



**IBRAHIM BADAMASI BABANGIDA UNIVERSITY, LAPAI**  
**CONSULT AND SERVICES**

(OFFICE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR)

**NON-DEGREE DIPLOMA**  
**PROGRAMME**

**SULEJA STUDY CENTRE**  
**FIELD BASE, 2<sup>ND</sup> GATE, SULEJA NIGER STATE.**

**THE USE OF ENGLISH**  
**COURSE HANDOUT**

(First Semester)

COURSE FERCILITATOR: *Muhammad Adamu*

## 1. Introduction

Welcome to ‘**The Use of English (I)**’. This is a general course meant to be COMPULSORILY taken in the first semester by all year one student of the Non-degree Diploma of this university, irrespective of their departments or course of study. The course has a varying course codes across departments, thus: **GST 011** for those in *Science and Laboratory (SLT)* and *Computer Science* Departments, **DPA 117** for those in *Public Administration Department*, **DBA 116** for those in *Business Administration Department*, and **CRM 101** for those in *Criminology and Intelligent Studies Department*. The course will run through first and second semesters respectively, with a two-credit unit allocation per-semester. It is designed to enable you gain understanding on variety of issues, relating to appropriate use of the English language for effective communication and to amass a great deal of study skills.

This Course Outline is a general overview of the course. It provides you with useful information about the structure of the course.

## 2. Goal

The overall goal of this course is to provide the student with the language skills which will enable him to cope effectively with the challenges of his course and to use English Language (which is the medium of instruction) effectively in the practice of his chosen profession as well as interact with others in the society.

## 3. Objectives

On the successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- Explain the concept of language, outline the characteristics of language, identify the functions of language, the four language skills and illustrate the uses of English language in Nigeria.
- Use the listening enabling skills to listen and comprehend lectures and talks, and be able to take down notes, while listening to a talk or lecture.

- Apply effective reading techniques to reading diverse texts and to comprehend diverse text materials, and to demonstrate that in his/her ability to make comprehensive notes.
- Deploy diverse writing techniques in formatting different forms of writing for socio-academic purposes.
- Make an appreciable and commendable outing in any form of public speech and communication, such as group presentation, seminar presentation and etcetera.
- Demonstrate how the principles of communicating in English can be applied to language use in diverse situations
- Demonstrate increase proficiency in the use of English Language, substantially, so as to be capable of performing language functions in social and academic settings.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

### Module One

Unit 1	The Concept of Language	-	-	-	5
Unit 2	Characteristics of Language	-	-	-	8
Unit 3	Functions of Language	-	-	-	12
Unit 4	The Four Language Skills: Introduction	-	-	-	15
Unit 5	The uses of English Language in Nigeria	-	-	-	17

### Module Two

Unit 1	Listening Enabling Skills	-	-	-	19
Unit 2	Listening and Comprehending	-	-	-	21
Unit 3	Listening and Note-taking	-	-	-	25
Unit 4	Listening and Information Retrieval	-	-	-	29

## **MODULE ONE**

### **UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF LANGUAGE**

Language is the most important phenomenon in the world. From birth to death, all our activities are regulated by language. The human knowledge and culture are stored and transmitted in language. Thinking is only possible through language. In our dreams, we make use of language. Language dominates every aspect of human life. In fact, it is a yardstick to separate us from other beings. But what exactly is the nature of this very important human phenomenon? This Module is set to explore the essence of Language, reviewing the concept of language, the characteristics of Language, its functions and basic skills, in order to expose the student to the proper understanding of what language is, for the benefit of his academic pursuit.

#### **Unit 1            The Concept of Language**

##### **What is Language?**

This concept like any other social concept, has eluded a single definition. Different scholars have defined it differently.

For example, Henry Sweet, an English phonetician and language scholar, defined language as: "the expression of ideas by means of speech-sounds combined into words. Words are combined into sentences, this combination answering to that of ideas into thoughts". Sweet's definition, is too narrow and fails to look at the fact that language is not just a speech sound but has other components that are not necessarily spoken. The definition also, in an attempt to be succinct puts excessive weight on 'thought'.

Alternatively, The American linguists Bernard Bloch and George L. Trager formulated another definition which sees language as a "system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates". While definition is close-fitted and views the social angle, it also failed in limiting language to a system of vocal symbols. It also used "arbitrary" in a specialized, though legitimate, way.

The Encyclopedia Britannica, on the other hand, defines language as "a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves".

Britannica's definition above is relatively broad and seems to be more encompassing. This is because it stretches its view to cover all the components of Language, in a succinct way, and at the same time admitting its human and social status. The definition simply reveals 'Language' as the principal method of human communication, consisting of words used in a structured and conventional way and conveyed by speech, writing, or gesture.

