LISTENING SKILL: UNIT III

MEANING OF LISTENING:

Listening skill is critically important to effective communication. Most time of a day we spend a lot of our time in listening. The prime aim of listening is to gather important information and knowledge from surrounding people. Good listening skill will improve person’s ability to develop relationships and make them more creative and effective in the process of communication. And this is why listening is the base of language as it plays a vital role in effective communication. Person’s ability to listen and clearly understand allows the person to:

1. Develop relationship to a deeper level.
2. Be a better team player.
3. Be a better leader in organization.
4. Be an effective problem solver.
5. Support people who need help.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LISTENING AND HEARING:

HEARING:

Though the words ‘listening’ and ‘hearing’ seem similar word, they are different. Hearing is the physical aspect of human body that receives sounds. Hearing mainly depends on ears. We can hear sounds without deliberate effort because hearing is an instinctive process. In this manner in hearing we do not require concentration or attention. For example: when two friends passing through a crowded street talking with each other, they hear different sounds and noise from the street. These sounds simply hit to their eardrum. The surrounding noise does not make any sense to them. The ability of understanding and comprehension requires concentration and attention which lacks in hearing.

LISTENING:

Contrary to hearing listening is an active process where we pay proper attention toward the sound. In listening we require to comprehend the sound that we hear. In this way listening is a deliberate process. For example: in the class room students become active in listening because they pay attention to the teacher’s message to comprehend it. Mainly listening involves three parts: Hearing, Understanding and Response. Hearing is the first step in the listening process in
which person simply hear the words then after understand those words in the context of the entire conversation. Once we understand what we are hearing we respond in the context of the conversation and the whole process becomes listening.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hearing</th>
<th>Listening</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hearing depends on ears</td>
<td>Listening depends on mental ability</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is a physical process of receiving sound</td>
<td>It is a mental aspect of comprehending the message</td>
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<tr>
<td>We hear without deliberate effort.</td>
<td>We listen with deliberate effort.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hearing does not require proper attention.</td>
<td>Listening requires proper attention and concentration</td>
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<tr>
<td>In hearing sounds hit to person’s eardrum</td>
<td>In listening sounds goes to the depth of the mind to derive their meaning</td>
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**TYPES OF LISTENING:**

Listening is an active process in which our prime aim is to gather information and knowledge. There are mainly four types of listening.

1. Appreciative Listening
2. Empathetic Listening
3. Comprehensive Listening
4. Critical Listening

**Appreciative Listening:** In appreciative listening we derive aesthetic pleasure. We love to listen to songs, music, radio, TV etc. because they provide us aesthetic pleasure. In this type of listening the effect of listening does not last for a long time. The moment we plug out our ear-phone or stop listening, we stop deriving aesthetic pleasure.
**Empathetic Listening:** Empathetic listening is very essential for improving mutual understanding and trust. Through empathetic listening a listener lets the speaker know that he understands his problem and how he feels about it. When we listen to a distressed friend who wants to vent his feeling, we provide emotional support in the form of empathetic listening. Through listening we understand and sympathize him. There are certain benefits of empathetic listening. Empathetic listening:

1. Builds a trust and respect between persons
2. Enables the distressed to release his/her emotions
3. Reduces tensions
4. Creates the safe and healthy environment by solving problems.

A good empathetic listener should:

1. Increase the speaker’s self confidence.
2. Tell the speaker “you are important” & “I am not judging you”.
3. Gain the speaker’s cooperation.
4. Build teamwork.
5. Gain trust.
6. Encourage the speaker for positive attitude.

**Comprehensive Listening:** This type of listening requires full concentration because in such type of listening listener has to understand and comprehend the message and he has to respond on the base of understanding. For example students
in the classroom listen to the lecture to understand and comprehend the topic. Here students have to listen carefully. Similarly we listen attentively to the announcement at railway station and airport. In this way such type of listening where we require full attention in listening, it is called comprehensive listening.

**Comprehensive Listening**

**Critical Listening:** The ability to listen critically is essential in democracy. In such type of listening person listens to the message in order to evaluate and judge it. We engage ourselves in critical listening while listening to politicians, news, presentation, speech etc. Critical listening is a kind of effort to see both the sides: positive and negative. Since it is very important to remove negative and unhealthy aspect from society, critical listening is very essential.
**BARRIERS IN EFFECTIVE LISTENING:**

There are several barriers to effective listening which weaken the process of listening. On one side hearing continues constantly but listening is not a continuous process because the process of listening can be stopped due to various physical and psychological factors.

(1) **Surrounding Condition:** Environmental conditions like humidity, temperature, noise pollution, period of time, lack of lights, ventilation etc. negatively affects the listening process. In such environment a listener gets bored and often becomes a victim of distraction.

(2) **Space/distance:** Space or distance between the speaker and the listener also plays a vital role in listening process. Due to much distance between the listener and the speaker the listener cannot get the message of the speaker properly. Whereas due to close space between them may listener feel uncomfortable and restless.

