

The Role of Listening Skills in Effective Communication

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Abstract: *In the realm of effective communication, the often-overlooked skill of listening plays a pivotal role. This abstract delves into the importance of honing listening skills as a cornerstone of successful communication. Highlighting its significance not only in personal interactions but also in professional settings, the abstract explores how active listening fosters understanding, resolves conflicts, and builds stronger relationships. It underscores the impact of attentive listening on the overall quality of communication, emphasizing its role in avoiding misunderstandings, facilitating cooperation, and enhancing overall communication dynamics. As businesses and individuals navigate an increasingly interconnected world, the ability to listen attentively emerges as a key factor in achieving meaningful and productive communication outcomes..*

Keywords: Listening skills, Communication competence

I. INTRODUCTION

Since oral output is considered a prerequisite for language learning, listening comprehension has been a major problem for language education theorists and educators. For some who believe that learning a second language is quite like learning one's home tongue, listening is a prerequisite for learning a language because it is the main method by which learners form their understandings in the target language and absorb the input. As Krashen (1981) stated, language learning is generally a function of input and output processes. This presumption states that listening abilities account for a significant portion of input and play a key role in acquiring input during the learning process. Because input greatly influences output, listening, hence becomes crucial.

We must listen to others. Efficiency or intelligence is not a substitute of good listening skills. One of the biggest impacts one has on people is simply by granting them a patient hearing. This is most important in the service business or while trying to build a network. The time we spend in hearing people out directly goes into shaping their perception of us – and perception of how we treat them.

Objective

- To investigate importance of listening skills in communication

Research Methodology– secondary data has been used for research paper.

WHAT IS HEARING?

Hearing is the sense that allows you to distinguish sounds with your ears. Dogs have a particularly acute sense of hearing, and they can hear sounds pitched too high for humans to hear.

UNDERSTANDING LISTENING

Listening is the process receiving, analyzing, and responding to a message from the speaker is the process of listening. A crucial component of communication is listening. Aside from speaking, reading, and writing, it is one of the most important abilities for gaining language proficiency. Effective communication is impossible without appropriate listening abilities, which is a crucial component of human communication. Listening is the simplest and most effective approach to establish a connection with someone. Pay attention. Our attention to one another is possibly the most significant gift we ever give one other.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LISTENING AND HEARING

Most individuals consider hearing and listening to be synonymous most of the time. As it happens, hearing and listening are not the same thing. Hearing happens accidentally. While listening is quiet, focused, and intentional, hearing is constant. Only a small number of necessary noises are picked up on and understood by us. Receiving, identifying, and comprehending sounds are all part of listening. Hearing is merely a physiological process, whereas listening is a psychological and neurological process.

Hearing is a highly generic action, whereas listening is a particular one. Hearing comes before listening. While listening is a skill, hearing is really an aptitude. It is important to build listening skills actively and methodically. Hearing is only connected to receiving of stimuli from the environment.

PROCESS OF LISTENING

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 faces 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 understood the message or not.

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

TYPES OF LISTENING

Active Listening

The Primary kind is known as Active Listening. Lively Listener awareness is on the speaker's words to recognize their means and context. This kind of listener pays near interest to the speaker's body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. They interact with the speaker, ask significant questions, and make clear facts. Energetic listening is beneficial in non-public relationships and professional settings while you want to build a strong rapport with a person.

Biased Listening -

Selective listening is another name for biased listening.

Biased listeners only pay attention to the information they particularly desire to hear.

Factual distortion may result from this listening procedure. This occurs when the listener isn't completely tuned in to what the speaker is trying to say.

Sympathetic Listening -

A sympathetic listener is motivated by feelings. The listener concentrates on the speaker's sentiments and emotions rather than the words that are being said. The listener can provide the speaker the assistance they require by listening with empathy. Instead of believing what they claim they're feeling, the listener can grasp how they truly feel. When a listener takes the time to listen in this way, the speaker will feel heard and validated. If we want to develop a deeper relationship with someone in our life, we must practice sympathetic listening.

Comprehensive Listening –

This Type of listening necessitates linguistic proficiency. Early childhood is when this kind of hearing is typically established. To fully comprehend what someone is expressing with words, people practice comprehensive listening. Comprehensive listening is the foundation for several other forms of listening. For instance, in order to use informational listening and pick up new knowledge, complete listening is required.

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Critical Listening –

Analyzing a speaker's message and distinguishing between fact and opinion requires critical listening, which calls for methodical thinking and deliberate consideration. When a salesperson is trying to close a deal or when a speaker may be observing political debates with an agenda, it's usually helpful to listen critically.

