retention, as is discussed in chapter two. The implications for listening skills will be discussed in chapter four.

#### 3.2.7.3 (Language) learning is a decision-making process

Snarski (1995:38) argues that in order to develop, learners must use existing knowledge and make decisions based on that knowledge. Typically, teachers/lecturers do the talking and make most of the decisions in the classroom. In conventional teacher-controlled classrooms the step of students expressing knowledge does not happen until the end of the term in tests, examinations or assignments. Learners should demonstrate their knowledge often and be credited for adequate knowledge. The latter point is important for students studying at technikons in the Western Cape in that they should be encouraged to demonstrate knowledge and the lecturer should give credit to students that demonstrate such knowledge.

#### 3.2.7.4 (Language) learning is not just a matter of linguistic knowledge

Snarski (1995:39) emphasises the fact that typical second language learners are often perceived as being cognitively and conceptually slow when it might be a linguistic ability that is lacking and not other abilities. Many lecturers of typical second language learners, however, base their judgement of students solely on the surface ability to communicate, orally and in writing. Ways have to be found of engaging students so that they can apply thinking skills (sequencing,

classifying, problem solving, etc.) to the content of the subject through the medium of instruction. The above statements should be considered in a technikon situation because the ability to listen effectively is a vital part in the learning and communication process.

#### 3.2.7.5 (Language) learning is not the learner's first experience with language

According to Snarski (1995:40), students at the Peninsula Technikon in the Western Cape are generally competent in another language, and in terms of subject-specific information, they might have some knowledge of the concepts of the terminology. The above statement could also be true of the Cape Technikon. Existing knowledge should be activated to aid in the understanding of new information. A lecturer then will be able to target the lesson accordingly, spending time on concepts that are not clearly known and reviewing already known knowledge.

#### 3.2.7.6 (Language) learning is an emotional experience

This principle concerns the affective filter of the student, of variables to motivation, anxiety and self-confidence. It is therefore important to create a relaxed and non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom for optimal learning to take place. Snarski (1995:41) suggests a number of ways of being sensitive to affective filters:

- use pair or group work to build social relationships;
- give students time to think and generally avoid undue pressure;

- put less emphasis on the product (the right answer) and more on the process of getting an answer;
- value attitude as much as aptitude and ability.

Using pair and group work takes some of the pressure off the lecturer in terms of constant performance and could be valuable for technikon students in the Western Cape where less capable language students could be helped by more competent ones. It could also increase the relationship between students in a multi-racial classroom and could give ineffective listeners the chance to verify the perceived message and learning material. Pair work according to Snarski (1995:42) also gives students some independent learning skill practice, and at the same time allows the lecturer to observe the intake of learners. Following this observation, lecturers can provide specific input where necessary.

#### 3.2.7.7 (Language) learning is to a large extent incidental

One does not need to be actively studying a language to learn a language. As English (or Afrikaans) is the medium through which students learn the content of subjects other than language at technikons in the Western Cape, the language itself does not need to be the focus. These lecturers would not be required to explain grammatical rules to the class, but writing down vocabulary and terminology would be appropriate for a class with a majority of second language speakers. The focus would not be taken off the content, but

the lecturer should be sensitive to the medium of instruction; slow down the presentation, provide visual aids, repeat and revise often (Snarski, 1995:42). These measures could also be made relevant to a second language English class situation, which will be further discussed in chapter four.

#### 3.2.7.8 (Language) learning is not systematic

Although people store information systematically, the process by which it is assimilated is not necessarily systematic. Each learner has a preferred method of learning, and, within a classroom, any combination of learning styles could be represented: visual, auditory, tactile, left brain or right brain learning styles. Snarski (1995:43) suggests various learning style inventories to determine students' preferred style of learning. The point of conducting such inventories is to discover the students' preferred learning styles and to match the teaching style to achieve optimal learning in the classroom. Snarski (1995:43) further argues that perhaps it is not so surprising that listening passively to a lecture is not the most successful mode for learning, but remains the most common in terms of transmission. However, alternating the mode of transmission will provide an opportunity for all styles of learning to be used, give students a chance to become familiar with the different strategies, and allow for a varied classroom learning situation.

The discussion of these language learning principles was an attempt to indicate how language can be brought into any classroom situation. Finally, according to Snarski (1995:44), a learner-centred approach promotes a culture of independent learning and could result in greater confidence and empowerment of the student. It could also lead to students acquiring adequate listening skills to achieve this kind of learning.

### 3.3 SUMMARY

In this chapter an attempt was made to indicate the importance of learning in an educational perspective and emphasise the relevance of the different learning processes. A brief overview of learning was given and the act of the learning event was examined as well as the stages in the learning process. Various learning theories were analysed to indicate their importance in the education process, and principles of language learning were discussed to emphasise their significant role in a classroom situation.

The understanding of the learning process is imperative to comprehend the relation between listening and learning which will be discussed in chapter four.

## CHAPTER 4

### **LISTENING AND LEARNING: THE INTERRELATIONSHIP**

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

By gaining a clear view and understanding of the importance of listening in chapter two and learning in chapter three, respectively, an attempt to indicate the interrelationship between the former and the latter can now be made. In this chapter the interrelationship between listening and learning will be discussed. Ways to assist lecturers in teaching adequate listening skills to students studying English as a foreign language at technikons, with special reference to those in the Western Cape, will also be discussed.

In many ways, listening is the most important of all communication skills (Simoncelli, 1994:13), yet, as is detailed in chapter two, it is probably the most neglected skill. It is also important to define listening skills for the purpose of this study. Pieterse (1987:3) defines a skill as an existing ability in one or other task or situation. A listening skill refers to an active ability relating to listening activities.

Listening is an active skill which takes time, needs patience and can be a tiring activity and experience. Simoncelli (1994:13) suggested that learning to listen adequately, is partly a matter of breaking bad listening habits and forming new ones. Listening is not a natural skill

and is not an innate trait in human beings. Proficiency in listening, like all communication skills, requires effort and practice, and must be learned. It is therefore important to discuss and indicate how listening and learning is interrelated.

## 4.2 THE EXPLICIT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LISTENING AND LEARNING.

### 4.2.1 THE IMPLICATIONS OF VARIOUS LEARNING THEORIES ON THE LISTENING PROCESS

The behaviourist view of learning is based on a model of a stimulus and response (S-R), with the presence of some form of reinforcement as discussed in chapter 3. Kruger (1990:22) sees listening as an important and useful technique in communication, one which can be learned. The behaviourist view, in this case classical conditioning, implies that whatever has been learned, like bad listening behaviour, can be unlearned. Western Cape technikon students could benefit from this view in that the lecturer could encourage better listening skills and encourage the unlearning of bad listening behaviour.

Skinner (Biggs & Tefler, 1987:155) believed that by operant conditioning a person's behaviour can be controlled through reinforcement. In order to sustain a particular desirable behaviour, the frequency of reinforcement must be increased, while suppressing undesirable behaviour. Students are likely to learn effectively when their responses are rewarded. When students are rewarded for

effective listening eg. achieving high marks in their examinations, they will continue to listen more effectively to obtain and understand new information. This implies that listening can be taught and such a learning experience can change students' listening behaviour.

First year students who enrol at tertiary institutions in the Western Cape area, show a decline in their abilities to read and write and do not know how to argue a point in class discussions (Die Burger, 1998). Through developing an awareness of the importance of listening in reading and writing sessions, the overall reading and writing ability of students could be improved because the lecturer is thought of as the person responsible for students' learning and is also involved in changing students' behaviour (Mwamwenda, 1989:133). It is therefore clear that lecturers can have a direct influence on students' acquisition of adequate listening skills.