(3) **Speed of the Speaker:** If the speaker is speaking too speedily, the listener would fumble to concentrate on the thoughts and ideas of the speaker. If the speaker speaks too slowly, the listener starts yawning and feeling sleepy. In this way speed of the speaker also affects the process of effective listening.

(4) **Speaker’s Non Verbal Communication:** If the speaker does not use facial expressions, gestures, body language, eye contact and other non verbal aspects, listener would start feeling boredom. Similarly over use of non verbal aspects would make the speech artificial and speaker laughingstock. For effective communication there should be a balance in the use of verbal and non verbal communication.

(5) **Lack Of Factual Information:** Many times listener does not listen attentively and carefully because he does not find any factual and useful information in the speech. Factual information makes the communication interesting and entertaining and therefore there are few chances of diverting listener’s attention.

(6) **Voice And Tone Of The Speaker:** If the speaker lacks knowledge of voice, tone and intonation pattern in speech, his speech would become monotonous uninterested. The listener will feel bore and fade up to listen to such monotonous speech. On the contrary many good speakers have a kind of magic in their voice that they literally mesmerize the listener for a longer time.
Thus above mentioned points are the fundamental barriers in effective listening skills. And keeping these barriers in mind a person can avoid them.

**TRAITS OF A GOOD LISTENER:**

Listening is an activity that requires practice and concentration. A few guidelines in the following paragraph would help the person in being a good listener.

**(1) Positive Attitude (Being Non Evaluative):** While listening to someone a person should have positive attitude. He can become a good listener by developing a desire to listen. As a good listener a person should not evaluate the speaker for his ideas and feelings. In other words listener should never pass any judgment of right or wrong. His behavior and expression will tell the speaker that whether you accept the person positively or not.

**(2) Paraphrasing:** A listener should pay an active role in the process of communication. He can do this with the help of paraphrasing where a listener presents his view or opinion about the speaker’s views and ideas. Use of this technique indicates that as a listener you are really interested in what the speaker is speaking about. A listener can use following phrases for paraphrasing.

- “As I gather, you want to tell……”
- “So you meant to say that…”
- “Do you mean that…..”

**(3) Reflecting Implications (Feedback):** A good listener always encourages the speaker by using reflecting implications or feedback because these reflecting implications show that a listener is listening eagerly. Listener can show his understanding using non verbal components like smile, laugh at funny things, nodding. He can also boost up the speaker’s confidence using some words like good, nice, well, you are on a right path, that is really nice etc.

**(4) Inviting Further Contribution:** When a listener has not understood the point clearly he can ask the speaker for better explanation. Following phrases can be used to demand better explanation.

- “Can you throw more light on this topic?”
- “After that what happened”
- “Will you explain it in detail?”
- “I’ve some confusion in it will you repeat it?”
(5) Responding None Verbally: A listener can show that he is active in listening by adopting certain postures and using non verbal components. Listener’s body language, eye contact, gesture, utterances like yes, hum, yh etc shows whether listener is interested in listening or not. In addition a person should not interrupt the speaker unnecessarily.

Thus these are main traits of good listener or use of these traits transforms the person from ‘hearer’ to a good listener.

Active Listening / Passive Listening.

OR

Difference Between Active Listening & Passive Listening

Active Listening: Like the difference between listening and hearing there is a clear difference between active listening and passive listening. When a person pays a full attention in the process of listening it becomes active listening because here a person is actively involved in the process of listening. He concentrates on the speaker’s speech in order to comprehend the message. In active listening a listener responds the speaker verbally and non-verbally and this is how he shows that whether he is interested in listening or not. In active listening person’s non-verbal components like gesture, eye contact, posture, behavior etc play an active role. For example when we listen to terrific news of terrorist attack, we listen to the news carefully and our non-verbal components instantly respond. In this way active listening provides us better understanding.

Passive listening: Contrary to active listening passive listening lacks the person’s attention. It means person only hears the sounds physically and he or she does not comprehend them. Here person’s attention plays a vital role since person does not pay attention, the communication process stops at the stage of hearing and this kind of hearing is called passive listening. For example while at the dining table, we glance at the television while busy in eating or talking to someone. Some sounds enter our ears but we do not pay attention to them. This kind of listening is called passive listening. Since there is a lack of concentration in such type of listening, it is not effective in the matter of communication.

Thus in our day to day life we come across both the listenings; active and passive and we use them according to our need.
Tips for effective listening:

1. Maintain eye contact and show you are interested in the conversation. Looking out the window or playing with your hair can give the impression that your mind is drifting away. Sit or stand properly.

2. Actually listen. Do not start thinking about your answer or response to what you are hearing. Listen with the intention of understanding.

3. Show your understanding of the speakers feeling with an appropriate physical gesture. For example smile, and laugh at funny things, nod your head when you agree.

4. Don’t interrupt the speaker unnecessarily. Let him finish his views. This does not work as some speakers seem to loose all sense of time when they are talking about matters close to their heart.

5. Use your body language to encourage the speaker. For example: lean toward the speaker to show him or her that you want to hear more.

6. Concentrate. Keep your mind focused on what is being said.

7. Respond by asking questions about the topic that has been discussed or add something to the discussion.

8. Always motivate your self to listen to the speaker.