However, beyond the different definitions offered by different scholars, the following considerations will enter into any proper understanding of language as a subject:

- Every physiologically and mentally typical person acquires in childhood the ability to make use, as both sender and receiver, of a system of communication that comprises a circumscribed set of symbols (e.g., sounds, gestures, or written or typed characters). This system is called language.
- Typically, people acquire a single language initially—their first language, or native tongue, the language used by those with whom, or by whom, they are brought up from infancy.
- Different systems of communication constitute different languages; the degree of difference needed to establish a different language cannot be stated exactly. But the larger the differences the farther a distinct language evolved.
- Language, as described above, is species-specific to human beings. Though animals can also communicate through vocal noises and other means, but human language is more complex and elaborate and possesses the quality of infinite productivity and creativity.
- The basic purpose of language is to facilitate communication, in the sense of transmission of information from one person to another.

## Origin of Language

Whenever the issue of language origin is brought up, three questions usually comes to mind: How did language started? Where did language comes from? What was the first language ever spoken?

The truth is, there is NO authoritative answer to any of the questions above, anywhere. There are currently over 7,000 languages (with different spoken dialects) around the world. And linguistic evidence suggests that Language, have been around for roughly 150,000 years now. However, the material evidences we have to prove this only date back to around 6000 years ago, when writing began. Consequently, the major historicity of language is covered in guesswork and written evidences that are much more later than what linguistic evidence have suggested.

However, efforts have being made over the ages to describe the origin of language. These efforts can be broadly classified into Creationists Perspectives (or Theorem) and Evolutionist Perspectives (or Theorem).

### A. Creationists Perspectives (or Theorem)

These are theories or independent traditions that ascribe a divine or at least a supernatural origin to language or to the language of a particular community. The biblical account (representing ancient *Jewish* and *Christian* belief systems) and the Qur'anic account (representing *Islamic* belief system) both, with varying degree of details, ascribes the beginning of human language to the creation of Adam by God and of Adam's naming the creatures of the earth under God's guidance. The *Norse mythology* also preserves a similar story of divine participation in the creation of Language. In India, the *Hindus* believes that the god 'Indra' is said to have invented articulate speech. And in ancient Greek, the debate on the nature and origin of language given in Plato's Socratic dialogue *Cratylus*, Socrates is made to speak of the gods as those responsible for first fixing the names of things in the proper way. A similar divine aura also pervades early accounts of the origin of language in many African traditions of origin.

### B. Evolutionist Perspectives (or Theorem).

These are theories that see the origin and development of language from an evolutionary and autochthonous angle rather than a product of divine creation. The following are some of the theories under this perspective:

- i. **The Bow Wow theory:** It is said that speech is the imitation of barking of dogs and other animals.
- ii. **The Pooh- Pooh theory:** Speech is derived from the automatic emission of painful feelings.
- iii. **The Ding Dong theory:** Speech is developed gradually by the harmonization of sound and sense.
- iv. **The Yo-he-ho theory:** Sound was produced by regulating the breath as a result of strong muscular action of mouth.
- v. **Gestural theory:** Humans used their tongue in the same rhythm with gesture and posture. It gradually helped to develop language.
- vi. **The Tarara-boom-de-ye theory:** Speech is the result of expression of joy. When earlier humans got big games in hunting, made different sounds of joy. It gradually became the basis of speech

Whichever of the two perspectives one believes in concerning the origin of language, what seems to be more probable is the existence of a proto-language (whether created or evolved) at the beginning. It is here suggested that it was this single proto-language that slowly evolved and was transported to different parts of the world and from which other languages continue to form and evolved into distinction in man's continuous effort to adapt to his changing environment.

## **Unit 2            Characteristics of Language**

Language, indeed, has many features or characteristics. But some are more arguable than others. Below, we consider 10 main characteristics.

1. *Language is systemic (a system)*



A language is a structured system of communication which consists of a set of sounds, signs and/or written symbols which are used by the people of a particular country, region or group for talking, writing or communicating.

Language is a system of communication that relies on verbal or non-verbal codes to transfer information. Language is a system of systems! Sub-systems within language include phonetics and phonology (sounds), morphology and lexicology (words), syntax (grammar), discourse analysis (sentences) and semantics (meaning).

## 2. *Language is symbolic*

Almost every single language system ever used by humans is primarily made up of symbols. A symbol is something that stands in for or represents something else. From Egyptian hieroglyphs to *Bislama*, a language spoken in Vanuatu, every drawing or sound is a symbol representing meaning.

Symbols can be communicated verbally (speaking the word hello), in writing (putting the letters H-E-L-L-O together), or nonverbally (waving your hand back and forth). Language is a symbolic system of communication based on a complex system of rules relating to spoken, signed, or written symbols.