Thorndike's theory of connectionism has some value for the learning and listening process. Gagné (1985:36) refers to connectionism as chaining, which connects sets of individual associations (S-R) in sequence. Verbal chains/sequences like key codewords could provide guidelines to acquire effective listening skills. These key codewords could have educational value in the sense that time can be saved by recalling codewords rather than to refer to whole chapters in textbooks on listening skills. Students could benefit from the above in that it could save time for students with full timetables.

Aspects of Bandura's social learning theory which are based on what students learn from the environment while observing others (Mwamwenda,1989:143), could be used in the learning and listening processes. As the lecturer interacts with students, students can learn and observe effective listening skills from the lecturer, in this case in a technikon classroom situation. Learning by observing and imitating adequate listening skills is one effective method of learning and teaching listening skills.

The cognitive view of learning emphasises insights, thinking, meaningfulness and arranging of information in order for learning to occur. A cognitive psychologist, Bruner, associated with discovery learning, states that discovery learning trains students in important thinking operations such as comparing, interpreting and criticising (Mwamwenda, 1989:148). This learning method could be useful in teaching listening skills to students in that students can compare, interpret and criticise various listening types and strategies in order to learn more effectively. This approach calls for ample time, which tertiary institution timetables do not permit and therefore makes this method unsuitable for teaching effective listening skills to students studying English as a foreign language at technikons.

Ausubel, an American educational psychologist, was the first modern cognitive psychologist to concentrate on meaningful learning (Mwamwenda, 1989:149). This method of learning could be made

applicable to teaching adequate listening skills to students learning English at technikons. For meaningful learning to take place, learning material should have the potential to be related to what the learner already knows. This knowledge could be useful for technikon lecturers when choosing learning material where students from different educational background with different levels of knowledge in English are involved in the learning process.

Learning can be made meaningful by means of lesson outlines, giving an overview of the subject matter, in this instance listening skills. Drawing attention to similarities, differences in various listening strategies and reviewing earlier related work regarding listening, could make the teaching of adequate listening skills a more meaningful experience for students studying English at technikons. Gestaltists like Kohler, Koffa and Lewin believe that insight is important in problem-solving (Child, 1986:91). A foreknowledge of basic elements, in this instance basic guidelines for effective listening which were discussed in chapter two, is essential for insight hence effective problem-solving and learning can take place.

Considering the unique blend in different background and multi-cultural groups in Western Cape technikons, students as well as lecturers could benefit from the various implications of learning theories for the listening process in order to improve listening skills and ensure that effective learning could occur.

#### 4.2.2 THE IMPLICATIONS OF VARIOUS LANGUAGE LEARNING PRINCIPLES FOR THE LISTENING PROCESS

The first of these language learning principles according to Snarski (1995:37), is that (second) language learning is a developmental process. Learners should use existing knowledge to comprehend incoming information in a classroom situation. Ample opportunity should be given in the classroom to discover what learners understand when describing different concepts. When ample listening skills are required for a learning situation, it could be useful in establishing existing knowledge of learners prior to the actual learning experience. Lecturers teaching at technikons in the Western Cape should consider the above in a teaching and learning situation.

The second principle in the language learning process is that language learning is an active and dynamic process. Learners should use new information actively. In terms of language learning, this means practising the vocabulary and grammar with great frequency for it to be internalised. To establish adequate listening skills for students, the principle of repetition can be used to realise this goal and ensure ample listening skills. Repetition is the key to retention (Snarski, 1995:45). One of Carl's (1983:290) suggestions on adequate listening and learning as discussed in chapter two, recommends that main points in an oral speech should be mentally reviewed as the speaker talks so as to finally guarantee that effective retention and learning will occur.

Language learning could be regarded as a decision-making process and as such constitutes the third language learning principle. This implies that learners should use existing knowledge to develop and make decisions based on that knowledge.

The fourth principle states that language learning is not just a matter of linguistic knowledge. Many lecturers teaching typical foreign language learners base their judgement of students solely on the surface ability to communicate, which includes listening skills. It might be a linguistic ability that is lacking in students and not so much a listening inadequacy. It is therefore important especially for lecturers teaching English as a foreign language, to be aware of linguistic inabilities of these learners, before effective listening skills could be taught.

The fifth language learning principle is that language learning is not the first experience that a foreign language learner has in learning a language. Existing knowledge should be activated in assisting the lecturer to teach effective listening skills to students.

The sixth principle is that language learning is an emotional experience. Using pair and group work in a classroom situation does not only build social relationships and provide time for students to think, but could also be used to improve listening skills in order to maximise a learning experience in a classroom situation.

The seventh principle states that language learning is to a large extent incidental. With a majority of second language learners learning English as a subject in a classroom situation, lecturers should be sensitive to the means of instruction; slowing down the presentation, revising and repeating important points, which could also assist in developing adequate listening.

The eighth principle in language learning is that learning English as a foreign language is not systematic i.e. each learner has a preferred style of learning (Snarski,1995:44). Lecturers should therefore find ways to accommodate these learning style preferences. Snarski (1995:44) further argues that listening passively to a lecturer is not the most effective mode of learning. By changing this mode of learning, lecturers should encourage learners to improve listening skills to ensure optimal learning.

In the next section, methods to assist lecturers in teaching adequate listening skills to students will be discussed.

#### 4.3 METHODS TO ASSIST LECTURERS IN TEACHING ADEQUATE LISTENING SKILLS TO STUDENTS

Adequate listening skills should be taught from an early stage in a person's life. Winn (1988:144) noted correctly that children do not need to listen more, they need to listen better. Tertiary students studying English should therefore also be equipped with better and

more effective listening skills rather than to be encouraged to listen more.

Listening becomes an integral part of the learning experience when students are actively involved in the listening process, i.e. by discussing and summarising information; background knowledge being activated by the lecturer; purposes being set and predictions being made about teaching materials. It is believed to be the lecturer's responsibility to provide situations in which listening is facilitated (Swafford & Paulos, 1993:401). By using the above meaningful components to facilitate more effective listening, lecturers teaching English could create better student listeners. If lecturers expect students to listen effectively, students cannot be merely implored to listen, but must be provided with conditions that enable students to listen effectively.

This research on listening in the learning process suggests two important conclusions. One is that if student learning is significantly influenced by listening skills, the students ought to be trained to ensure that they can, in fact, listen effectively. Another is that lecturers spend very little classroom time as listeners themselves. Lecturers, according to Wolvin (1984:18), tend to view their roles in the learning process primarily as sources of communication, not the receivers of it. Lecturers should therefore consistently practice these skills and also encourage their application by their students.

Just as students can improve their listening skills through direct practice, so too can lecturers improve their listening skills (Friedman, 1983:10). Wolvin (1984:17) remarked that lecturers should have adequate listening skills themselves to train students in listening and they should consistently practice listening skills to encourage students to practice listening skills. Lundgren & Shavelson's (1974:205) study of teacher education at Stanford University revealed that teachers/lecturers can improve as listeners through systematic training in listening skills.

Wolvin (1984:19) refers to the classroom process as an important part of this development of listening skills and describes this process as follows: when students enter a classroom for the first time, they look to the lecturer and wait for messages that will inform them what to expect. Simultaneously, the teacher is sizing them up. Each is attentive, alert and listening. From that moment on, they will spend most of their time together trying to gain and hold each other's attention, striving to understand and be understood, determining where they stand with each other, silently judging and evaluating – in short, they will be concerned with listening.

The primary beneficiaries of the above suggestions are students that will become more effective learners and educators/lecturers.

