

## **MODULE 3 LISTENING IN THE PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEXT**

Unit 1	Hearing and Listening
Unit 2	Types of Listening
Unit 3	Hindrances to Effective Listening
Unit 4	Techniques of Becoming a Better Listener
Unit 5	Listening in Persuasive Situations

### **UNIT 1 HEARING AND LISTENING**

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#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

When people speak, we may hear the words coming out of their mouths but we may not really be listening to what is being said. You may think your acting skills are great but people can tell quickly that your ears are working but your mind is not engaged. Listening skills are an important part of public speaking. Listening is an important part of communication. Indeed, the art of listening is a skill. How good is your listening skill? There is no doubt that much of what we learn everyday is a result of listening. You can see why this is an essential skill for public speaking success.

Listening thus involves:

- Hearing
- Understanding
- Judging

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end this unit, you should be able to:

- distinguish clearly between hearing and listening;
- identify the likely obstacles to effective listening; and
- practice the skills for effective listening.

## HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 Definition of Hearing

There is a world of difference between hearing and listening. A hearing specialist may, through therapy and devices, enable sounds to become more audible to the human ear. But these kinds of actions have no influence on a person's listening ability. Hearing is a physical process. Listening is a cognitive and emotional engagement.

Hearing is simply the act of perceiving sounds with the ear. If you are not hearing-impaired, hearing simply happens. You can hear someone speak without listening to the words. Hearing defines only the physical measurement of the sound waves that are transmitted to the ear and into the brain where they are processed into audible information. Hearing occurs with or without your consent. Indeed, hearing is such a passive quality that it occurs even while you sleep. When you merely hear someone's words but are not listening to what is being said, it can lead to misunderstandings, missed opportunities and resentment.

### 3.2 What is Listening?

Listening goes far beyond your natural hearing process. It means paying attention to the words that are being spoken with the intention of understanding the other person. Your personal perceptions and prejudices can affect the quality of your listening skills. For example, if you feel you are better off (financially, intellectually, socially) than the person you are listening to, you may dismiss much of what s/he is saying because of your perceived superiority. Everyone wants to be heard and understood, but at one time or another, most people don't listen and fail to understand the meaning of another person's words. It's a fundamental human need to have your feelings acknowledged, whether or not someone agrees with you. 'Honest to goodness' listening creates an intimate connection and makes you feel cared about.

In any speech event, it has been observed that there are generally four basic levels of hearing and listening, according to Toast Masters.org. Check the category you often fall into when involved in different conversations. A **non-listener** is totally

preoccupied with his personal thoughts and though s/he hears words, s/he is not listening to what is being said. **Passive listeners** hear the words but do not fully absorb or understand them. **Listeners** pay attention to the speaker but grasp only some part of the intended message. **Active listeners** are completely focused on the speaker and understand the meaning of the words without distortion. Listening is the most frequently used communication skill, but many of us are poor listeners. We lose interest, we concentrate on the speaker's appearance instead of his/her words and our thoughts tend to drift simply because we can think faster than people speak. However, discipline and active engagement in the conversation can significantly improve your listening skills. Sharpen your listening skill by doing the following:

### **Focus**

Pay attention to your speaker. Make eye contact with him/her and let him/her know you are listening by nodding or agreeing. However, even if you are making eye contact and nodding, it is still quite easy for your mind to wander. Concentrate on the speaker's words and anticipate his/her next statement. Ask yourself why s/he would say that or why s/he did not say what you were expecting. Watch his/her body language for a better clue of his/her true feelings.

### **Remove Distractions**

Close any books and remove any work from your desk when listening to a lecture. Do not use your computer to take notes during a lecture or meeting, as it is too easy to distract yourself with email or other work. Ask others around you to cease conversation, or ask your speaker to move to a quieter environment if possible.

### **Summarise**

When listening at a lecture or group meeting, summarise what the speaker has just said. This will not only strengthen your understanding of the subject, but will also improve your memory of the lecture and keep you from getting distracted by outside stimuli.

### **Take Notes**

If you have questions or comments that need to be addressed, simply make a note of them and bring them up when appropriate. Taking notes will also improve your listening skills as it physically forces you to listen.

### **Respond When Appropriate**

Save your questions or comments for when the speaker is done talking. The speaker may inadvertently address any concerns you may have had or answer your question later in the lecture. Interrupting is not only rude, but also proves that you are not willing to listen fully. Avoid forming any opinion of the speaker until you have listened to his/her entire statement. Jumping to conclusions will only distract you from the speaker's message. Responding once the speaker has

finished talking allows you to ask better questions or make stronger comments without wasting the speaker's time.

### **Ask Questions**

It is important that you do respond. This lets the speaker know that you listened to what s/he had to say and you either understand or want to know more. Asking questions shows the speaker that you are interested in what s/he has to say and are all ears.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

How would you distinguish between Hearing and Listening?

### **Relationship Listening Skills**

In order to be a good friend, spouse or employee, you must have effective listening skills. One of the most important communication skills you can learn is active listening. Therapists and counsellors spend large quantities of time learning and improving this skill in order to develop positive relationships with their clients because of its importance. Listening skills can improve your relationships and increase your success at work.