## 3. *Language is Systematic*

Although language is symbolic, its symbols are arranged in a particular system, not in random manners. For example, if we regard a language as being made up of sounds, we find out that only certain sounds occur in any one language that these occur in certain regular and predictable patterns. Certain sounds do not exist in certain languages. This makes a language mutually intelligible.

## 4. *Language is Social*

Language is social in that interaction with other persons is psychologically necessary to learn language. We use language to be in a community, to communicate with others. We depend on others when learning language, and we constantly borrow one another's uses of expression.

Language helps us perform various social functions, and many of its uses have become institutionalized. Language use is also part of social identity. I speak French therefore I share some characteristics, attitudes with other French speakers.

#### 5. *Language is Arbitrary*

Swiss linguist De Saussure claimed that language is arbitrary because of the lack of a natural relationship between the signifier (language form) and the signified (referent). The sounds of a word give very little to no clue to the meaning of the word. When you say or write dog, it doesn't really give us any clue to what it means. The word doesn't even sound like a barking dog. However, some linguists claim that is not entirely true.

There are cases where language is not arbitrary. Take onomatopoeias like woof-woof, for example. These words do give clues as to their meaning and, we, adults, use them to help children learn language.

#### 6. *Language is Cultural*

Language is one of the most important parts of any culture. Culture as a whole is transmitted through language. The fact that humankind has a history in the sense that animals do not is entirely the result of language.

We learn about the culture of a new country, our own culture thanks to language. Language is intrinsic to the expression of culture. As a means of communicating values, beliefs and customs, it has an important social function and fosters feelings of group identity and solidarity.

It is the means by which culture and its traditions and shared values may be conveyed and preserved. The opposite is true also. Language is transmitted through culture: a language is passed on from one generation to the next in a community.

#### 7. *Language is Dynamic*

Language is dynamic because it is always changing, evolving, and adapting to the needs of its users. The language we use today is different from the language our parents used and different from that used in Middle Ages.

New words appear regularly. Dictionaries change. Pronunciation differs. Even grammar rules evolve. As long as the needs of language users continue to change, so will the language. Language is constantly adapting and changing to reflect our changing lives, experiences and cultures. Language change enables us to accommodate new ideas, inventions and technologies.

It's not just the words themselves which change; the way in which we use them can shift too. But languages are also dynamic in the way that whole systems (a complete language) die. Languages disappear every day as users/speakers die.

#### 8. *Language is Variation*

Language is variation. There is more than one way of saying the same thing. Speakers may vary pronunciation (accent), word choice (lexicon), or morphology and syntax (grammar).

Variation happens for many different reasons. Sociolinguistics, the study of social factors affecting language, is based on the ideas that language varies because of different social reasons such as age, race, gender, social-economic status, geography, etc.

#### 9. *Language is Meaningful*

A language signal/symbol always conveys meaning. In linguistic terms, all the symbols/signals of language have a semantic content. The semantic content means each symbol is associated to something in the real world. Humans are able to give the same symbol a meaning, and very often, more than one meaning, and they're still able to distinguish all of them.

#### 10. *Language is Human*

Language is human as it differs from animal communication in several ways. The characteristics highlighted above set apart language from animal communication forms.

Some of these features may be part of animal communication; yet they do not form part of it in its entirety.

## Unit 3            Functions of Language

Functions of Language or Linguistic functions refer to the general social uses of language, such as requesting objects and activities, initiating social interactions, expressing personal feelings, describing aspects of the world, requesting information, and pretending. There are many functions of language as given by different linguistic scholars. We shall however, adopt the modified Roman Jakobson's linguistic functions

### 1.        Primary Function

The primary purpose of Language is communication. Language came into being in order to fulfill man's need for inter-personal exchange. In Jakobson's theory, there are six factors that are required for communication:

- ★ **Addresser:** This is the person who delivers a message to a specific audience.
- ★ **Addressee:** This is the audience that receives the message. Must consist of at least one person but could include many people.
- ★ **Context:** The context forms the setting or the reason for the message that will be communicated.
- ★ **Contact:** There needs to be a relational channel and connection between the addresser and the addressee. This connection keeps the lines of communication open.
- ★ **Common code:** The code includes the rules that combine to form the message and correspond to the type of language used.
- ★ **Message:** The message is what is sent by the addresser and corresponds to an experience, idea, explanation, and so on.

The effective connection between the above factors ensures a quality delivery in terms of realizing the primary objective of Language, which is information transmission (i.e communication).

### 2.        Secondary Function

Beyond the primary function of facilitating the exchange of information there are other functions of language that are either complementary or supplementary to communication. Those are the Secondary functions of language and are six according to Jakobson's theory.