#### 4.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter an attempt was made to indicate the relationship between listening and learning and the influence of the different learning theories on the listening process. Methods to assist lecturers in teaching adequate listening skills to students at technikons were also discussed. In the next chapter an empirical study, undertaken to investigate the qualities required for lecturers to improve students' listening skills will be presented with a view to develop a teaching plan for lecturers teaching English as a foreign language.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF QUALITIES REQUIRED FOR LECTURERS TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILLS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TEACHING PLAN**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

There is little doubt that social and political changes in South Africa in the past decade have created a compelling need for communicative competence in the workplace, and that a tertiary qualification alone is insufficient to enable people to communicate effectively in most professions (Steinberg, 1996:44). These factors strongly suggest that developing communicative competence, with the emphasis on listening skills as part of the communication process, is for the purpose of this study considered to be a vital part of tertiary education and training.

#### **5.2 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The aim of the study was to establish lecturer awareness of the influence of adequate listening skills on the learning process when teaching English as a foreign language. The objectives derived from this aim are: to determine strategies for improving listening skills through lecturers teaching English at technikons in the Western Cape; to establish whether technikons in the Western Cape meet the needs of lecturers by assisting them in the acquisition of listening skills in

order to improve students' listening skills; to establish whether items of audio-visual equipment were used; and to establish students' opinions on listening skills training at technikons in the Western Cape.

Later in the chapter both the questionnaire and the responses obtained by means of it will be dealt with.

### 5.3 THE RESEARCH PROCEDURE

To realise the aim and objectives of the investigation as mentioned in 5.2, in addition to a discussion with students, a questionnaire was selected as the appropriate research instrument to receive homogeneous responses in order to indicate whether lecturers effectively utilise listening strategies in order to improve the listening skills of students. Verification of the questionnaire was done through discussions in a trial run with involved lecturers. A copy of the questionnaire as well as the covering letter explaining the reasons for the research and setting out instructions on how to respond to questions, will be found in Appendix 1. Lecturers were interviewed personally, inviting the maximum number of responses.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections. In an attempt to assess the success of strategies used by lecturers for improving students' listening skills, the respondents were requested to indicate in section one which strategies they used. This would allow valuable information to be obtained on what lecturers do to improve students'

listening skills. Section two sets out to establish whether and what audio-visual equipment is used by the respondents to improve students' listening behaviour in a classroom situation. Section three examines the respondents' training in listening skills in order to establish the extent of training in listening skills education available to lecturers in English as a second language at technikons.

The discussion with students studying English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape, was an attempt to establish the importance of listening skills in a classroom situation. First-year students studying English as a second language at technikon campuses in the Western Cape voluntary took part in the discussion.

Responses to the questions will be discussed in 5.5.

#### 5.4 DISTRIBUTION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was completed by interviewing 13 available lecturers teaching English at technikons in the Western Cape, namely 7 lecturers at Peninsula Technikon and 6 lecturers at the Cape Technikon. The 13 lecturers represent 70 % of the lecturers teaching English as a second language at Western Cape technikons. The respondents answered all questions covered in the three sections to the questionnaire. The quantity and quality of the useable data can be considered sufficient to formulate valid and justified conclusions and can be seen as a representative sample of the population in question.

## 5.5 RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The data collected on each item of the questionnaire is presented by first providing the responses and then following up with a discussion.

### 5.5.1 SECTION ONE: STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS

(Item 1) *Appreciative and creative listening as teaching strategies could be used by lecturers to encourage students to listen constructively to improve students' listening skills. What do you as lecturer do to establish appreciative and creative listening?*

From the 13 lecturers interviewed, 9 stated that listening as a communication strategy is part of the tuition. All 9 respondents stated that students, from the first lesson, are made aware through some class activity that listening is crucial.

The following suggestions were made by the respondents:

- in the first lesson, by reading a passage to students, explain how two-way communication takes effort and should be practised in every lesson.
- use a workbook where students have the opportunity to know in advance what the content of lessons will be. This ensures that students pay more attention to listening to the flow of the lesson instead of concentrating too much on unfamiliar terms which they

can be familiarised with beforehand.

- structured group work could improve appreciative and creative listening. Peer group listening forces students to assess each other and ensures constant interaction. An example of such an assessment form is included in Appendix 2.
- emphasise to students that classroom listening is the basis of respect, either in a group or in a one-to-one relationship with the lecturer. Students who do not have the necessary listening skills are unable to respond in a classroom situation.
- use real life situations to stimulate appreciative and creative listening in students, like simulating shopping, making enquiries, etc.
- by repeating main points and stressing their importance, help the students in the process of listening.
- use creative language in context to stimulate creative listening.
- show students a video called “You are not listening” early into the course, which makes them aware of the importance of listening in a classroom situation.
- implement an empowering process whereby students, over a period of two weeks, hear the same word/phrase, eg. “Learning skills”, “listening skills”, etc. This would effectively contextualise the word(s)/phrases(s) when later, repeatedly, used in oral/written applications. By indicating through tapping on their desks every time they hear/recognise these words/phrases, students could improve their listening.

The responses to question one of section one indicate lecturers' awareness of challenging students' listening skills lies with the lecturer and of the benefits of the different methods to stimulate appreciative and creative listening. By using these methods in a classroom situation, lecturers could create better student listeners. It is the lecturer's responsibility to provide situations in which listening is facilitated (Swafford & Paulos, 1993:401), as discussed on page 74, par. 2.

*(Item 2) Lecturers who regularly demonstrate listening skills and encourage their students to do the same will provide situations for adequate listening to occur. What do you do as a lecturer to demonstrate your listening skills in a classroom situation?*

The following suggestions were made by the respondents:

- repeat/rephrase students' questions in correct English to clarify the meaning, eg. Student: "Was he hung for his crimes?" Lecturer: "Was he hanged for his crimes?". Students acquire correct English usage through listening to the lecturer repeating/rephrasing questions and so demonstrating listening skills.
- be aware that students learn through actions rather than through words, eg. making introductions. After a lesson explaining and showing customary introductions, students should be able to perform introductions between lecturer and student and/or student and student.

- demonstrate listening skills through acting as a constant listening role model in class. Since listening is a component of the curriculum, role model listening situations should frequently be made available so that students can practice their individual listening on an interpersonal level.
- encourage students to respond to questions by giving ample time for response and supply students with aural exercises to complete during class time.
- demonstrate listening skills by being empathically available to students and encourage question time to improve independent listening.
- provide time for students to reflect on learned material in writing and/or aural exercises.
- demonstrate listening skills by planning a highly structured lesson and starting the lesson through “mapping” (refer to 6.4.3). This indicates to students what they can expect in the lesson. Time to review the lesson by the end of the session gives the lecturer and students the opportunity to demonstrate their listening skills.

Lecturers themselves spend very little classroom time as listeners, as discussed on p. 74, par. 3. This agrees with the statement made by Wolvin (1984:18) that lecturers tend to view their roles in the learning process primarily as sources of communication, not the receivers of it. The responses to question two in section one show that some lecturers teaching at technikons in the Western Cape are aware of their lack of

listening skills but most of the respondents are conscious of the effect of effective listening skills in the learning process.

(Item 3) *A self-analysis by lecturers to assess their own listening behaviour would encourage lecturers to practise effective listening in order to serve as role models to their students. How would you do a self-analysis to assess your own listening behaviour?*

The following recommendations were made by the respondents:

- self-reflection upon lessons is a way to self-analyse one's own listening behaviour. Self-analysis could be useful but is too subjective according to some respondents; a self-assessment form for completion by students might be valuable for reflecting lecturers' listening behaviour (refer to appendix 4).
- put conscious effort into listening to students and focus on what students have to say and not how it is said.
- consecutive interpreting of students' questions is useful to establish the amount of listening that has taken place and indirectly to analyse the lecturer's own listening behaviour.
- professional training, eg. by attending available courses through NGO's, etc. and consulting resources centres for self-analysis of personal listening skills, could benefit listening behaviour.
- constant self-searching to improve the lecturer's own listening skills.
- relying on student input as a regular assessment tool for lecturer's own listening behaviour.