### **Paying Attention**

If you want to be an active listener, you must pay attention to what the other person is saying. Check in with yourself periodically; if you find that you are nodding off or distracted, refocus your attention. If you are already planning what you are going to say in response, you are not listening or paying attention. Let the person finish speaking before you make judgments or respond. Listen to the other person as you would want to be listened to. If you are talking to your friend about something upsetting, you expect for him/her to care and listen to your concerns. You might want her/him to offer some advice or just hear what you have to say. When other people interrupt you, you probably feel as if they aren't listening or paying attention. Watch how others respond to you and mimic the behaviours that you like.

### **Non-Verbal Communication**

People can show that they are listening or that they are distracted through nonverbal communication, according to Helpguide.org. If you are talking to your spouse about an argument that she had with her friend, you want to show her that you care. She can tell you are not listening if you do not make eye contact, fidget or look at your watch. If you want to improve your nonverbal communication, occasionally nod, sit up straight and smile to encourage the speaker.

### **Feedback**

People want to be heard, and part of listening in a relationship is giving the other person feedback. This doesn't mean you have to provide advice or give your opinion. Repeat what the person has said in your own words. For instance, if

your friend tells you he/she is not getting along with a co-worker, has to work long hours every day and feels drained when he gets home, you could respond by saying, "It sounds as though you're stressed and overwhelmed." With that one short statement, your friend will understand that you listened and care. If s/he asks for advice, give it, but just let him/her vent before telling him/her how to fix his situation. Many times, that is all it takes to make the other person feel better.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

When a person responds to your words by saying "I hear you," do you sometimes wonder if he was truly listening to you? Perhaps you find your mind wandering off when someone is sharing her thoughts with you. You may have heard the words being spoken, but were you really listening to their meaning? Hearing and listening have different meanings. Hearing is a passive occurrence that requires no effort. Listening, on the other hand, is a conscious choice that demands your attention and concentration.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

Listening and hearing, as you have studied in this unit, may be both sensed through our ears but beyond that listening is very different from hearing. Hearing is just the perception of several sounds going through your ear while listening is absorbing every part of the sound and understanding what is meant. Therefore, listening entails understanding while hearing does not. Aside from this, listening requires attentiveness and concentration which requires your brain to work. On the other hand, hearing is more like the perception of sound waves in the ears. So when somebody gives you an oral instruction, it is always a wise decision to listen and not only hear. If you want to understand and acquire knowledge, always use your ears to listen and not just to hear words.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

What listening techniques will you use when listening to a public lecture on "Globalisation and its implication for Nigerian education?"

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

- Koch, A. (1988). *Speaking with a Purpose*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
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- Samovar, L. A. & Mills, J.M. (1989). *Oral Communication: Message and Response*. Dubuque, Ia: Brown.

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## UNIT 2    TYPES OF LISTENING

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Audience Listening Interpretation Techniques
  - 3.2 Types of Listening
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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in the previous unit, listening requires conscious effort to choose to do. Listening requires a measure of mental concentration so that your brain processes meaning from words and sentences. It is important to remember that with communication, it is not necessary always to say something back. It is rather important to develop into a great listener.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the different types of listening skills; and
- describe the different communication situations where each skill should be applied.

### HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Audience Listening Interpretation Techniques

The audience mind can be turned on by a good speech, like turning on a light, and the public speaking audience consists of the people who share in or participate in the experience or encounter of the presentation put on by a presenter. Your public speaking audience can better be served if you know a few basic things about them

and how they can interpret the information they hear. Listening is more than the sum of its parts, and there are various kinds of listening techniques that the audience may employ at any given time they are listening. They could be engaged in the following way:

- **Listening for information**

Information could include facts, figures, details, knowledge, instruction, advice, guidance, direction, counsel, enlightenment, news words, thought content or knowledge. Informational Listening can be to understand or to learn.

- **Listening for Emotional Content**

Emotional content is the underlying feelings that are based on emotion rather than reason. It can also include things like the tone of voice, gestures, body language and micro-expressions. Is the person happy and satisfied or dispirited or dejected? Is there anger or pleasantness noted in the effect? Or does the speaker manifest proud or humble emotions?

- **Listening for the Unspoken**

Listening for what is unsaid, what is implied but not stated, inhibited from being said or what may really be meant.

- **Listening for Entertainment**

Sometimes we like to listen to music, poetry readings and other forms of entertainment.

- **Critical or Evaluative Listening**

Here, we listen to some pieces of information, and then use what we have heard to make personal decisions in our lives.

### 3.1.2 Listening Styles

Speech mastery in public speaking requires understanding the **Listening Style** of the audience. In addition to the various types of listening public speakers concern themselves with, of greater interest should be the way the audience listens.

Listening style can be categorized into four different classifications. The 1984 book *Whole Brain Thinking* reported on a 20 year research project by Dr. David Merrill and Dr. Roger Reid on how the mind works. Their findings demonstrated that an effective speaker must be aware of at least 4 different styles of listeners. To reach each different type of listening requires speaking to meet the unique personality or psychological needs of an audience. This is a very basic look of the makeup of an audience that would be listening to public speaking. When we speak, to feel as though you are connected and to be able to say the audience is listening is an understatement. More importantly, how are they listening? What is

the style of listening used by each individual in the audience? What is the psychology of listening?