**i.      *Referential Function***

One of the main functions of language is sharing information with an audience. This is the language you use to convey information in an objective way. It describes a situation, object or mental state. It includes logical, truthful and genuine information. For example: Sales are up 3% this quarter.

**ii.     *Conative Function***

This function focuses on the receiver of the message. The language used with this function is meant to get the attention of or a reaction from the addressee. For example: Can you show John where to find the paper clips?

**iii.    *Expressive Function***

At its essence, language is said to be expressive. Language helps us meet various needs through our ability to express ourselves. And this expressive power helps us communicate our needs, observations, feelings, thoughts and identity.

The above expressive characters can be 'acronymed' NOFTI (Need, Observation, Feelings, Thoughts, Identity) for easy recollection.

- ❖ **N:** Need = Stating wants and desire or requesting help or support. When we express needs, we are communicating in an instrumental way to help us get things done. For example, you may say "I need to take a week off from lectures in order to rest". This expresses what you need at this point.
- ❖ **O:** Observation = Report of sensory experiences or memories. When we express observations, we report on the sensory information we are taking or have taken in. Eyewitness testimony is a good example of communicating observations. Witnesses are not supposed to make judgments or offer conclusions; they only communicate factual knowledge as they experienced it. For example, a witness could say, "I saw a white Mitsubishi Eclipse leaving my neighbor's house at 10:30 pm."
- ❖ **F:** Feelings: Communicating emotions. When we express feelings, we communicate our emotions. This could be joy, sadness, love, pains etc. For example, when you say: "I feel at peace when we're together". You are expressing an emotion or feelings.

- ❖ **T:** Thought = Conclusion about or judgment of experiences and observations. When we express thoughts, we draw conclusions based on what we have experienced. For example, when someone says, “I think you’re too strict with your attendance policy”, that is him expressing his thought.
- ❖ **I:** Identity = a tag of what you are or perceived yourself to be. When we express our identity, we use chosen words or symbols that describe, in practical terms, who we are or how we want people to view or address us. For example, we use our tribes, religions or gender or even race to identify who we are.

**iv. *Phatic Function***

The phatic function is used to establish a social connection without really communicating any meaningful information. This type of language is used to start or stop a conversation or to check the connection between the sender and receiver. For example: “How are you?” “I’m fine.” “See you later.”

**v. *Aesthetic Function***

This one is also known as the poetic function of language. This function focuses on the message as well as the artistic way the message is communicated. This means that the message might be embellished with rhetorical figures of speech or “flowery” language in order to bring out the inherent beauty or depth of the expression. You will find the poetic function in quotations and colloquial sayings. For example: “It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known”. It is the formal language function in literature.

**vi. *Metalingual Function***

Meta is basically defined as self-awareness. So metalingual refers to talking about the language itself—its features, word definitions, clarifying ambiguity, and describing deliberate word play are metalingual functions. The metalingual function is also relevant in translation if foreign words are used to give special meaning or emphasis. For example: I couldn’t help but feel a touch of Schadenfreude (a sense of pleasure or joy from the failure of others) when the other team lost by 50 points.

## Unit 4      Language Skills: Introduction

Language skills are the abilities that enable you to express your thoughts coherently and communicate with others efficiently and effectively. These skills provide structure and relevance to the information you wish to convey to the recipient.

There are four basic language skills that can help improve how you communicate. They are: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. It is common to combine two or more language abilities while interacting. These skills, when used together, are co-dependent on each other. For example, if listening is an input of information, speaking is a form of output where the audience can interject, ask questions or provide inputs after listening to the message. Similarly, writing is the summary output of what is read, understood and interpreted, which requires reading skills.



### 1.      Listening

Listening refers to understanding, interpreting and analyzing the speaker's message. Listening is an integral part of the communication process as it is vital for the listener to stay engaged and actively comprehend what is said. This helps increase clarity, ask relevant questions, frame appropriate responses and prevent misunderstandings. Listening is crucial when participating in meetings, discussions, feedback sessions and interviews.

Listening attentively has several benefits that can be essential even after the conversation is over. Active listening can help you process and store information for later recollection. Focusing on what the person in front of you is saying can also help increase focus and enable you to articulate your thoughts effectively.

## **2. Speaking**

Speaking is the verbal expression of your thoughts and ideas. Speaking effectively includes having clarity and fluency in your expression and vocabulary. It also includes other essential abilities such as confidence, passion and storytelling. Speaking skills are usually important when companies are hiring new employees. Strong speaking skills can help you progress in your career, contribute during meetings and improve your interpersonal relationships.

## **3. Writing**

Writing involves presenting your thoughts in the form of text using the right structure and flow of information. Writing includes changing the format and tone of the text as per the target audience. Choosing the right vocabulary, medium and outline for what you wish to convey can ensure that your writing is interesting and delivers the intended message. Writing grammatically accurate text, using short sentences and researching comprehensively are some ways to make your text more impactful.