- giving attention to students' non-verbal cues to help assess lecturer's own listening behaviour, eg. nodding or shaking their heads in agreement or disagreement.
- recording of lessons to assess how much listening lecturers themselves do.
- using a journal to reflect on each lesson as listening is an integral part of a lesson.
- making notes of what students say, and using the information to assess the success and understanding of a lesson.

Just as students can improve their listening skills through direct practice, so lecturers, too, can improve their listening skills by self-analysis of their own listening skills as discussed on p. 75, par. 1. The responses to question 3 in section 1 show that the majority of lecturers rely to a greater extent on self-analysis, but a small number of lecturers were not familiar with self-analysis.

*(Item 4) A less lecturer-centred approach may encourage better listening behaviour in students. What do you do to encourage better listening behaviour in students?*

The following recommendations were made by the respondents:

- use practical demonstrations where students have to role play, eg. a restaurant situation to encourage students' listening behaviour.
- improve the opportunities for students to listen more effectively, work

- together and demonstrate respect for each other's views, eg. through presenting an English course that is not lecturer-centred.
- in a third language teaching situation, although the lecturer is the main source of information, stimulate active listening by talking slowly and clearly.
  - vary teaching methods continuously with strong emphasis on group work and involve groups in evaluation sessions, eg. by means of discussions.
  - use co-operative learning, where the lecturer stimulates critical and creative thinking through innovative oral assignments.
  - video tape students' presentations so that students can view and listen to themselves as communicators.

The responses above show that lecturers in the Western Cape do realise the benefits of a less lecturer-centred approach in the learning process. Wolvin (1984:18) argues that although teachers will continue to be important information sources in the classroom, as discussed on p. 74, par. 3, a less lecturer-centred approach will encourage better listening habits.

*(Item 5) Utilising group work as a teaching method could provide independent learning and listening skill practice to students in a classroom situation. How do you make use of group work to improve listening skills?*

The following varied responses and suggestions were received from the respondents:

- group together students of more or less the same proficiency in a language.
- provide guideline cards to each group, giving each student a role to play, eg. the task master, the recorder or time-keeper, rotating their roles each time.
- make regular use of role play situations.
- use decentralised learning by dividing classes into interdependent subdivisions exchanging inputs and interactively arriving at final presentations.
- base 10 % of the total of marks for students' assignments on marks allocated by their peers for listening in groups.
- group work is recommended by a number of respondents, preferably using groups of two or four students. Some respondents prefer to select their own group members, while others leave this choice to the students for specific reasons such as building trust and familiarity amongst students, thereby encouraging listening. Some other respondents recommended changing group composition regularly in order to encourage listening and coping with different speech behaviour.
- class size sometimes discourages group work, but thorough lesson planning can enable lecturers to deal better with larger groups.
- encourage group work outside the classroom situation, which truly tests the listening abilities of the groups by research into a particular

aspect/situation on campus, eg. using questionnaires to obtain oral responses regarding the effectiveness of the student cafeteria.

The responses suggest that a small number of the respondents might be overlooking the importance of true interaction in groups and with the lecturer. Remedying this oversight could improve students' listening skills.

It seems, though, that most of the lecturers are using group work successfully to encourage listening. Providing technikon programmes in listening to students and lecturers, is one way of improving group interaction amongst students and lecturers, which could benefit and improve students' listening skills (refer to 6.4.4).

Snarski (1995:42) argues that pair or group work provides independent learning and listening skill practice to students in a classroom situation, which also allows lecturers to observe the intake of information in learners and provides specific input where necessary, as discussed on p. 63, par. 2.

*(Item 6) Which listening strategy did you use with most success in the past? (eg. Using unfamiliar or unusual words or tone of voice to challenge students' listening skills etc.)*

The following suggestions were made by the respondents:

- repetition encourages listening.
- vary the volume, pitch and tone of voice to influence students to listen.
- appeal to students' sense of respect for each other and create a listening environment in which students spend time listening more effectively.
- use aural substitution exercises to stimulate listening.
- use video tapes to emphasise or repeat already learned material, which encourages listening from a source other than the lecturer.
- use a well planned lesson and stimulating material to encourage students to listen (refer to 6.4.3).
- use humour to encourage students to listen as it may be a challenging and novel experience.
- tell students an improbable story as it sensitises their senses and stimulates the listening process.
- use case studies to encourage listening where students have to identify common errors and dramatise the content.
- use unusual utterances to attract students' attention, eg. slang, such as "Have you seen the latest flicks?", which students would not expect from the lecturer.
- use a pause and a softer voice to encourage listening.
- involve students in activities eg. to give students the opportunity to write on the overhead projector as a result of an audio-input.
- creative use of words such as telecommuting encourages students to listen more effectively.

Swafford & Paulos (1993:401) argue that when students do not listen effectively, lecturers need to re-evaluate the listening experience they provide for students, as discussed on p. 74, par. 2. It seems as if lecturers teaching at technikons in the Western Cape are aware of poor listening habits in students and provide them with listening experience whereby they could benefit in becoming better listeners.

#### 5.5.2 SECTION TWO: USE OF AUDIO-VISUAL EQUIPMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILLS

*(Item 7) The frequent use of audio-visual equipment (eg. overhead projectors, film, tape recorders etc.) available to lecturers and students at technikons in the Western Cape could benefit both lecturers' and students' listening skills. How do you incorporate these media tools in your lesson plan?*

The following suggestions were made by the respondents:

- use the overhead projector to
  - write down key points as an outline for lessons and display diagrams in support.
  - avoid information overload by writing down only the broader outlines of a lesson.
  - display cartoons taken from magazines, newspapers, etc., as part of the lesson to stimulate the listening process.
- make a blank transparency available to students to write down their

own contributions in response to an audio-input for displaying on the overhead projector during a lesson.

- use video recordings occasionally, but owing to the risk of theft, video apparatus may not always be readily available; video recordings for second and third language speakers have limited benefits because of information overload that may occur, but using video recordings without the sound could stimulate students' creative listening.
- use multi-media computers to enable students to use the internet for audio support for listening skills.
- use tape recordings regularly to stimulate listening; using recordings of radio talks as part of a planned lesson.

External stimulation can be used when attention is needed for listening (Gagné, 1985:80) as discussed on p. 48, par. 2. Most lecturers teaching English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape use the overhead projector during their lessons, but each one has his or her own method in using it. Other audio-visual equipment is used to a lesser extent.

### 5.5.3 SECTION THREE: LECTURERS' TRAINING IN LISTENING SKILLS

(Item 8) *In-service training in listening for lecturers teaching at technikons could benefit both these lecturers and their students. Is in-service training available at the technikon where you teach? If so,*

*please include a copy of the training agenda and say which aspects of the training were usable in a classroom situation.*

The following responses were received from the respondents:

- most respondents were unaware of any in-service training in listening at their respective technikons.
- some respondents were aware of in-service training sessions for first-year lecturers but have not attended any such sessions.
- new lecturers undergo in-service training at the respective technikons, but cannot recall listening in a classroom situation as part of the training.
- one respondent attended a short course of one semester's duration in tertiary teaching methods and commented that, for example, the session on small group work included some aspects of listening as shown in Appendix 3.
- a number of respondents attend orientation programmes in the beginning of each year as part of staff development. Aspects of listening and their importance in a class and group situation are brought to lecturers' attention.
- one of the respondents was responsible for an in-service training session on how to integrate listening skills into lessons.