### **Listening Style: Four Types**

#### **Analytical**

Analytical listeners will have puzzled looks while listening. They will be questioning, thoughtful and sceptical during the talk. Body language will include rubbing chin and or brow. They will be evaluating and critiquing the information and delivery.

If you are new to public speaking, these are the listeners to get your critique from. You also need to give them things to analyse without boring everyone else.

#### **Driver**

'Driver' listeners are the result - oriented men and women of action. They are also impatient. They will be the ones usually sitting at the front of the audience. They ask, "How can I use this information now." "How is this practical?" They do not need to know when or why if these are self evident. To them, the information application is self evident. Their need is for what, and how that is new. Their listening style is, "Get to the point." Great public speaking requires meeting their need while not leaving everyone else behind.

#### **Amiable**

These are the audiences that care for you as the speaker. They also care for the audience. Those new to public speaking will enjoy the kudos they receive from this group. They usually will not give the critical assessment that will help you attain Speech mastery.

Consider an example of public speaking to this group and really connecting to them.

Imagine a speaker stopping, shuffling his notes as though he lost something he wanted to say. He then looks down at the floor as if it may have fell. How do you feel? What thoughts would go through your mind? When seeing this happen to a speaker, my heart sunk. Then the speaker reaching into his pocket pulled out a piece of paper with this ah-ha look on his face. He proceeded to explain he was demonstrating the quality of empathy. It was an exceptional illustration. Unfortunately, he was only speaking to part of the audience.

He was speaking to those who would be concerned with his plight. Others may have been thinking he should have been better prepared. The amiable listener may look concerned and even worried if someone is ignored, or smile to



encourage you, the speaker, or even others.

### **Expressive**

This group of listeners like to be involved and be a part of what is going on. The expressive like involvement. This listener will become easily bored with technical data. They will become fidgety or a class clown. The research found they will often be intuitive.

Those with this listening style will really appreciate audience participation. The most basic way to involve an audience in public speaking is to ask for a show of hands with a question you know will have many responses. If you can and do, this will enable you to connect to those with this listening style.

### **Reach all in your Audience**

To reach all four audiences and hold their attention, when public speaking requires balancing many elements of speaking, they need enough data to please the analytical listener without boring the expressive. The programme needs to move along for the goal oriented driver. Openness, comfort and empathy are needed to satisfy the amiable personality. Many public speaking books will say all audiences are basically the same. You will find in your experience and based on this science, on at least a few levels, this is not true. Learn to reach out to each of the several types of listening styles when you are engaged in public speaking. Learn to meet the demands of each individual listening style. If you master putting all four listening styles together to best serve your audience, you will not only attain speech mastery, you will gain power over your audience.

## **3.2 Types of Listening**

Here are six types of listening, starting with basic discrimination of sounds and ending in deep communication.

### **Discriminative listening**

Discriminative listening is the most basic type of listening, whereby the difference between different sounds is identified. If you cannot hear differences, then you cannot make sense of the meaning that is expressed by such differences.

We learn to discriminate between sounds within our own language early, and later are unable to discriminate between the phonemes of other languages. This is one reason why a person from one country finds it difficult to speak another language perfectly, as they are unable to distinguish the subtle sounds that are required in that language.

Likewise, a person who cannot hear the subtleties of emotional variation in another person's voice will be less likely to be able to discern the emotions the other person is experiencing.

Listening is a visual as well as auditory act, as we communicate much through body language. We thus also need to be able to discriminate between muscle and skeletal movements that signify different meanings.

### **Comprehension listening**

The next step beyond discriminating between different sounds and sights is to make sense of them. To comprehend the meaning requires first having a lexicon of words at our fingertips and also all rules of grammar and syntax by which we can understand what others are saying.

The same is true, of course, for the visual components of communication, and an understanding of body language helps us understand what the other person really means.

In communication, some words are more important and some less so, and comprehension often benefits from extraction of key facts and items from a long spiel.

Comprehension listening is also known as *content listening*, *informative listening* and *full listening*.

### **Critical listening**

Critical listening is listening in order to evaluate and judge, forming opinion about what is being said. Judgment includes assessing strengths and weaknesses, agreement and approval.

This form of listening requires significant real-time cognitive effort as the listener analyzes what is being said, relating it to existing knowledge and rules, whilst simultaneously listening to the ongoing words from the speaker.

### **Biased listening**

Biased listening happens when the person hears only what they want to hear, typically misinterpreting what the other person says based on the stereotypes and other biases that they have. Such biased listening is often very evaluative in nature.

## **Evaluative listening**

In evaluative listening, or *critical listening*, we make judgments about what the other person is saying. We seek to assess the truth of what is being said. We also judge what they say against our values, assessing them as good or bad, worthy or unworthy.

Evaluative listening is particularly pertinent when the other person is trying to persuade us, perhaps to change our behaviour and, maybe, even to change our beliefs. Within this, we also discriminate between subtleties of language and comprehend the inner meaning of what is said. Typically also we weigh up the pros and cons of an argument, determining whether it makes sense logically as well as whether it is helpful to us.

Evaluative listening is also called critical, judgmental or interpretive listening.

## **Appreciative listening**

In appreciative listening, we seek certain information which we will appreciate. For example, that which helps meet our needs and goals. We use appreciative listening when we are listening to good music, poetry or maybe even the stirring words of a great leader.