No matter the role or industry, professionals often write emails, reports, letters and proposals. This makes writing skills essential for all professionals, particularly those in the IT, marketing, strategy, consultancy and data analytics industry.

## **4. Reading**

Reading skills helps in understanding different texts, their context and inference. These skills are crucial to improving your overall literacy skills as they can help enhance your vocabulary, expression, analysis and communication. Reading different text forms carefully, such as letters, messages, notes, memos, emails and reports, can help prevent miscommunication in your



personal and professional relationships. Being attentive and focused while reading can also help you interpret the meaning of the text effectively and retain the information for a longer duration.

## **Unit 5            The uses of English Language in Nigeria**

English Language is a West Germanic language of the Indo-European language family. It originated in England long ago, and from there spread to other parts of the world such as the United Kingdom, United States of America, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, India and the Sub-Saharan Africa. There are, currently, around 1.5 billion people worldwide who speaks English either natively or as a second language, as well as 67 different countries (including Nigeria) and 27 non-sovereign entities where English is considered an official language.

English Language first came into the Nigerian area between the 17th and 18th centuries through the activities of British traders. It was during this period that ‘contact English’ developed. Then came the Christian missionary expedition of the 19th century; and the colonization of Nigeria in the 20th century, which consolidated the implantation of English in the country. By 1914, the whole of what we call Nigeria today is under the control of the British as a colonial territory and having the English as an official language. And since then, English has evolved into an integral part of many Nigerians and have assumed a whole lot of roles and uses in Nigeria.

Below, we discuss some of the major uses of English Language in Nigeria.

### **1.        *It is the Lingua Franca***

The official language in Nigeria is English. So, the lingua franca in Nigeria is Queen’s English. This means that anyone on official duty is expected to communicate or facilitate his transaction in English language.

### **2.        *It is the Language of Academia.***

In Nigerian schools, English is used to impart knowledge in pupils and students alike, from nursery to tertiary institution. Since English is the official language in Nigeria, it is therefore used as a medium of learning, as well as, used as a medium of teaching in

schools across Nigeria. English is also used as a medium of exchange of views among Nigerian professional class, outside formal educational institutions of learning in Nigeria.

**3. *It is the standard Language used in the Mass Media.***

English language is used by the Media to inform the public about the activities of government, as well as some happenings within the Nigerian society. So, members of the public are kept abreast of what is happening within the society either through print media or electronic media through the use of English language.

**4. *It is also used in the Judiciary***

Everything that has to do with legal drafting and law are documented in English language. So also, is every court processes and procedures. Even the interpretation of law by the judiciary is done in English language. Take for instance, the Nigerian constitution is written in English language. Litigation and the passing of judgment are also done in English.

**5. *It is also the standard language used In Science and Technology.***

English language is also used in the area of science and technology. The advancement of science and technology today has been made possible through the use of English language. Most chemical names, scientific names etc., are written in English language, even some of the scientific formulae. Most computer software and applications designed in Nigeria and elsewhere are coded in English language.

## **MODULE TWO**

### **LISTENING, COMPREHENSION & INFORMATION RETRIEVAL**

As noted in Module One, Listening is one of the four basic skills/abilities of every language. It is an integral part of the communication process for the listener to stay engaged in hearing what the speaker is saying in order to actively comprehend what is being said. This helps increase clarity and assist, immeasurably, in the framing of appropriate feedback.

This Module is very important to the student because over 50% of his activities in this program will involve active listening. As a student, you will be consistently attending lectures from within and outside your departments. You may also be attending seminars, group discussions and tutorials within and outside the study Centre. You therefore, need the skill of listening accurately in order to comprehend what is conveyed to you as information and act appropriately. That is why you need to pay a kin attention to this Module.

#### **Unit 1          Listening Enabling Skills**

In this unit, you will be exposed to what the concept of listening entails and who a listener is. You will also be accustomed to the purpose of listening, as a student and the listening enabling skills that you need to function effectively in your course of study will also be unfolded.

#### **What is Listening?**

Listening is the process of receiving a sound signal, processing the signal received and giving a feedback. It involves the act of hearing something with thoughtful attention. We are endowed with the natural gift of hearing any sound within our proximity: sounds from automobiles, cries of children, unsolicited voices from people's discussions etc. Not all these 'hearings' are 'Listening' but the hearing which was given a due consideration and a thoughtful attention to elicit a feedback.

## Who is a Listener?

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that a listener is someone who has the ability to receive a sound signal, process it and give appropriate feedback. That is, anybody who is capable of listening to anything said, and possibly, participates in what he listened to and what is demanded to be done. He is the second person in the communication model (the first being the Initiator or the speaker). In the classroom setting, the student is the listener while the lecturer is the speaker.