Since listening is so important to the learning success of students, lecturers themselves must have the listening skills to train students in effective listening behaviour (Wolvin, 1984:17), as discussed on p. 75,

par. 1, and should therefore be trained in effective listening skills. In-service training in listening skills at technikons in the Western Cape could benefit lecturers once they are trained to assist students in adequate listening behaviour.

(Item 9) *Workshops and In-service training/education available on a regular basis could facilitate improving lecturers' listening skills in order to improve students' listening behaviour. Are workshops held at the technikon where you lecture? If so, how are they presented? Could you include a copy of such a workshop? If not, how should it be done?*

The following responses were given by the respondents:

- most lecturers were unaware of any workshops offered by their respective technikons to improve the listening skills of lecturers, although they were aware of workshops available to students to raise an awareness of the importance of listening in a class situation. One respondent is of opinion that workshops should be practical eg. using lecturers to take the roles of students to make them aware of the difficulties second language students may encounter in a classroom situation.
- one respondent recommended that the emphasis should be on ways to improve the listening skills of the second language learner. Awareness of and an approach to the issue should also be included in such a workshop presentation or programme.
- a number of respondents believe that the presentation of workshops

is a specialist field which should be left to professionals.

- according to most respondents, staff development sessions which are held throughout the year at the respective technikons include the discussion of the importance of listening in a classroom situation, although not in a formal workshop pattern.
- one respondent attended a technikon workshop on listening skills and recommends that small group sessions should be included in the workshop programme to allow discussion of issues regarding the implementation of integrating listening skills into all academic courses and not only language courses.
- another respondent attended a general technikon workshop on classroom management, which included listening skills in which the integration of listening skills into a classroom situation was discussed.

According to Wolvin (1984:17), lecturers should consistently practice listening skills to encourage the practice of these skills by their students, as discussed on p. 74, par. 3. None of the respondents could include a copy of a workshop on listening skills, but a few respondents made a number of suggestions as to which aspects should be included in a workshop on listening. Workshops held on a regular basis could assist in improving lecturers' listening skills in order to improve students' listening behaviour and could make lecturers aware of certain listening habits to avoid in order to become better listeners themselves.

According to Simoncelli (1994:13), listening is not a natural skill and proficiency in listening requires practice and training, as discussed on p. 66, par. 3. The responses to question 9 in section 3 indicate a probable lack of training as regards listening skills in lecturers teaching English as a second language. Workshops in listening skills at technikons in the Western Cape could enhance the listening abilities of lecturers.

Item 10) *How long have you been teaching at a technikon in the Western Cape?*

The responses to this question are reflected in the table below:

EXPERIENCE OF LECTURERES TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AT TECHNIKONS IN THE WESTERN CAPE	
Years of experience	Number of lecturers
5 and less	4
6-10	3
11-15	0
16-20	3
20 and more	3
	13

Almost half of lecturers teaching English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape have more than ten years experience in teaching languages, which indicates that a large number of lecturers have a wealth of experience in the listening process in a classroom situation. The lecturer is thought of as the person responsible for students' learning and is also involved in changing students' behaviour (Mwamwenda, 1989:133), as discussed on p. 68; par. 2. It is therefore clear that lecturers can have a direct influence on students' acquisition of adequate listening skills, and lecturers with experience in listening in a classroom situation would benefit students' learning process.

In a discussion with students studying English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape, it emerged that all students consider listening skills as important in a classroom situation and they suggested several ways in which students could benefit through effective listening skills. Listening could:

- enable students to comprehend more information;
- prepare students better for their studies;
- stimulate communication between themselves and the lecturer;
- remove bias/prejudice;
- improve their understanding of fellow students; and
- improve concentration.

All students were positive about the idea of training in listening skills for students and lecturers. The majority of students argued that the best

way of learning and practising listening skills is to be part of the classroom situation and to share in small group activities. A minority suggested that interactive audio-visual sessions may be a good way of learning and practising listening skills.

The questionnaire to lecturers and the discussion with students indicate that lecturers and students realise the benefits of effective listening skills in the learning process.

## 5.6 TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR LECTURERS TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS OF STUDENTS

The aim of the research, as discussed on p. 81 of this chapter, was to establish the role of lecturer awareness of the influence of adequate listening skills on the learning process when using English as a medium of instruction in teaching English as a second language. In order to achieve such an awareness of the effects of adequate listening skills on the learning process, a teaching plan for lecturers at technikons in the Western Cape will be outlined and discussed.

A specific teaching strategy could assist in developing lecturers' listening competencies, which includes work on the motivation, habits and skills of lecturers in order to improve listening skills. In addition, guided listening experiences, which should form the core of any education programme in listening, ought to include the analysis of lecturers as role models of listening (Wolvin,1984:18). The lecturer

who demonstrates effective listening in the listening process in the classroom can in fact benefit students by acting as a role model in listening. Lundsteen (1971:24) suggested the following checklist for lecturers to assess their own listening behaviours in order to improve their listening and be able to act as role models in listening:

- What kinds of listening do I do myself?
- Do I listen more than I talk?
- Do I encourage students to speak more than a single word or thought in response to a question?
- Do I ensure that my choice of words is appropriate to students?
- Do I also use some challenging words that stretch students' listening powers?
- Do students interact with each other as well as with me in class?
- Do I give oral directions clearly? Are my directions worthwhile?
- Do I relate good listening habits to all classroom activities?
- Do students understand the purpose of each classroom activity?

A self-analysis by means of this checklist is a useful step in developing listening skills as a "listening lecturer".

The heart of the teaching transaction is skilled oral communications (Dedmon,1983:14). Lecturers must consistently apply their oral communication skills, which include speaking and listening, and encourage students to do the same. An effective lecturer is a good speaker and a good listener, while the latter function may be more important than the former (c.f. chapter two).

It is with this context in mind that in-service staff development programmes should be implemented in order to provide lecturers with a solid foundation in listening skills (refer to 6.4.4). Wolvin (1984:18) argued that lecturers should develop more indirect teaching methods, ones which could allow them to listen more frequently and students to expand on their learning experiences and lectures to provide some opportunities for inquiry and self-expression in the process. Lecturers teaching at technikons, and in fact all teachers as well as learners, could benefit from indirect teaching methods in that they, in a less lecturer-centered approach, will be encouraged to listen better and thus be symbiotically involved with learning material.

## 5.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter is set out the utilisation of research procedures in order to substantiate the use of a questionnaire as a tool for collecting relevant and valid data. The responses to each question/item of the questionnaire were then discussed fully and the following emerged: First, in respect of lecturers teaching English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape, they are conscious of their responsibility to provide challenging listening situations to stimulate students' creative and appreciative listening skills. Second, most of them are aware of the fact that they spend very little classroom time as listeners themselves and aim to demonstrate effective listening skills in a classroom situation. Third, they realise they can improve their listening skills through self-analysing their own listening skills. The

majority of lecturers use some sort of self-assessment but a minority of lecturers have not used any self-assessment before. Fourth, they realise the benefits of a less lecturer-centred approach in the learning process. Fifth, they are aware that using group work successfully can improve effective listening in students. Sixth, most of the lecturers are aware of students' poor listening behaviour and realise that it is their task to provide students with a listening experience to enable them to become better listeners. Seventh, the majority of them use the overhead projector during their lectures, each employing an individual method in using it. Other audio-visual equipment may be used to a lesser extent. Eighth, in-service training and workshops in listening skills are not readily available at technikons in the Western Cape, but lecturers realise the importance of these exercises in staff development.

A discussion with students studying English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape showed that they consider listening skills as an important part in the learning process and believe that lecturers and students should receive training in listening skills at the technikons where they teach or study.