## **Sympathetic listening**

In sympathetic listening we care about the other person and show this concern in the way we pay close attention and express our sorrow for their ills and happiness at their joy.

## **Empathetic listening**

When we listen empathetically, we go beyond sympathy to seek a truer understanding of how others are feeling. This requires excellent discrimination and close attention to the nuances of emotional signals. When we are being truly empathetic, we actually feel what they are feeling.

In order to get others to expose these deep parts of themselves to us, we also need to demonstrate our empathy in our demeanour towards them, asking sensitively and in a way that encourages self-disclosure.

### **Therapeutic listening**

In therapeutic listening, the listener has a purpose of not only empathizing with the speaker but also to use this deep connection in order to help the speaker understand, change or develop in some way.

This not only happens when you go to see a therapist but also in many social situations, where friends and family seek to both diagnose problems from listening and also to help the speaker cure themselves, perhaps by some cathartic process. This also happens in work situations, where managers, Human Resource people, trainers and coaches seek to help employees learn and develop.

### **Dialogic listening**

The word 'dialogue' stems from the Greek words 'dia', meaning 'through' and 'logos' meaning 'words'. Thus, dialogic listening means learning through conversation and an engaged interchange of ideas and information in which we actively seek to learn more about the person and how they think.

Dialogic listening is sometimes known as 'relational listening'.

### **Relationship listening**

Sometimes, the most important factor in listening is in order to develop or sustain a relationship. This is why lovers talk for hours and attend closely to what each other has to say when the same words from someone else would seem to be rather boring.

Relationship listening is also important in areas such as negotiation and sales, where it is helpful if the other person likes you and trusts you.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Listening skills allows one to make sense of and understand what another person is saying. In other words, listening skills allow you to understand what someone is "talking about".

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we studied types of listening and have been able to prove that good listening skills can be deliberately cultivated and developed.

We stressed that the ability to listen carefully will allow you to:  
better understand assignments and what is expected of you

- build rapport with your colleagues and other members of the public
- show support
- work better in a team-based environment
- resolve problems with people
- answer questions and
- find underlying meanings in what others say.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Mention and discuss any four types of listening skills you have studied, and which you think you require most as a student in the National Open University of Nigeria.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

David, M. & Roger, R. (1984) *Whole Brain Thinking*. New York: Harper & Row.

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## UNIT 3 HINDRANCES TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING

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- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

As a public speaker, the art of listening is vital. To be a great speaker, you need to be a great listener. For your message to reach the ears of those you speak to, you need to know what they want to hear. Everyone has a job to be done. You can only find out what that is by listening to what your audience is saying prior to preparing your speech. When you learn how to be a truly supportive listener, you may find yourself surrounded by others who are able to do the same, thereby reducing or even eradicating any hindrance to effective communication. In listening we therefore have problems of attention and accuracy, but difficulties also arise from the different frames of reference held by the speaker and the listener. Our knowledge, concepts, vocabulary and way of thinking derive from the past - our own, individual past education and experience. If we do not allow for the fact that the other person has his/her own, perhaps very different, frame of reference, it is all too easy to get our wires crossed, or to assume a level of understanding which is not real. We continually run the danger of over-complicating or over-simplifying what we hear. We have all had the experience of talking to someone and then hear them say, "I know just what you mean" and then go on to describe something unrelated to your conversation.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end this unit, you should be able to:

- identify the various listening hindrances that can come up during communication; and
- explain how to overcome these hindrances.

### HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.

- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 What are Listening Hindrances?**

##### **Physiological Hindrances to Effective Listening**

###### **Hunger**

Communication and active listening involve higher-order brain functions that cannot be supported without proper nourishment. If you skip lunch before meeting with a friend, chances are that you will not be able to really listen to what he/she is saying.

###### **The Need to Use the Restroom**

Always use the restroom before entering a situation in which you may need to use active listening skills. Otherwise, you will have difficulty focusing. It is better to interrupt the interaction for a quick bathroom break than to continue without the ability to really listen.

###### **Pain**

A headache, stomach upset or injury can inhibit your ability to process information and listen to someone when they speak. Find a way to control your pain as much as possible if you cannot postpone a conversation or meeting that requires your full attention.

###### **Illness**

When you are sick, it is a bad idea to become involved in a conversation that requires you to actively listen. You will not be able to concentrate and you will be too focused on how you feel to care about what the other person is saying.

###### **Fatigue**

Fatigue undermines your ability to concentrate and make important communication judgments. Even though you may do your best to actively listen, chances are you'll find yourself dozing off while the other person is speaking.

## **Emotional Distress**

Extreme grief, anger, anxiety or fear can alter the chemical balance of your brain, making it physiologically impossible to engage in rational, intentional communication. Active listening shouldn't be attempted until after you've calmed down.

## **Poor Hearing**

Hearing loss or partial deafness can severely impede a person's ability to actively listen. Poor hearing can cause you to incorrectly perceive what someone is saying, making communication difficult. Age-related hearing loss, an ear infection or even a plugged ear canal can all interfere with active listening. If you find it difficult to hear what people are saying to you, visit your doctor to test for hearing problems.

## **Psychological Hindrances to Listening**

### **Concentration**

Listening barriers can also be created by internally generated noise, such as monologues. People often miss what others are saying because they are distracted by their own thoughts or daydreams. Sometimes they fail to concentrate because they are too self-absorbed.

