

Listening skills: The first skills of the language

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“One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say”

Bryant. McGill

Abstract

Listening is the following and understanding the sound. Listening is emotional where as hearing is physical listening is the absorption of the meanings of words and sentences by the brain. Listening leads to the understanding of facts and ideas. It is the bigger point of communication. Hearing is merely a physical act that depends on the ears. Listening on the other hand, is a much more conscious effort to comprehend what is heard. Hearing is compulsory while listening is not. During the process of listening, one has to hear (i.e. receive), decode the message, evaluate and interpret it and then respond it. Listening is more than just hearing. A good listener can inspire and motivate himself/herself for listening. He/she listens to the speaker attractively. He/she is self-motivated and self-inspired. A good listener is open minded. A person with prejudices can never be a good listener. Using appropriate body language and non-verbal cues, the good listener responds to the speakers message and thus motivates the speaker to enhance interaction. A perfect listener has to be ready physically and psychologically to listen. She/he has to remove or minimize expressing extreme emotions, fear, anxiety, complexes etc.

“Listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. When we really listen to people there is an alternating current, and this recharges as so that we never get fired of each other”

Key words: Communication, Inspire, Self-motivated, Non-verbal Cues.

Introduction

Listening is the following and understands the sound. Listening is an emotional whereas hearing is physical. Listening is ethical to effective teaching and effective teaching is the life line of all the teachers. Most of the time we assume that we are listening well. But we may not. There are several reasons for this. One of them is that most often we complete on our own sentences of the speaker before he completes them. This is called predicting. It is possible the speaker will say something different from what we expect. As a result difficulties in understanding the messages can occur, and misunderstandings can arise as result. The average speaker transmits information at the rate of 125-150 words per minute while the average listener processes information at 400-600 words per minute.

Pertaining to the levels of listening, the non-listener is someone who does not actually hear the speaker at all. If it is clearly evident that this person is not really paying any attention. Sometimes this person falls inattention while thinking about restricted matters. They are usually considered social bores and are severely disliked and nearly tolerated.

The active listener focuses on the thoughts and feelings of the speaker including what is not being said as well as the concrete word. He concentrates on understanding the speaker's point of view. An active listener spends his personal thoughts and feelings and focuses totally on what the speaker is saying. He also gives verbal and non-verbal feedback that tells the speaker he is absorbing what is being said.

Listening is a process of receiving and interpreting the spoken word. For developing the listening skills, students should be exposed to different kinds of audio clippings and should be made to understand that. In a listening activity the listener should be able to identify the main and subsidiary points and the link between them. The students should be exposed to formal, semi-formal and informal styles of language through the audio clippings and should be made to identify the style or function of the language. It also comprises of identifying the phonological aspect, falls starts, pauses, hesitations, stress, intonation and rhythm patterns(2).

Listening is the ability to identify and understand what others say or speak. This involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, their grammar, vocabulary and governing meaning. It is a language experience that operates in context ranging from simple conversation to academic debate.

Kinds of listening

Wohin and Coakley (1982) describe five different kinds of listening

1. Discriminative
2. Comprehensive
3. Critical
4. Therapeutic
5. Appreciative

1. Discriminative: It makes the listener sensitive to argument and language. It also enables the listener to distinguish fact from opinion.

2. Comprehensive: It helps the listener to understand a message.

3. Critical listening: It makes the listener to evaluate and then accept or reject a message.

4. Therapeutic listening: It enables the listener to serve as a sounding board without evaluating or judging a message.

5. Appreciative listening: It is for enjoyment or to gain a sensory impression.

Thus whatever may be the purpose, effective listening requires cognitive and behavioral interaction.

Types of listening

There are many types of listening skills. These may be categorized as follows

1. **Casual listening:** Listening to someone without focus or intention is called casual listening. This process does not serve any specific purpose.
2. **Intentional listening:** Listening with intention and focus and in a systematic process is called intentional listening. It serves specific purposes.
3. **Active listening or Reflective listening:** It is single most useful and important listening skills. In active listening you are also genuinely interested in understanding what the other person is thinking, feeling, wanting or what the message mean and you are active in checking out your understanding before you respond with you and new message. You restate or paraphrase year our understanding of their message and reflect it back to the sender identification.

The following are the listener commonly discussed listening model

1. Passive
 2. Evaluative
 3. Appreciative
1. **Passive or Attentive:** Attentive listening is when you are genuinely interested in hearing and understanding the other person point of view. You are attentive and passively listens. You assume that you heard and understand correctly, but stay passive and do not verify it.
 2. **Empathetic listening:** Listening with care regard to give advice, or to solve problems in empathetic listening. For example a Psychiatrist listens to his/her patients empathetically to suggest solutions.
 3. **Ignoring:** Pretending to listen to someone without grasping the message of the speaker is another way of ignoring someone. This kind of listening also called preventive listening.
 4. **Listening skills in question:** The activities that enhance listening skills and readily available in the existing curriculum. They are only to be practice during the teaching different subjects. The advanced skills could be listening for problem solving, summarizing, answering questions, interpreting information, filling gap , paraphrasing etc.

Need for listening skills

We have earlier considered listening as the foundation of the formal education and language acquisition. At birth we know nothing about language and yet we complete much of the first language acquisition process within the first five years depending exclusively on listening.(1)

Therefore the importance of listening as a skill in the learning of a language. There is also a need to learn how to think about and so what interactions and face-to-face conversations.

Acquisition of listening skills

Effective listening is just one way to achieve success in life. It is a natural process of the human behavior. We listen for various purposes. At the airport, perhaps, we would like to know when the flight would take off, how long we would have to wait. At the railway station we listen to the announcement which would give the information about the number of the platform on which the train arrives, the time of the departure /arrival of the train etc. we listen to commentaries if we are interested in games and sports. We listen to interviews to

know the people and their interests. We listen to discussions to know how opinions differ or agree. Thus, listening form one of the major activities in our life. A proper training of the skill naturally benefits all our students.

Barriers to effective listening skills

There are many types of barriers to effective listening.

1. Linguistic barrier: When the listener does not understand the meaning of the words used by the speaker, there is a linguistic barrier. The speaker may have used specialized vocabulary, Jargon, another language or may not have used the right words or sentence structure. These results in linguistic barriers.

2. Physical barrier: One of the major barriers is a physical barrier. If the listener cannot clearly hear the speaker because of distance or disturbance, it could create a gap of communication. If the channel used for transmission has any technical or physical defect, there is a defects, there is a physical barrier to listening.

3. Psychological barrier: Our listening may be affected by psychological factors such as extreme emotions, excitement, anxiety, fear, feelings of superiority or inferiority etc. these may prevent us from listening and understanding the other person. These are the psychological barriers.

Advantages of listening

1. You can reduce tension: giving the other person and enhance to express his problems or view point will help to clear the air of tension and hostility.

2. You can learn by listening: you can learn about the subject being discussed or about the person speaking.

3. Listening gives you confidence: if you can follow the trend of the discussion and speech you can be confident of what you speak.

4. Listening enhances your thinking: the average spelling rate is about 125 words per minute and your capacity to listen is about 400-600 words a minute.

Conclusion

In the last four decades, communication and proficiency oriented approaches to language teaching placed in increasing importance on listening comprehensive. From 1950s, to till date 1970s, the researcher focuses on listening for understanding and listening for acceptance or rejection of messages. More over the present system of education, up to primary grades, listening accepted as the most effective learning mode. In colleges to texture system draws heavily upon listening skills.

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