On the basis of information obtained by means of the questionnaire and the discussion with students, strategies were suggested for use by lecturers teaching English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape so as to assist in improving both lecturers' and students'

listening skills. The next chapter contains the conclusions and recommendations arising out of this study, and offers a teaching plan and a suggested workshop programme in listening skills for lecturers to improve their own listening skills in a classroom situation.

## CHAPTER 6

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING SKILLS IN A CLASSROOM SITUATION: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Listening is central to all learning. Good listening makes not only good academic sense but also good business sense. Students at technikons in the Western Cape are trained to take up employment after completing their studies. Because of the importance of listening skills in the work environment, it is important that lecturers should assist students in acquiring adequate listening skills. A sound knowledge of listening skills could improve work performance in a lecture room situation at technikons in the Western Cape as well as in a business environment. The following summary of the study will provide a basis for the conclusions and recommendations affecting lecturers and students teaching and studying English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape.

#### 6.2 SUMMARY

##### 6.2.1 Overview of study - chapter one

That inadequate listening skills negatively affect the teaching-learning process is evident from the literature study. Adequate listening skills are essential to lecturers' teaching and students' learning

performance. In the introduction the influence of inadequate listening skills on the learning process was discussed, with emphasis on the importance of adequate listening skills in tertiary institutions like technikons in the Western Cape. This study identified the following areas of inquiry, namely how a lecturer can enhance appreciative and creative listening; what teaching strategies the lecturer can use to encourage students to listen constructively; whether workshops are conducted to improve listening skills; whether training is available for this purpose at technikons in the Western Cape; and whether the use of audio-visual material in a listening program will assist in more effective student listening.

The research framework stated the scope of the research, and the hypothesis that lecturers lack adequate tuition in listening skills when assisting students in the learning process. The methodology and techniques of using a questionnaire for lecturers and discussion with students studying English at technikons in the Western Cape, were dealt with in the study outline, illustrated by a schematic research plan.

#### 6.2.2 An educational perspective on listening skills - chapter two

Adequate listening, as emphasised in this chapter, is necessary for a greater understanding of the importance of listening skills in the learning process. An overview of listening was given as background on listening as a field of study. Effective listening strategies in order to make lecturers more aware of effective listening skills and their effects

on the learning process were discussed. Lecturers who are trained in ways to enhance appreciative and creative listening and teaching strategies to encourage students to listen constructively, could improve students' listening skills remarkably.

### 6.2.3 An educational perspective on learning and learning skills - chapter three

An educational perspective is given on the importance of learning with the emphasis on the relevance of the different learning processes aimed at developing a better understanding of learning to assist lecturers and students in the learning process. This is followed by a brief overview of learning, the act of the learning event and learning processes contributing to a better understanding of the learning process. Various learning theories were analysed to indicate their importance in education, and the principles of language learning were discussed in order to accentuate the importance of knowledge in the learning process.

### 6.2.4 Listening and learning: the relationship - chapter four

A discussion of the relationship between listening and learning and the influence of the different learning theories on the listening process produced a better understanding of the importance of listening in the learning process. Relevant methods to teach adequate listening skills were set out in order to enable lecturers to enhance appreciative and creative listening in students studying English at technikons in the

Western Cape. The above knowledge could also assist lecturers to improve their own listening skills in order to assist students in adequate listening for effective learning to take place.

#### 6.2.5 Listening and learning: an empirical study - chapter five

Opinions from among lecturers teaching English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape were surveyed, using a questionnaire as a tool for collecting relevant and valid data to establish the quality of listening that lecturers accomplish themselves. Each question/item in the questionnaire was discussed fully and the finding presented systematically. On the basis of information obtained from a discussion with students studying English as second language at technikons in the Western Cape, together with information obtained by means of the questionnaire, an outline was developed for a teaching plan for lecturers teaching English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape in order to assist in improving both lecturers' and students' listening skills.

For lecturers to accomplish such an acquisition of ample listening skills, training in adequate listening skills is essential.

### 6.3 CONCLUSIONS

This research into listening as part of the learning process leads to the following conclusions:

– Lecturers enhancing appreciative and creative listening as teaching

strategies could encourage students to listen constructively which could improve students' listening skills remarkably (p. 80).

- Lecturers themselves spend very little classroom time as listeners. Lecturers ask students to listen, but view their own roles in the learning process primarily as sources and not receivers of communication. It is believed to be the lecturer's responsibility to provide situations in which listening is facilitated. It therefore seems that lecturers who regularly demonstrate listening skills and encourage their students to do the same will provide situations for adequate listening to take place (p. 82).
- Lecturers who frequently use self-assessment as a tool to examine their own listening behaviour will encourage students to follow their example (p. 83).
- A less lecturer-centered approach could benefit students' listening behaviour (p. 85).
- The inability to realise the benefits of groupwork in a classroom situation, could hamper the students' ability to practice and demonstrate their own listening skills in a group learning situation. Independent learning could take place when regular groupwork as a teaching method is used (p. 86).
- The use of various listening strategies by lecturers could benefit students in practicing and learning new listening skills (p. 88).
- The frequent use of audio-visual material could stimulate students' listening skills (p. 89).
- The lack of in-service training/education and workshops available to

lecturers teaching English at technikons in the Western Cape, could be a disadvantage in acquiring adequate listening skills essential in the learning process. If students depend so significantly on listening skills to learn, both students and lecturers ought to be trained to ensure effective listening (p. 91).

- The more experience lecturers have of teaching English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape, the better the opportunities they could provide students for practicing their listening skills (p. 95).

The hypothesis stated on pp. 6-7 was that there is a presumption that lecturers teaching English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape have not had sufficient training in listening skills to enable them to assist students in mastering effective listening, that is listening for understanding, towards the ultimate goal of effective learning.

In the light of the development of the theoretical basis for testing this hypothesis, and in view of both the questionnaire to lecturers teaching and the discussion with students studying English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape, it emerged that the hypothesis could not be proved or disapproved conclusively owing to other variables. The hypothesis appears to apply in the case of lecturers who may not have had comprehensive listening skills training and lack the experience of teaching to overcome this shortcoming.

However, among those lecturers of long standing the lack of sufficient listening skills training could and was overcome through years of experience and an empathetic approach to students.

From the above the following recommendations can be made.

## 6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.4.1 General recommendations

Just as students can improve their listening skills through practical application, so lecturers, too, can improve theirs. Lecturers teaching English at technikons in the Western Cape probably never received any special training/education in listening skills. It is therefore necessary to educate lecturers teaching English as a second language at technikons in the Western Cape in listening skills through workshops and in-service training/education in listening skills. Lecturers would then, with adequate listening skills, be able to act as role models for listening in order to teach students to become better listeners.

Teaching strategies, as discussed in chapter five, could be applied successfully by lecturers teaching English at technikons to improve their own listening behaviour. This will enhance their listening skills and also assist students in obtaining adequate listening skills for effective learning. Listening is not a natural skill and listening proficiency therefore requires practice and training.