### **Attitudes**

The way people feel about themselves and about others can be a major listening barrier. When a person thinks that he or she knows best, either in general or when discussing a particular topic, this attitude can prevent him or her from effectively receiving information from another person. People also have a tendency to erect listening barriers when they feel threatened by what they are hearing. This can happen when individuals believe that they are being personally attacked, accused or insulted. Being defensive can also result in listening barriers if one person is accustomed to the poor communication skills of another person. For example, if a husband and wife constantly argue, the anticipation of an argument may prevent them from listening to each other even when they try to interact more civilly.

### **Reactions**

Certain words can trigger reactions that create listening barriers. Being politically correct and using emotionally charged vocabulary has this effect. Words denoting ethnic or racial identity can also have this effect if they conjure thoughts of negative stereotypes. This type of language grabs attention but also tends to create



a situation that prevents people from listening effectively to the overall message.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

List and discuss any five factors that can hinder you from listening effectively to a tutorial class in your programme.

### **3.2 How to Overcome Listening Hindrances**

Effective communication is both simple and complicated. On the one hand, effective communication is simply a matter of listening respectfully, in the way we would like others to listen to us. On the other hand, we each have our own agenda, which inhibits our ability to fully listen to someone with conflicting objectives. Overcoming hindrances to effective listening involves finding common ground on which to communicate and then learning to express opinions and needs calmly and clearly. Study the following suggested ways of overcoming listening hindrances'

- Treat the person you are attempting to communicate with respectfully. If you do not put him/her on the defensive, s/he will be better able to hear what you have to say and respond by truly addressing the issues rather than reacting to perceived insults. Speak without making overt or implied accusations and listen carefully to his point of view. The more fully you understand what he or she has to say, the easier it will be to reconcile your differences.
- Find common ground on which to communicate. Despite the fact that issues and antagonism can create hindrances to effective communication, there is almost always some point of agreement between two people from which they can start building a bridge. For example, if one neighbour wants to plant a tree while the other objects to the shade that tree will create in his garden, they can begin a dialogue based on their common interest in keeping their neighbourhood attractive.
- Identify any other existing barriers to effective communication, such as physical barriers of space or time, or cultural differences that cause one party to speak or act in a way that the other party finds offensive or threatening. Whenever possible, discuss these barriers when you begin your dialogue. If you cannot openly discuss the variables creating barriers to effective communication, keep them in mind nonetheless in order to maintain as much perspective as possible.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

You found yourself in a situation where your inadequate knowledge of the subject matter of a lecture was hindering your understanding. What steps will you take to overcome this problem?

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

One impulse of the will which is only too quick to awaken is the urge towards power and conflict, to impose our own will and resist the other person's. Resistance at the level of intention is often rationalized into arguments which can never be resolved, because the basic will to reach agreement is not present. If we allow these conflicting forces to arise in us whilst listening, we create an immediate barrier to a creative future work relationship. To sense the real intentions of another person, what they want, why they are telling you this or that, can be one of the hardest aspects of the art of listening. Often, speakers are themselves only dimly aware of what they actually want in a situation. Skilful listening can help to discover, "behind" the thoughts and "below" the feelings involved.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

Active listening promotes healthy conflict resolution, meaningful relationships and good interpersonal skills. However, there are a number of barriers that can hinder good active listening. We have outlined some of these barriers here and also suggested the steps you can take to overcome such barriers. What we have emphasised in this unit is that the goal of good listening is simply to listen - nothing more and nothing less.

### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the hindrances you have often encountered while listening to a sermon in your place of worship, and what you do to overcome them.

### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## UNIT 4     **TECHNIQUES OF BECOMING A BETTER LISTENER**

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objective
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Stages of Listening
  - 3.2 Becoming a better Listener
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to the International Listening Association, we only retain about half of what we hear immediately after we hear it, and only about 20% beyond that. Pretty bad, isn't it? Despite the disappointing statistics, though, listening is one of the most important parts of successful communication. Many times, I think we get caught up in the sound of our own voices and we forget to be quiet and hear what others are saying. Imagine if we were all able to boost our ability to listen so we retained 75% of what we heard immediately after hearing it and 50% long term? The implications of this more effective listening would be phenomenal in the following ways:

- we would spend less time trying to recall what we cannot remember and become more productive;
- the quality of our work would improve because we would make less mistakes;
- we would likely get into fewer arguments;
- our relationships would be stronger; and
- we would have more empathy and compassion for others.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVE

At the end this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the techniques of becoming a better listener in any communication endeavour you are involved in.

### HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.

- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 The Stages of Listening

Effective listening involves knowing the difference between what is said, what you hear, and what is meant. Indeed, effective listening involves these four stages which you should acquaint yourself with.

##### The Four Stages of Listening

- a. **Sensing:** The sense of hearing being employed to take in the message. Our minds have the ability to listen four times faster than a person can talk. One challenge to effective listening would be focusing our minds on hearing what is said rather than the several other things going on in our lives at any given moment.

To improve the skill, look directly at the person talking. As you hear the words said, also start reading the body language. Listen for tone and intonation. With advancement in the art, you will be able to notice even more subtle body language such as pupil movement.