## Why do we Listen?

Generally, we listen because we have to listen. It is part of our natural disposition. Listening is a day to day activity to us as humans. We listen to our friends and family talking, may be in our language or English. We listen to directions when we are lost or new to a place. We listen to lectures, which are delivered by specialists in a field. We listen at home, at work, in the office, to a telephone conversation and so on.

Essentially, Listening can be categorized into two, based on purpose:

### *i. Listening for General Purpose.*

This is the type of listening we do as everyday people and participants in our social settings. We listen to greetings, pleasantries as well as discussions that we have no specific interests in, as we go on our daily activities. Marginal attention is what is required from us here as we listen. This listening is **Passive** in nature and it is not the type required of you as a student in a classroom setting.

### *ii. Listening for Specific Purpose.*

This is the type of listening usually done to gather information, for directions, listening to academic lectures, to process involved in doing something, or listening to critically evaluate what a speaker is saying. Because there is a specific objective, we want to achieve with listening here, the act of listening is usually deep. This is the type of listening you are concerned with as a student. And this purpose requires deploying a listening attention that is **Active** in nature.

## Listening Enabling Skills

These are skills or abilities that are needed in order to achieve active listening that ensures comprehension. Some of these skills are natural abilities or endowments that only needed to be sharpened for effective use. The listening enabling skills are as follows:

**i. *Functioning Ears:***

Anybody with a functioning ear can listen. Indeed, this is the attribute common to many people. Even the deaf listen by means of signals from sign language. Of course, if you have listening defects, listening ability will be difficult.

**ii. *Concentration:***

Effective listening is difficult in the midst of interruption, when there is lack of interest in the topic, noise and when a speaker speaks above your head by using difficult word.

**iii. *Ability to think along with the speaker:***

You cannot think along with the speaker if your mind goes astray. You cannot anticipate the next thing, if your attention is not there. There are some signals in listening that can facilitate anticipation. Some of these are put in the box below.

**iv. *Ability to anticipate what the speaker is about to say:***

That is, your ability to relate or connect what was said before with what the speaker is saying now. Relationship comes into listening when expressions such as “as I said before”, “on the one hand”, “consequently”, “in other words”, etc., are said by the speaker.

**v. *Ability to note important signposts that keep the listening activity going:***

Sign posts such as transition words like; “firstly”, “secondly”, “lastly”, “now”, “next”, “where”, “when”, “who”, and so on, is an important listening enabling skill. These signs tell you the important points that the speaker is making and when he transitions from one main idea to the other.

## Unit 2      Listening and Comprehending

Listening is closely related to comprehension. You listen in order to comprehend and comprehend in the process of listening. Listening is, therefore, useless if there is no

comprehension. This unit will expose you to the relationship between listening and comprehension and how to achieve a comprehensive listening.

### **Relationship Between Listening and Comprehending**

As noted earlier, the purpose of listening is comprehension. So, the aim will have been defeated and the effort wasted where comprehension is not achieved after a listening exercise. As you listen, you must always be ready to do everything possible to achieve comprehension. The level of comprehension achieved in listening however, depends on the type of listening deployed. There are two types of listening, in this context:

***i. Superficial Listening:***

In this type of listening the listener has a little awareness of the content, what is being said. The output in this type of listening is zero because the listener tends to ignore the message, and is not able to concentrate on the theme, main points supporting details of the message.

***ii. Intense Listening:***

This is the type of listening that involves going beyond simply hearing the words that another person speaks but also mentally dissecting what is being said in order to understand the meaning and intent behind them. It requires deep thinking and being an active participant in the communication process. It also involves being fully present in the conversation, paraphrasing and reflecting back on what has been said.

In communication, active listening is important because it keeps you engaged with your conversation partner in a positive way. It also makes the other person feel heard and valued. This skill is the foundation of a successful conversation in any setting—whether at work, at home, in social situations or in classroom setting.

The above types of listening are not rigid separations. The listener should be able switch in between the two as situation demands. Some speeches are to be comprehended, superficially, because the points are not too important. Some need proper attention because what is to be

discussed is very important. Flexibility in the art of listening and comprehension is therefore very important.

### **Achieving Effective Listening for Comprehension**

So far in this unit, we stressed the fact that listening is closely related to comprehension. In this action, we are going to discuss how to comprehend. In order to comprehend you should:

- i. Listen attentively.
- ii. Follow the speaker.
- iii. Possess a wide range of vocabulary related to the subject being discussed
- iv. Recognize general speech pattern and major speech divisions such as introduction, main body of speech, transitional clues, change of ideas, shift of emphasis, summary, concluding remarks, etc.
- v. Put your experience of the world to bear on the topic.
- vi. Show interest in the topic.