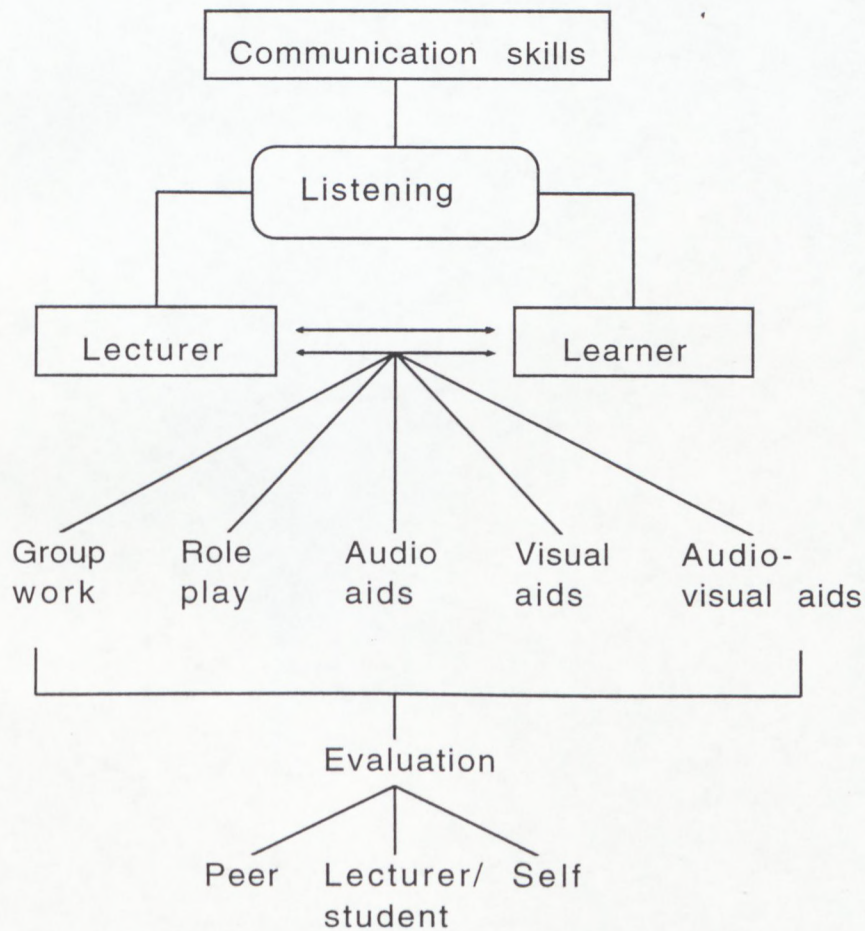
The following guidelines are recommended for improving listening skills in both lecturers and students:

- Develop appreciative and creative listening as teaching strategies to encourage constructive listening.
- Demonstrate listening skills and provide teaching/learning situations to promote adequate listening.
- Use self-analysis to improve own listening behaviour and establish a role model for listening.
- Employ a less lecturer-centred approach to encourage student self-expression in the interest of expanding students' learning experiences and encourage better listening behaviour.
- Encourage frequent group work and consistently practice listening skills in order to provide independent learning and listening skill practice in a classroom situation.
- Make frequent use of audio-visual equipment and multi-media to enhance listening skills.
- Provide in-service training/education, eg. workshops, to develop lecturers' listening behaviour which, in turn, would impact positively on students' listening and learning.

### 6.4.2 Teaching plan

The general recommendations culminate in the following suggested teaching plan.

Fig. 6.1 An outline of the suggested teaching plan



Lecturers teaching English at technikons in the Western Cape could benefit from the recommendations above in that lecturers who are educated in listening skills could provide valuable assistance in teaching listening skills to their students for effective learning to take

place.

### 6.4.3 Lesson plan

To assist lecturers further in teaching listening skills to students, the following suggested lesson plan is given to encourage developing adequate listening skills in students.

<b>LESSON PLAN</b>	
SUBJECT:	English
LESSON TITLE:	The importance of listening in a classroom situation
DATE:	20 May 1998
DURATION :	2 x 35 min.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES:	Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Listen effectively in class</li><li>• Demonstrate effective listening skills in a classroom situation</li><li>• Work effectively with others as member of a group</li><li>• Organise and manage listening activities independently, responsibly and effectively</li></ul>
KEY CONCEPTS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why do we listen?</li><li>• Consequences of bad listening skills</li><li>• Benefits of good listening skills</li></ul>

## LESSON PLAN (CONTINUED)

<p><b>MEDIA, OTHER RESOURCES:</b></p>	<p>Writing board Overhead projector Video Flipchart Worksheet</p>						
<p><b>INTRODUCTION:</b></p>	<p>Display a cartoon strip on overhead projector to draw students' attention to how important listening is in every day life. Open discussion on why listening is important in a classroom situation.</p>						
<p><b>PROCEDURE (ACTIVITIES):</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorm ideas with the key concepts in mind</li> <li>• Watch video "Are you listening?"</li> <li>• Groupwork (groups of four) - complete a worksheet on the video through group discussions</li> <li>• Feedback</li> </ul>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">TIME</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">10 min.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">20 min.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">20 min.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">10 min.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	TIME	10 min.	20 min.	20 min.	10 min.
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10 min.							
<p><b>CONCLUSION:</b></p>	<p>Listening is vital for effective learning to take place. Listening enables students to interact and communicate more effectively with peers and lecturers, it improves understanding and can remove bias/prejudice.</p>						
<p><b>HOMEWORK:</b></p>	<p>Students have to design a questionnaire after a discussion in classroom to assess the listening skills of other students studying English at their technikons.</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">10 min.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	10 min.				
10 min.							
<p><b>ASSESSMENT (to see if learning objectives have been attained):</b></p>	<p>In next session</p>						

#### 6.4.4 Workshop in listening skills

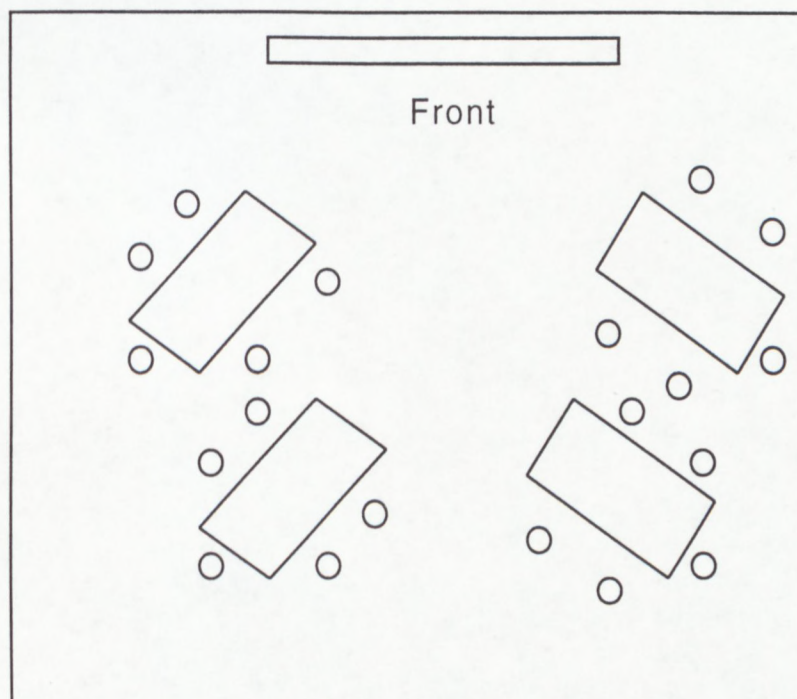
A suggested workshop programme to improve listening skills for lecturers teaching English at technikons in the Western Cape is presented below.

### WORKSHOP IN LISTENING SKILLS IN A CLASSROOM SITUATION

**DATE:** 20 May 1998  
**TIME:** 8h30-15h15  
**VENUE:** Cape Technikon, School for  
Teacher Education, Seminar Room

20 Lecturers  
Divide into groups of five for group work

Floor Plan



## PROGRAMME

8h30-8h50	Tea and biscuits
8h50-9h00	Welcome & Problem Identification
9h00-10h00	Use of listening skills in the classroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Introduction</li><li>- Video: "Are you listening?"</li><li>- General discussion of video</li></ul>
10h00-11h00	Needs analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- 20 min. group discussion</li><li>- Feedback: compiling a list of needs</li></ul>
11h00-11h15	Tea and refreshments
11h15-11h45	Listening techniques & lecturers' input: Theoretical foundation
11h45-12h45	Devising listening techniques in a classroom situation: Group work
12h45-13h30	Light luncheon
13h30-14h15	Feedback and selection of one outstanding technique per group
14h15-14h30	Preparation for demonstration of selected techniques
14h30-15h00	Demonstrations by individual groups
15h00-15h15	Summary and conclusion

Carefully planned lessons and workshops aimed at improving listening skills of lecturers and students, could benefit both lecturer and student in teaching and studying at technikons in the Western Cape. It is therefore important for lecturers and students to be made aware of the importance of effective listening skills in any learning situation.