On the flip side, if you are taking part in public speaking, your audience will face the same challenge you do with the art of listening. Understanding this will be an aid to developing and improving your public speaking skills.

- b. **Understanding:** The processing and interpreting of the message. Rather than thinking about what you are going to say next, try to think of what is being said from the standpoint of the communicator. Think of yourself as their advocate and your purpose is to help everyone understand what the speaker is trying to communicate.
- c. **Evaluating:** Appraising the message. Tap into the filing cabinet of your little gray box on conveniently mounted on the top of your body. First sort and classify what you are hearing. What are the implications, the applications, benefit or damage of the information? You will have plenty of time to draw a conclusion. You will only have a few seconds to quickly make a fool of yourself however. So put prejudices aside. Stifle any desire to respond emotionally. For future public speaking jobs, it is vital you not only learn about your audience, you need to practise the art of listening on them. Find out what floats their boats. Find out how best to reach them.
- d. **Responding:** Acting on the message. You will benefit little if you do not act on the direction or advice. A simple credo in this regard, there are three things a true professional does not do when being given counsel or advice.

Justify, minimize or shift the blame.

Reasonableness in the art of listening dictates that there is always more to learn on a subject. If your public speaking is reasonable, it will be easy for the audience to be reasonable in listening to you.

### 3.2 Becoming a Better Listener

Listening to people is a fine art that needs to be practised. If you are like most people, then chances are you often interrupt others while they are still talking. In your defence, you could say that a long-winded, one-sided conversation is the quickest turn off ever, and while this might be true, it just shows basic respect for the other person when we are prepared to listen to them without consistently interrupting their speech. As it stands though, none of us ever likes to be interrupted anyway. If it does happen, we tend to feel ignored, overlooked and unappreciated. So how can we still get our message across while becoming a better listener in the process?

- a. **Stop talking:** Put yourself in the speaker's shoes so you get a deeper understanding of where he or she is coming from and what is driving him or her to say what he or she is saying. Sometimes, saying nothing says so much more. The messages you tell when you are silent can be read in your body language. By being silent and observing what the other person has to say, we learn to pick up on their energies and the messages they DO NOT speak. This is a great tool if you work with people, because you can gain a deeper insight into their personalities by being a better observer.
- b. **Focus on** using inviting body language, such as making eye contact, uncrossing your arms, and turning your shoulders so you are facing the person speaking. Avoid thinking about what you are going to say next. Instead, create memory triggers to assist your recall.
- c. **Be open- minded** and avoid passing judgment on the speaker. How often do we shut off to another person's message just because we do not agree with them? We do it all the time. Since we are human, we all have our own opinion on things. That is perfectly fine. But you know as well as I do that everything has two sides.
- d. **Remove your prejudice.** By removing our prejudice to actually listen to what the other person has to say we remove self-imposed brain blockages and open ourselves up for proper communication with the other party. You should try it, because you might be surprised at what you learn during the process.
- e. **Stop doing other things** — all other things — while someone is speaking to you. A discussion without eye contact is like a body without a soul. Something lacks - a personal touch. If you are guilty of shutting off to other people's talk, could it be because you don't make eye contact with them while talking to one another? Granted, this is hard to do when speaking on the phone, but the next tip might help you in those situations. Practice eye contact when you speak with someone the next time. Initially,

it might be hard because many people are actually uncomfortable looking into each other's eyes. However, it will be worth your while because in doing so you establish a new intimacy between the people involved and I'm almost willing to guarantee that this will help to form a better bond between you.

Participate in active listening by encouraging the speaker with nods and affirmative words. Take what is being said at face value and avoid focusing on the “hidden” meaning. Ask for clarification to get a better understanding of what was said.

Do not interrupt. When it is time to ask your questions, summarize and repeat what you heard before asking the question.

When it gets down to it, and when you take the busy nature of life into consideration, listening is hard. But we all have the same struggles and the same opportunity for improvement.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Listening is defined as applying oneself to hearing something. In verbal communication, listening is to hear while giving attention to what is being said. It is an ability that can be cultivated and practised into a skill. From this standpoint, it can be viewed as an art. As a public speaker, it is an art to be mastered. To listen, really listen, we have to hush our internal monologue and put effort into hearing what the other person is saying. It takes real effort and energy to listen like this - actively listening, listening with engagement. It is far more than sitting passively while someone else talks.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

Becoming a better listener involves being genuinely interested in what the other person has to say. Listening is not only about just keeping quiet when the other person is talking, or being nice and courteous. It is about understanding and remembering what the other person says. That is the only way to understand the other person, build a relationship, resolve any conflict, and offer a solution. Indeed, listening is really the best way to sell your ideas when engaged in any public speaking event.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Explain clearly the stages you need to better listen to a lecture in this course (Public Speaking).

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

<http://www.dumblittleman.com/2009/08/how-to-become-better-listener.html>

Koch, A. (1988). *Speaking with a Purpose*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

## UNIT 5 LISTENING IN PERSUASIVE SITUATIONS

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 3.0 Objective
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Depth of Listening
  - 3.2 How to Listen in Persuasive Situations
  - 3.3 Mastering the Art of Listening
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Listening effectively to others can be your most fundamental and powerful communication tool. When someone is willing to stop talking or thinking and truly listen to others, all interactions become easier. Listening well is as powerful a means of communication and influence as to talk well.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVE

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the techniques of listening in persuasive situations.

### HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers to Self-Assessment exercises, go to the relevant sections of the unit to derive the answers.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Depth of Listening

How can you improve your listening? First, by admitting even the *slightest* possibility that you might not *always* listen with absolute effectiveness. So there is some room for improvement, however small. Always *commit to improving*. There are different depths of listening, based on how deeply you are listening to the

other person. If you can identify these, then you can choose which you want to use. They are:

### **False listening**

False listening occurs where a person is pretending to listen but is not hearing anything that is being said. They may nod, smile and grunt in all the right places, but do not actually take in anything that is said.

This is a skill that may be finely honed by people who do a lot of inconsequential listening, such as politicians and royalty. Their goal with their audience is to make a good impression in very short space of time before they move on, never to talk to that person again. It is also something practised by couples, particularly, where one side does most of the talking. However, the need for relationship here can lead to this being spotted ('you're not listening again!') and consequent conflict.

### **Initial listening**

Sometimes when we listen we hear the first few words and then start to think about what we want to say in return. We then look for a point at which we can interrupt. We are also not listening then as we are spending more time rehearsing what we are going to say about their initial point.

### **Selective listening**

Selective listening involves listening for particular things and ignoring others. We thus hear what we want to hear and pay little attention to 'extraneous' detail.

### **Partial listening**

Partial listening is what most of us do most of the time. We listen to the other person with the best of intent and then become distracted, either by stray thoughts or by something that the other person has said.

This can be problematic when the other person has moved on and we are unable to pick up the threads of what is being said. We thus easily can fall into false listening, at least for a short while. This can be embarrassing, of course, if they suddenly ask your opinion. A tip here: own up, admitting that you had lost the thread of the conversation and asking them to repeat what was said.

### **Full listening**

Full listening happens where the listener pays close and careful attention to what is being said, seeking carefully to understand the full content that the speaker is seeking to put across.



This may be a very active form of listening, with pauses for summaries and testing that understanding is complete. By the end of the conversation, the listener and the speaker will probably agree that the listener has fully understood what was said.

Full listening takes much more effort than partial listening, as it requires close concentration, possibly for a protracted period. It also requires skills of understanding and summary.

### **Deep listening**

Beyond the intensity of full listening, you can also reach into a form of listening that not only hears what is said but also seeks to understand the whole person behind the words.

In deep listening, you listen between the lines of what is said, hearing the emotion, watching the body language, detecting needs and goals, identifying preferences and biases, perceiving beliefs and values, and so on.

To listen deeply, you need a strong understanding of human psychology and to pay attention not just to the words but the whole person.

Deep listening is actually known as 'Whole person' listening.

## **3.2 How to Listen in Persuasive Situations**

As a speaker, you spend a lot of time thinking about the listener. But, how much time do you spend thinking about *listening*? How good a listener are you?

### **What is “Persuasive Listening”?**

It is easy to assume that when you go to listen to a persuasive speech, you have already accepted that you are going to be persuaded. The speaker will try to persuade you. And you will listen to whatever he or she has to say. You are not going to argue or supplement. However, persuasive listeners are the kinds of persons who would naturally and routinely listen. This calls for altruistic love, an inner care for others, a curiosity about others and putting others above themselves.

Here is a great drill for becoming a persuasive listener:

### **Pay attention to others**

Be connected to yourself—your feelings and thoughts about others

When you are serious about listening to someone, first be sure you turn to them and *look at them*. And look into the windows of their soul - their eyes.

Remembering (and working) to look a speaker in the eyes requires you to focus your attention on the speaker.

Next is that little voice in your head that can take you to where the speaker is heading or it can take you in a thousand divergent directions. Do not quash the little voice, the thoughts in your head, but focus them as you have focused your gaze - on the speaker. Get that little voice to work towards effective listening. Use it to remember your questions and organize the speaker's words for you.

Listening is persuasive when it:

- makes the other person feel respected and understood.
- helps the listener understand the feelings and perceptions of the other party.
- enables the listener to ask better questions.
- enables the listener to understand how to relate to the other party.

### **3.3 Mastering the Art of Listening**

Listening begins by learning how to read people by the energy they are emitting. Do they come across as excited and enthusiastic or do they sound lifeless and ready to go to sleep? Are they aggressive from the first words out of their mouth? Are you able to sense their negative or sceptical body language?

Effective listening provides valuable information and assists the listener in building relationships with the speaker. People love to feel listened to! Listening makes people feel special! Have you ever been in the middle of a conversation and the person you are talking to continually interrupts you? Does this annoy you? This usually stems from someone proving they have to be right or get the final word in. Are you guilty of this? Great listeners who become great speakers learn that the “less they talk, the more intelligent they sound”, and they also learn “how to say less to more people.”

Listening is attention, a stroke, a hug, a kind word. When you listen non-judgmentally and non-critically, you sell yourself as worthy of respect and affection. A level of trust begins more easily when you are listening. Listening not only allows you to receive valuable information, but is crucial to establishing a close and personal friendship. Think how valuable you will become with the person speaking if you are the only person in their lives who listens! Listening is the art of getting meaning from any situation. "Really listening" builds self-esteem in the speaker, It builds trust. It makes the speaker feel heard, understood, liked, respected, appreciated, and assisted.