The chart below indicates how to carry out all the comprehension steps listed above.

<b>COMPREHENSION TIPS</b>	<b>STEPS TO TAKE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Listen Attentively</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Show high level of concentration.</li> <li>▪ Avoid noise and distractions.</li> <li>▪ Be focused, do not let your mind wonder away.</li> <li>▪ Fix your eye on the speaker.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Follow the Speaker</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Imagine what he is saying.</li> <li>▪ Speak along with him.</li> <li>▪ Be close to him in thought.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Possess Vocabulary</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Read widely on the topic before the lecture.</li> <li>▪ Search the Library.</li> <li>▪ Bring to memory all words related to the topic</li> </ul>

- **Recognize General Speech Pattern.**

- Know what introduction is given.
- Be conscious of the major speech divisions.
- Note transitional words such as now, then, later, on the other hand, however, etc.
- Note the shift in emphasis, change in ideas, etc.
- Note when the speaker is summarizing all points: this moment is very important.
- Note the conclusion.

- **Previous Knowledge**

- Think about what you know about the topic previously.
- Think about what is going on at the moment related to the topic.
- Think about your pleasant and horrible experiences about the topic.

### **Factors Affecting Comprehension**

This section is directly the opposite of how to comprehend. The following can affect the rate of comprehension.

- Not being familiar with the topic.
- Lack of concentration.
- Lack of interest
- Limited language and vocabulary of the subject matter.
- Inability to think deeply.

Comprehension is central to all listening activities. As you listen to lectures, seminars and tutorials in your study center, make sure you avoid barriers that can hinder comprehension.

Remember, listening without comprehension is useless. You must always strive for comprehension whenever you listen.



## **Unit 3            Listening and Note-taking**

Listening and Note-taking are closely related too. Throughout your student life, you will face situations where you have to listen to lectures, may be delivered by a distinguished special guest or lectures presented by your lecturers in your regular class contacts. Regardless of how good you think your memory is - you will need to take notes in certain situations to remind yourself of what was said, either for the purpose of immediate feedback, test or even for examination purposes. Here lies the significance of Note-taking.

### **What is Note-taking?**

Note-taking is, simply, a way of concisely recording, in writing, important information you heard so that you can recall it later. Note-taking is not just about writing down everything you hear. It is a process of reviewing, connecting and synthesizing ideas from your lectures. It is a powerful aid to communication, a way of summarizing and retaining the key points from what you've heard and understood. Effective note-taking is an important [transferable skill](#), a skill that can be applied in all aspects of life, socially, at work and during study.

Note however, that there is a difference between Note-taking and Note-making. In this unit, we take note-taking to mean taking notes from lectures, speeches and other oral presentations. We, however, see note-making as an activity done during study time. You make notes from your textbooks, journal articles or study texts.

### **Why Take Note?**

As a student, there are several reasons why you will need to take note. Below are some of them:

- Note taking helps you stay active and engaged during your lectures, reading and revision
- Taking notes will help you to extend your attention span. When reading or listening, your mind may tend to wander off. You might be inclined to think about work, money, or relationships. It is quite easy for other aspects of your life to pop into your head while you are listening to a lecture or while you are reading. Taking notes helps keep you focused on your subject area and to the task at hand.

- Taking notes will help you to remember what you have heard or read. We learn more effectively when we use multiple senses and multiple activities. When note-taking we are using listening and writing skills and we are using our brain and muscles. Also, by writing down notes, you are paraphrasing the lecture or reading material into your own words and into a format that you are more likely to understand when you review the notes. And as an adult learner you are more likely to remember what you have heard or read if you take an active part in your learning. Rather than being a passive listener or reader, note taking makes you an active learner. The notes you produce are your own work and are a visible reminder of the effort you have put into the course. This in itself can be a motivational factor for your study!
- Note taking helps you to organize the ideas you are learning about. Good notes should arrange topics into easy-to-review chunks of information that are clear and well referenced. This is important if you're using your notes to review for an examination or for as a starting point in an assignment.

### **Tips on Effective Note-taking.**

Below are some tips on how you can take notes from lectures, seminars, speeches and tutorials. The rules are simple and straightforward. You should not forget them.

1. ***Listen carefully to the lecture:*** Paying attention is very important in note-taking. Some students start to write as soon as the speaker starts speaking, without taking pain to listen attentively to what the speaker is saying.
2. ***Place more priority on Understanding:*** Understand what the speaker is saying before attempting to take notes. It makes no meaning written down what you essential don't understand and cannot make a meaning of. So, take notes only when you've understood the point made, and never hesitate to ask the lecturer or speaker to come over a point again for the purpose of clarity where this is allowed.
3. ***Put down the summary of the main points of the lecture.*** Some students start writing even before the points are made. Thus, they end up writing irrelevancies. Most of the

things students study, as notes today are irrelevancies because proper notes are not taken. Write points. Do not write full sentences in note-taking.