Therapeutic Listening –

Therapeutic listening means allowing a friend, colleague, or family member to discuss their problems. It involves emphasizing and applying supportive nonverbal cues, such as nodding and maintaining eye contact, in addition to empathizing with their experiences.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Barriers to effective communication can result in confusion which can lead to incorrect information being conveyed or miscommunication which can lead to loss of business.

Following are some of the barriers to effective communication:

Semantic Barriers – These are also called language barriers. These barriers are caused by miscommunication between the sender and the receiver. The following cases of semantic barriers can be seen in communication:

Organisational Barriers - Hierarchical obstructions are those boundaries that are caused because of the construction, rules and guidelines present in the association. The different kinds of boundaries that can be experienced because of prevalent subordinate connections where the free progression of correspondence is unimaginable.

Cultural Barriers – Cultural Barriers are those that arise due to lack of parallels among the different societies across the world. A term that can be inoffensive in one culture can be regarded as a shoptalk in another culture. Also, Colourful Beliefs can differ from One Culture to another.

Physical Barriers – Physical Barriers to effective communication include issues such as malfunctioning equipment, disruptive noise, closed doors, and enclosed office spaces that lead to distortion of the information being transmitted from the sender to the receiver, ultimately causing communication breakdowns.

Physiological Barriers – These occur when either the sender or the recipient of a message faces challenges in conveying or comprehending the communication effectively, typically as a result of physiological conditions such as dyslexia or neurological disorders that disrupt speech or hearing.

LISTENING AS A TOOL FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS:

ACTIVE LISTENING:

Research suggests that people spend between **70%-80%** of their day engaged in some form of communication, and about **55%** of their time is devoted to listening. But the question is, do they actively listen? 'Active listening' as a term was first coined by psychologists, Carl Rogers and Richard Farson in 1957. Active listening is when you are fully aware and concentrate on what is being said rather than passively hearing what the speaker is trying to convey.

The goal of active listening is to acquire information, listen to understand people and situations before responding to it. It is the conscious decision to listen carefully and understand what people are trying to convey without being judgmental. Active listening helps to :

Build trust: Active listening builds trust within the organization through honest and supportive communication that is non-judgemental and fosters team understanding and cooperation.

Improve Productivity: Proper feedback and actively consideration of the employees' views and ideas by the management are vital for a healthy workplace and performance. Ensuring that the internal communication is solid will assure that a culture of mutual trust and understanding is developed. This in turn enhances employee productivity leading to a solid, successful business model.

Resolve Conflict: Conflicts and mishaps are inevitable in any workplace. The reasons for this can vary from a minor misunderstanding or a major debacle. Misunderstandings, different viewpoints, or a lack of recognition often create

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conflicts in the workplace. There is nothing that good communication (active listening) cannot resolve. Failure to understand or respect other's views happens due to our inability to see things from their perspectives. Our sense of self-righteousness also interferes here. Active listening helps in recognizing other's perspectives and feelings and helps us appreciate them. This not only helps in resolving conflicts but also helps foster a culture of respect.

WAYS TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS

“Listen” to Non-Verbal Cues:

Pay attention to what the other person is saying with their body language. Facial expressions, tone of voice and gestures can tell us just as much as what is being said in words. Pay attention to what the other person is saying with their body language.

Face the Speaker and Have Eye Contact:

We must position ourselves to face the person speaking and maintain visual contact. Establishing eye contact plays a crucial role in in-person discussions. However, it's essential to strike a balance, as excessive eye contact can come across as intimidating. Therefore, it's advisable to tailor our level of eye contact to the specific context we find ourselves in. Additionally, being mindful of our body language by ensuring an open posture; steering clear of crossing our arms or legs, as such gestures may convey a closed-off or defensive demeanour, also helps in enhancing our listening ability.

Listen without Judging, or Jumping to Conclusions:

If we let our emotions dictate our reactions to what is being said, it can hinder our ability to truly hear and comprehend the subsequent conversation. Instead, we must concentrate on active listening. Additionally, we should avoid making presumptions about the content of the forthcoming remarks.

Show that we are listening:

Demonstrate our attentiveness by nodding, wearing a friendly smile, and using affirming interjections such as "yes" and "uh huh" to signal our engagement and motivate the speaker to keep talking. Avoid checking the time, fidgeting, or toying with our hair or nails as these behaviours can disrupt the conversation and convey disinterest.

II. CONCLUSION

One ability that can be cultivated is listening. Understanding and listening go hand in hand and require work. To hone the listening abilities, the listener should stop talking, make the speaker feel comfortable, convey that they want to listen, take away any distractions, show patience, avoid disagreements and criticism, and ask questions. Premature judgments must also be avoided because most of us are prone to making fast decisions and judging others before giving them a chance to speak, particularly when their opinions diverge from our own. Furthermore, we need to focus on what the speaker is saying rather than our own opinions while we are listening.

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