#### 6.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Research in the field of listening and learning will increasingly receive relevance in the future as effective communication will continuously play an important role in an academic and business world, and the long-term effects of listening on the learning process should therefore not be underestimated.

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Appendix 1

School of Teacher Education  
Cape Technikon  
P O Box 652  
CAPE TOWN

5 March 1998

TO: TECHNIKON LECTURERS TEACHING ENGLISH AS A  
SUBJECT IN THE WESTERN CAPE REGION

Dear Sir/ Madam

QUESTIONNAIRE: LISTENING SKILLS AT TERTIARY LEVEL

I am currently undertaking research into listening skills at technikons in the Western Cape as these skills are regarded as a prerequisite for effective teaching/ learning. I am focussing on students and lecturers, respectively, studying or teaching English. It is a didactic study with a view to obtaining a Masters Degree in Technology in Post-School Education.

The objectives of the questionnaire are:

- to collect data on lecturers' strategies for improving students' listening skills whilst at technikons in the Western Cape region.
- to determine whether workshops or special training sessions are provided to improve lecturers' listening skills so that they may assist students in acquiring adequate listening skills.
- to establish whether items of audio-visual equipment are used to benefit the students' acquisition of listening skills.

In order for this research to succeed in its objective, your kind cooperation is required in responding to questions in the interview.

Thank you for your assistance and co-operation.

Yours sincerely

E.M. Lloyd

## Appendix 1

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LECTURERS TEACHING THE SUBJECT ENGLISH AT TECHNIKONS IN THE WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Please answer all the questions.
2. Please answer the questions according to what would closely relate to reality in the classroom situation.
3. All responses to the questionnaire will be statistically processed in such a way that it will be impossible to identify any person.

#### STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILLS

1. Appreciative and creative listening as teaching strategies could be used by lecturers to encourage students to listen constructively to improve students' listening skills. What do you as lecturer do to establish appreciative and creative listening?
2. Lecturers who regularly demonstrate listening skills and encourage their students to do the same will provide situations for adequate listening to occur. What do you do as a lecturer to demonstrate your listening skills in a classroom situation?
3. A self-analysis by lecturers to assess their own listening behaviour would encourage lecturers to practice effective listening in order to serve as role models to their students. How would you do a self-analysis to assess your own listening behaviour?
4. A less lecturer-centred approach may encourage better listening behaviour in students. What do you do to encourage better listening behaviour in students?
5. Utilising group work as a teaching method could provide independent learning and

listening skill practice to students in a classroom situation. How do you make use of group work to improve listening skills?

6. Which listening strategy did you use with most success in the past? (eg. Using unfamiliar or unusual words to challenge students' listening skills or tone of voice etc.)

#### AUDIO-VISUAL EQUIPMENT

7. The frequent use of audio-visual equipment (eg. overhead projectors, film, tape recorders etc.) available to lecturers and students at technikons in the Western Cape could benefit both lecturers' and students' listening skills. How do you incorporate these media tools in your lesson plan?

#### TRAINING OF LECTURERS

8. In-service training in listening for lecturers teaching at technikons could benefit both these lecturers and their students. Is in-service training available at the technikon where you teach? If so, please include a copy of the training agenda and say which aspects of the training were usable in a classroom situation.
9. Workshops and In-service training/education available on a regular basis could facilitate improving lecturers' listening skills in order to improve students' listening behaviour. Are workshops held at the technikon where you lecture? If so, how are they presented? Could you include a copy of such a workshop? If not, how should it be done?
10. How long have you been teaching at a technikon in the Western Cape?

Appendix 2

PEER REVIEW FORM - GROUP WORK						
STUDENT'S NAME:				GROUP NO.:		
<p>You will need to rate each group according to the following scale:</p> <p><b>ALWAYS: 5      SOMETIMES: 3-2      HARDLY EVER: 1</b>  <b>MOST OF THE TIME: 4      NEVER:0</b>      Allocate a mark for each behaviour</p>						
THIS STUDENT:	ALWAYS	MOST OF THE TIME	SOME-TIMES	Hardly EVER	NEVER	TOTAL
Listens well						
Displays positive non-verbal behaviour						
Shows commitment to task e.g. punctual: meets deadlines, etc.						
Is actively involved: e.g. takes part discussions, makes suggestions						
Shows tolerance, patience and sensitivity towards group members						
<b>TOTAL</b>						

Appendix 3

<b>SHORT COURSE IN TERTIARY TEACHING METHODS</b> <b>PROGRAMME FOR FIRST SEMESTER 1998 (Please tick)</b>			
V1c	Video self-confrontation	4 February	
M1c	The role of media	11 February	
P4c	Aims in higher education	18 February	
T1c	Lecturing	4 March	
T2o	Lecturing to large groups	18 March	
D1c	Didactic principles	25 March	
T3c	Small group work	29 April	
A1c	Introduction to assessment	13 May	
A2c	More thoughts on assessment	20 May	
E1c	Course evaluation	3 June	
T7c	Designing effective projects	10 June	
T4c	Assignments and projects	17 June	
A30	Alternative assessment techniques	24 June	

Appendix 4

<b>SELF ANALYSIS FORM</b> Overall analysis			
Encircle your opinion of the degree of success you achieved:			
<b>SPEECH SETTING:</b> Was there anything about the room (size, lighting, heating, and the like), distribution of the audience, public address system, or any other aspect that added to or detracted from your potential success?	Yes	Partially	No
<b>SPEECH AUDIENCE:</b> Was there anything about audience size, age, sex, race, religion, sosio-economic level, attitude, interests, or knowledge that added to or detracted from your potential success?	Yes	Partially	No
<b>THE SPEAKER</b> Was there anything about your attitude, dress, demeanor, posture and the like, that could have added to or detracted from your success?	Yes	Partially	No

Adapted from Verderber, 1975:245.

<b>PROCESS ANALYSIS</b>	
MESSAGE INTENT: Place a ✓ for apparent intent:	
Enjoyment Social Expectation Negotiation Information Asking Information Giving Opinion Asking Opinion Giving Changing behavior	
SKILLS: Place a ✓ for attempt at using skill; place a – mark for absence of that skill; place a * mark for a particularly successful use:	
Describing feelings Indexing Dating Separating fact/inference Nonverbal body action Nonverbal paralanguage Listening Paraphrasing Perception checking Feedback, verbal	
EGO STATE: Place a ✓ mark indicating apparent source of each statement:	
Parent Adult Child	

Adapted from Verderber, 1975:337.

<b>PROCESS ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)</b>	
<p>BARRIERS: Place a / to indicate the beginning of a communication barrier; place a * mark for successfully dealing with the barrier; place a – mark for compounding the barrier:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information overload</li> <li>Noise</li> <li>Transfer stations</li> <li>Gaps</li> <li>Hidden agendas</li> <li>Defensiveness</li> <li>Suspicion</li> <li>Overemotional reaction</li> <li>Crossed transaction</li> <li>Game</li> </ul>	

Adapted from Verderber, 1975:337.

CAPE PENINSULA  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

