

“Importance of Listening in Communication”

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Abstract: This paper is going to throw light on the aspect how listening is integral part of communication. Communication is the key to success in everyone life. The main purpose of communication is to get across message clearly. It requires conscious efforts from the participants to make the communication effective. The sender and receiver both should have mutual interest to have proper communication. If the process of communication is fraught with errors, messages are likely to be misinterpreted by the receiver. Since communication is a skill, it means that it can be learned and mastered. To acquire mastery over any language we need to focus on improving our abilities in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing that language. In this paper we will look on the various ways, methods and techniques which will help to improve our communication skills by listening effectively.

Keywords: Communication, listening, hearing, language, speaking, reading, writing.

I. Introduction

Communication is essential to all human being to be a part of society. Communication is a continuous process of passing information and understanding from one person to another. Communication promotes understanding, motivates people to generate new ideas and achieve success in life. The world would have no social structure without communication. Communication is the process by which sender conveys information, ideas, feelings to someone in the form of message through an appropriate medium to get response from receiver in the form of feedback. Communication can be verbal or written which involves skills like-Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. In every sphere of life listening is required. One cannot be the skilled communicator unless he is an effective listener. Effective listening helps to communicate skillfully and achieve goals in life.

II. What is listening Skill?

Listening is the process of receiving, interpreting and reacting to a message received from the speaker. Listening is an important aid to communication. It is one of the major skills for mastering language other than the three being speaking, reading and writing. Listening is important part of human communication without proper listening skills, effective communication is impossible.

The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention.
(Dr.Rachel Naomi Remen)

III. Listening is not the same as Hearing.

Most of the times listening and hearing are taken as one and the same by most people. In fact both listening and hearing are different from each other. Hearing is unintentional. Hearing is continuous while listening is quiet intentional and specific. We pay attention to a very few or required sounds only and understand them. This is listening. Listening involves reception of sounds, recognition of sounds and comprehension of sounds. Listening is a, psychological and neurological process while hearing is only a physiological process.

Hearing is very general while listening is a specific activity. Listening starts with hearing. Hearing is basically ability but listening is a skill. The listening skill is to be developed systematically and intentionally. Hearing is related only to the reception of sounds. Hearing is the primary stage where the sounds or words are received. But listening is an advanced stage where the listener is focused on the sounds heard.

IV. Process of Listening

To be a good listener, it is necessary to know the various stages of listening. These are:

The sensing/ selecting stage- The listener selects, from among a multiple of stimuli, the only one that seems important at that point in time and converts it into a message.

The interpreting stage - The listener is busy in the act of decoding the message. It is at this stage that the listener faced numerous barriers that could be semantic, linguistic, psychological, emotional, or environmental.

The evaluating stage- Critical listening takes place at this stage. The listener assigns a meaning to the message, draws inferences, takes an overview of the messages, and seeks accuracy of information and evidence. Often, the listener is disturbed by past experiences, beliefs, and emotions, which often come in the way of the evaluation process.

The responding stage- This is the stage when the listener is ready to respond. In addition, this feedback stage is important for a speaker. The listener's non-verbal signals inform the speaker whether he or she has been understood the message or not.

The memory stage- This is final stage of listening. Effective listening helps listeners retain what they have heard.

‘Unfortunately, no matter how bright a speaker is, most listeners can pay only 10-25% of a talk or a presentation.

V. Types of Listening

Listening is a process of gripping words and selecting meaning. Listening is a skill –it can be developed and improved upon. Listening is classified into the following main types-

1. **Informative Listening-** informative listening refers to the situation where the listener’s key concern is to understand the message. Informative listening, or listening to understand, is found in all areas of our lives. Lot of our learning came from informative learning. For example, we listen to lectures or instructions from teachers and what we learn depends on how well we listen. We listen to instructions, speeches, and orders, if we listen poorly we are not equipped with the information we need. Effective informative listening demands attention.
2. **Attentive Listening-** Attentive listening involves attention, careful consideration, concentration and comprehension of the speaker’s ideas. The listener participates in communication process actively and attentively. The listener nods his head, leans forward or shows positive body language which supports and encourages the speaker to communicate.
3. **Passive Listening-** Passive listening is very stern, firm and orthodox type of listening.
4. **Appreciative listening-** In this type of listening, listeners appreciate the speaker. This is encouraging type of listening. The listeners appreciate and support the speaker.
5. **Evaluative listening-** This type of listening involves critical evaluation of the speaker’s thoughts and ideas. The listener assesses speaker’s depth of knowledge, choice of words and stylistic devices and tone and style of speaker. The listener makes an estimate of value and relevance of speaker’s ideas, opinions and thoughts.

VI. Barriers to effective listening

1. **Superiority complex:** Individuals having higher levels of intelligence, suffer from this attitude. They think that they know everything and do not give much attention to people who are inferior to them.
2. **Inferiority complex:** This category of people suffers from low self-esteem and confidence. They always surrender easily under the impression that they have lower in intelligence, than others. These people are detrimental to organization since they cannot take part actively in brainstorming session which is common to business enterprises.
3. **Blaming others (You attitude):** Some people are arrogant in their behavior. They have a tendency of blaming others for their mistakes. These people do not easily accept their mistakes as a result it leads to a drop in positive communication.
4. **Selective hearing:** The people in production department will not pay attention when it is about marketing department. Only the marketing people pay attention. This is a barrier in the communication between the two departments and hinders the progress of the company.

5. **Introvert behavior:** Often people with introvert behavior are classified as arrogant people. Shedding the fear of being laughed at can easily overcome this barrier. Introvert people find themselves to be misfits' in the society.

VII. Ways to improve listening skills

Communication isn't just about talking with others and sharing information. Effective communication involves listening skills that develop your ability to really understand what others say, and that with an open mind. By developing better listening skills, you will be able to get additional information out of the conversations. The power to listen is a very sensitive skill; it is the skill that makes inter personal relations effective.

- 1) Stop talking. Be attentive. Make the speaker feel important
- 2) Put the speaker at ease creates a positive atmosphere through body language. Your non-verbal behavior must show that you are interested; the speaker must see and feel that you are listening.
- 3) Be patient. The speaker may need time to say what she/he wants to say; if they are interrupted, they get more nervous.
- 4) Do not create or allow distractions.
- 5) Ask questions only after the speaker begins to feel more comfortable and ready to reply.
- 6) Keep an open mind; do not jump to conclusions Avoid making any judgment until the speaker has completed speaking.

VIII. Conclusion

Listening is a skill that can be developed. Listening is related to understanding which needs effort. To improve listening skill the listener should stop talking, put the speaker at ease, give him the impression that you want to listen, and remove distractions, empathize with the speaker, be patient, go easy on arguments and criticism and ask questions. We must also avoid premature judgments as most of us are guilty of forming snap judgments and tend to evaluate others before hearing them out especially when the speaker's ideas conflict with our own. Furthermore while we are listening we must concentrate on what the speaker is saying and not what we think.

According to **Keith Davis and John W. Newstrom**, people have to stop talking before they can listen. Feedback can be given only if the listener has listened, understood and empathized.

In communication, the art of listening plays a very important role. In our daily life we are often listening to conversations, lectures, seminars, lessons news, announcements, dictation, dialogues, instructions, etc. In this process, we either pay more attention to the speaker or less attention. At times we respond immediately; at other times we do not respond immediately, but listen to retain information for future application. The speaker, the message, the body language along with listening ability is observed by the listener.

The receiver must therefore be an active listener for the cycle of communication to be complete.

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