**UNIT 2**

**Developing Listening skills**

Listening Vs Hearing

Effective Listening

Process of Listening

Types of Listening

Barriers to effective listening

**1. Listening vs. Hearing**

* **Hearing**:
  + **Definition**: Hearing is the passive, physiological process of sound waves entering the ear and being received by the brain. It is an involuntary action and does not require conscious effort.
  + **Example**: When you are sitting in a cafeteria, you might hear background noises like chatter, clinking of dishes, or music playing. You aren’t actively paying attention to these sounds, but they are still perceived by your brain.
* **Listening**:
  + **Definition**: Listening is an active process that requires focus and mental engagement to understand, interpret, and respond to what is being said. It involves making sense of the sounds and using cognitive processes to interpret the meaning.
  + **Example**: During a lecture, when you pay close attention to the professor's words, take notes, and mentally process the information to understand the concepts, you are actively listening.
* **Key Difference**: Hearing is automatic and passive, while listening is intentional and active, requiring effort to comprehend and engage with the information.

**2. Effective Listening**

* **Definition**: Effective listening is the ability to fully understand the speaker's message, including both the content and the underlying emotions, intentions, or attitudes. It involves actively engaging with the speaker, asking clarifying questions, and providing feedback.
* **Characteristics of Effective Listening**:
  + **Focused Attention**: Avoid distractions and concentrate on the speaker.
  + **Empathy**: Try to understand the speaker's perspective and feelings.
  + **Open-Mindedness**: Listen without jumping to conclusions or making judgments.
  + **Active Engagement**: Provide feedback, ask questions, and show interest.
* **Example**: In a business meeting, effective listening means not just hearing the proposals being made but also understanding the concerns and motivations behind them, asking relevant questions, and summarizing the key points to ensure clarity.

**3. Process of Listening**

* **Stages of Listening**:
  1. **Receiving**: The first step where sound waves are captured by the ear. This is the hearing part.
  2. **Understanding**: Interpreting and making sense of the sounds heard. This involves processing the words and sentences to grasp their meaning.
  3. **Remembering**: Retaining the information for future reference. Memory plays a crucial role in following a conversation or recalling details.
  4. **Evaluating**: Assessing the information, including judging its validity, reliability, and importance.
  5. **Responding**: Providing feedback to the speaker, which could be verbal or non-verbal, showing that you have understood and are engaged in the conversation.
* **Example**: While listening to a client’s requirements, you first receive their words, understand the needs, remember the key points, evaluate the feasibility of their demands, and finally respond with appropriate suggestions or clarifications.

**4. Types of Listening**

* **Discriminative Listening**:
  + **Definition**: The basic type of listening that focuses on distinguishing between different sounds and recognizing the differences in pitch, tone, and inflection.
  + **Example**: A doctor listening to a patient's heartbeat with a stethoscope to detect any irregularities.
* **Comprehensive Listening**:
  + **Definition**: Listening to understand the message being communicated. It involves grasping the content of the communication.
  + **Example**: Students listening to a lecture to comprehend the material being taught.
* **Critical Listening**:
  + **Definition**: Listening to evaluate or scrutinize the message. It involves analyzing the speaker's arguments, checking for consistency, and assessing the credibility of the information.
  + **Example**: During a debate, critically listening to the opposing side’s arguments to identify weaknesses or logical flaws.
* **Biased Listening**:
  + **Definition**: Listening with preconceived notions, focusing on aspects of the message that confirm one’s own beliefs or biases.
  + **Example**: A person with a strong opinion on a topic may listen selectively to only those parts of a conversation that support their view.
* **Sympathetic Listening**:
  + **Definition**: Listening to show care and concern for the speaker’s emotions. It is more about understanding the speaker's feelings rather than the content of the message.
  + **Example**: A friend listening to someone who is going through a difficult time, offering comfort and support.
* **Empathetic Listening**:
  + **Definition**: Deep listening to understand the speaker's emotions and perspective. It involves putting oneself in the speaker’s shoes.
  + **Example**: A manager listening to an employee discuss their challenges at work, understanding their emotions and concerns.
* **Therapeutic Listening**:
  + **Definition**: A specialized form of listening used by therapists to understand and help individuals work through their thoughts and emotions.
  + **Example**: A counselor listening to a patient to provide guidance and support.

**5. Barriers to Effective Listening**

* **Physical Barriers**:
  + **Definition**: External factors that can prevent effective listening, such as noise, poor acoustics, or hearing impairments.
  + **Example**: Trying to listen to someone speak in a crowded and noisy restaurant can be difficult due to the background noise.
* **Psychological Barriers**:
  + **Definition**: Internal factors that hinder listening, such as stress, anxiety, or preoccupation with other thoughts.
  + **Example**: Being worried about an upcoming exam can make it hard to focus on a lecture.
* **Physiological Barriers**:
  + **Definition**: Biological factors that affect listening, such as fatigue, illness, or hearing loss.
  + **Example**: Feeling exhausted after a long day can reduce one’s ability to listen attentively.
* **Semantic Barriers**:
  + **Definition**: Misunderstandings that arise from differences in language, jargon, or terminology.
  + **Example**: Listening to a technical presentation filled with industry-specific jargon can be challenging for someone unfamiliar with the terms.
* **Cultural Barriers**:
  + **Definition**: Differences in cultural norms and practices that can affect how messages are interpreted and understood.
  + **Example**: In some cultures, maintaining eye contact is a sign of attentiveness, while in others, it may be perceived as disrespectful.
* **Emotional Barriers**:
  + **Definition**: Strong emotions such as anger, frustration, or excitement that can cloud judgment and hinder effective listening.
  + **Example**: Being upset with a colleague might make it difficult to listen to their explanation calmly.

**Conclusion**

Developing strong listening skills is essential for effective communication in both personal and professional settings. Understanding the differences between hearing and listening, mastering the process of listening, recognizing the various types of listening, and being aware of potential barriers are all crucial steps toward becoming an effective listener.