4. ***Use abbreviations where necessary and possible.*** This saves time. Common note-taking abbreviations are listed in the box below.

i.e = that is	sth = something	b/4 = before	idm = idiom
i/c = in charge	syn = synonyms	viz = namely	etc = and so on
sb = somebody	fig = figure	sth = something	abr = abbreviations
BrE = British English	gov't = government	Dev't = development	b/c = because/became
Nig = Nigeria/Nigerian	Afr = African/Africa	Conj = conjunction	sym = symbol/symbolic
Prep = preposition	prep = preparation	blv = believe	

The above are just a few. You can, on your own, find out many more. Do you know what? You can even create your own abbreviations. The only thing is that you should not fill up your notes with too many abbreviations that will make the notes incomprehensible. Abbreviations save time during note taking. You need them more when the speaker is fast. In addition to abbreviations, acronyms can also be used. Examples are: FCT (for Federal Capital Territory), GSM (Global System for Mobile communication), FIR (Federal Inland Revenue), NTA (Nigerian Television Authority), NPF (Nigerian Police Force), NAMA (Nigerian Airport Management Authority), PDF (Portable Document Format), GOOGLE (Global Organization Of Oriented Group Language of Earth), UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply), WWW (World Wide Web), INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission), etc.

5. Use symbols where necessary or important- there are many symbols that you can use. Science and technology students use more symbols than the humanities students. Be familiar with the symbols in your field. Some of the symbols you can use in note-taking are presented in the next box.

=	equals	& = and
≠	does not equal	# example on telephones/addresses
≈	approximately equal to	... omission from extract/sentences
>	more	# ditto/same as above
<	less than	@ at
∴	therefore	% percentage
∵	because	₦ Naira
✓	Correct/tick	① information
X	incorrect	♂ Male
*	Important point/asterisk	♀ Female
¶	paragraph	
⋮	boundaries	

Again, there are many symbols that can be used during note-taking. Only a few is given here. Of course, you can also form your own symbols. Note-taking activities during lectures are fast when symbols are used.

6. ***Make use of Mnemonics as much as possible.*** **Mnemonics** are memory devices that help learners recall larger pieces of information, especially in the form of lists like characteristics, steps, stages, parts, etc. Simply put, a Mnemonic is anything (whether real or incorporeal) that you use while taking note in order to assist you in recalling what was said. There are different types of Mnemonics. Let consider few by way of illustration.
- Name Mnemonics.*** In a name Mnemonic, the 1st letter of each word in a list of items is used to make a name of a person or thing. An example is: **ROY G. BIV** = colors of the rainbow (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet.)
  - Expression or Word Mnemonics.*** To make an **Expression or Word** mnemonic, the first letter of each item in a list is arranged to form a phrase or word. For example: in English, the 7 coordinating conjunctions are For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So = **FANBOYS**. Another example is that the order of operations for math is Parentheses, Exponents, Multiply, Divide, Add, and

Subtract = **PLEASE EXCUSE MY DEAR AUNT SALLY**. And The categories in the classification of life are Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species, Variety = **KINGS PLAY CARDS ON FAIRLY GOOD SOFT VELVET**.

iii. **Model Mnemonics**. In a *Model Mnemonic*, some type of representation is constructed to help with understanding and recalling important information. Examples include a circular sequence model, a pyramid model of stages, a pie chart, and a 5-box sequence. Models should be used in addition to words and lists because they make recall at test time much easier.

7. When writing down notes, try to distinguish between facts, opinions, and examples. It is important to write down relevant facts. Facts are „true“ statements that should be supported by research or evidence. It is also important to write down important, relevant, educated opinions. For example, if the lecturer is giving a lecture that compares the ideas of different theorists, it would be important to write down a summary of each theorist's opinion in your notes. Lecturers and authors use examples to help explain difficult concepts and to maintain your interest. While you might find the example interesting, it is not important to write down all the examples.
8. **Spacing**. Leave plenty of space between different headings and sub-headings when taking notes. The spaces are to be used for writing additional information or facts that you may discover after the lectures or during your own private study. Also leave wide margins for later comments and related references. Emphasize key words, phrases, sentences and ideas by use of capitalization, underlining, coloring, asterisks, etc.
9. **Neatness**. The neater your notes, the more attractive and the more you would like to read them. Good handwriting, systematic organization, consistent use of headings and sub-headings, all add to what can make your notes attractive, pleasant to read and easy to learn.

## **Unit 4          Listening and Information Retrieval**