Listening can be safely called the better half of conversation. When we use the term “conversation”, speaking is usually what comes to mind first. However, speaking is only part of a conversation and usually not the biggest part. In the end, what makes the difference is what is heard, accepted, and internalized, not just

what is spoken. It is important to let you know that persuasive listening is a whole new awareness, distinction and insight, and is very useful in the process of becoming a master listener. This is a process of creatively and actively absorbing what people say. It also involves learning to manage your listening, and really hearing what people are telling you, which also allows you to unleash your own speaking abilities. Persuasive listening can be interpreted thus: when you treat listening with the same care and concern you put into speaking, then your conversations will have the influence and effect you desire.

Your motivation comes from wanting to be the best you can be at your job and succeed in your business. Once motivated, here are some tips to help you master the art of listening.

**Maintain eye contact.** Looking people in the eye shows respect, and helps maintain focus on what is being said.

**Ask questions.** Asking questions forces you to concentrate on listening. Get in the habit of asking speakers to clarify or elaborate things you do not fully understand. This not only helps you to listen, it also will help you to learn things.

**Take notes.** Even if you never refer to these notes, the act of writing things down on paper forces you to concentrate on what the other person is saying. It also helps lock the information in your mind. The notes don't have to be detailed – just jot down key words, phrases and numbers. People speak much faster than anyone can write. If you try to write down every word that is said, you will lose track of the conversation and miss some of the speaker's main points

**Get rid of distractions.** Avoid the temptation to multi-task by doing paperwork, checking e-mail, etc., while someone is talking to you. Do not try to answer another incoming call on a different line. This really is aggravating to the other party. Leave it to the phone receptionist or voicemail to take a call back message.

**Interject.** From time to time during a long conversation, make brief comments such as: "I understand ... I see what you're saying." It helps you to stay alert, and also shows the speaker that you are paying attention.

**Do not interject your own thoughts.** Make sure the other party has finished talking before you venture an opinion or explanation. Some people have trouble getting to the point. Give them time to tell you what they want to say in their own way, although it is OK to move the conversation along by asking questions.

**Do not rehearse a response.** Listen to the full message. Only respond after the other person has finished talking. There may be key information not revealed until near the end.

**Pause.** After the other party finishes talking, pause for a few seconds before responding. The other person might be pausing just to catch a breath or formulate other remarks. Pausing also allows you a chance to soak up and retain what's been said, as well as collect your thoughts.

**Sit at the end of your chair.** Being too comfortable promotes daydreaming. When speaking on the phone, try to assume the same businesslike posture you would if you were meeting the person face-to-face. This will help make you more attentive.

**Tune in to unspoken messages.** A famous study has shown that only 7 per cent of communication gets conveyed by spoken words. Facial expressions and body language account for 55 per cent, with the other 38 per cent coming through in one's tone of voice. Over the phone, you will not have access to the visual information, but you will to the 38 per cent of information conveyed by tone of voice. This means that it is not enough to listen only to what people say. It is important to pick up on how they say it. They may be trying to tell you something, but do not know how, or are uncomfortable saying it. For example, a person may not want to get someone in trouble by criticizing performance. Yet, the person's tone of voice often will reveal this information as the root of a problem.

Listening is truly an internal process. It is an art that takes its own attention to detail. You have to pay particular attention to what is being said, not what you think you hear. Persuasive listening is often overlooked in leadership training, even though it may be the most important leadership skill. Mastering the art of persuasive listening will make a big difference in your life.

As an exercise, try and spend one whole day focusing on what you hear and what new information you have learned that you may have taken for granted. Teach yourself to pause after someone finishes speaking a sentence and wait two or three seconds before responding. This may challenge you. Average people jump in right away at the back end of someone else's sentence because they feel they have to be heard. They end up missing half of the spoken sentence because they are consumed with thinking about what to say instead of listening.

Start to catch yourself interrupting people or your speakers. Be humble enough to apologize and to let the person finish. You will know you are improving when you start to catch yourself and you start making improvements.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Asking questions can help you concentrate on listening. What other listening tips can you use to help you focus on a speech event like a public lecture?

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Listening is essential to human connection and communication. Asking all the right questions will get you nowhere unless you develop careful listening skills. Listening is more than just keeping quiet. Listening requires you to train your brain to focus on the speaker instead of on yourself or your surroundings.

It may sound easy, but listening is hard work. You may be working in an area bombarded with jobsite sounds or from people talking on a phone. There may be noise from radios, traffic, construction or office equipment and extraneous conversations. We have learned to tune out most of it as background noise. Our aural processing systems do not always work to perfection, unfortunately. Distractions sometimes cause us to tune out stuff that matters.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

Different situations require different types of listening. We may listen to obtain information, improve a relationship, gain appreciation for something, make discriminations, or engage in a critical evaluation. While certain skills are basic and necessary for all types of listening (receiving, attending, and understanding), each type requires some special skills. In this unit, you have been exposed to the techniques you need to listen effectively in persuasive situations. We have discussed those special skills and presented guidelines to help you improve your listening behaviour in all persuasive situations.

#### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. How will you know that your listening activity is persuasive during any given facilitation programme in your course?
- ii. With relevant examples define Persuasive listening.

#### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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