

## UNIT 6

### LISTENING SKILLS

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon the completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand how we listen in various situations, and use listening skills to communicate more effectively;
- Explain the advantages of effective listening; and
- Identify obstacles to effective listening, and to demonstrate the ability to eliminate these obstacles.

#### **6.1 What is listening?**

Listening is perceived as a process of analysing and interpreting words in order to get meaning and understanding.

##### **6.1.1 Facts about listening**

- Listening is a skill that needs to be developed and practised throughout our lives.
- Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.

#### **6.2 THE HEARING-LISTENING DISTINCTION**



Hearing and listening are not the same, and they should not be confused and should also not be used interchangeably.

### **6.2.1 Hearing**

Is a passive process which entails sound waves stimulating the sensory receptors of the ear. In other words:

- ✓ A passive process;
- ✓ Most of us are born with the ability to hear;
- ✓ It does not require concentration and effort; and
- ✓ Is something that happens unconsciously.

### **6.2.2 Listening**

Is an active process which requires a purposeful and systematic response to messages. In a more logical and philosophical sense,

- ✓ It is an active and deliberate process;
- ✓ It requires concentration and effort; and
- ✓ Is something that happens consciously.

### **ACTIVITY 1:**

Between hearing and listening, which one is of crucial importance and why?

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## **6.3 THE STAGES OF THE LISTENING PROCESS**

### **6.3.1 Hearing (stage one)**

It is the ability to perceive sound, you need the ability to hear for listening to take place.

### **6.3.2 Attention (stage two)**

A receiver needs to pay attention, focus on what is being said to ensure understanding and provide appropriate feedback.

### **6.3.3 Understanding (stage three)**

The receiver gathers meaning from what is communicated, and should be able to interpret what the sender is communicating.

### **6.3.4 Remembering (stage four)**

Listening will not be effective unless one remembers the facts; one needs to store the information for future references.

### **6.3.5 Responding (stage five)**

Responding could be in the form of writing a test or exam or a simple yes or no. Responding to verbal communication allows the conversation to flow, encourages the sender and ensures understanding.

## **6.4 THE ADVANTAGES OF EFFECTIVE LISTENING**

- Listening leads to learning
- One has to be a good listener in order to be a good speaker or presenter
- Achieving better interpersonal relationships
- Saving time and money
- Avoiding mistakes and misunderstandings
- Identifying problems and grievances before it is too late

- Creating a working climate of openness and sensitivity
- When people notice how well you listen to them, they usually try to understand you better and they love your company
- You receive more accurate information
- You acquire vital information
- Active listening leads to better recollection of important facts and issues

## **6.5 SKILLS REQUIRED TO BE AN EFFECTIVE LISTENER**

- Give the sender full attention.
- Do not let your eyes wander.
- Show that you are listening by:
  - ✓ Maintaining direct eye contact
  - ✓ Giving the sender an undivided attention
  - ✓ Shoulders, feet and knees in the direction of the speaker
  - ✓ Nodding
  - ✓ Smiling
- Ignore all distractions
  - ✓ Listening requires intense concentration
- Relax – that will enable you to give full attention
- Enquire if necessary
  - ✓ Questions show that the receiver understands what is said
  - ✓ Give the sender the opportunity to clarify any misunderstanding

## **6.6 REASONS FOR LISTENING**

### **6.6.1 Listening for enjoyment/entertainment**

This kind of listening constitutes the larger part of our listening time. Examples:

- ✓ Reading or studying while listening to music
- ✓ Listening to music while driving, cleaning, cooking etc.

### **6.6.2 Listening for information**

- ✓ This is a process where you listen to attain certain information and once you get it, you are no longer interested.

### **6.6.3 3. Critical listening**

- ✓ Critical listening occurs when you still want to understand what the other person is saying, but also have some reason or responsibility to evaluate what is being said. In a more practical sense, you do not only listen in order to understand but in order to analyse information. During critical listening, you  
\_\_\_\_\_AND\_\_\_\_\_.

### **6.6.4 Conversational and reflective listening**

- ✓ Is also called empathic listening.
- ✓ Is a process when you listen to different angles.
- ✓ Occurs when you try to put yourself in someone's situation.

## **6.7 TYPES OF LISTENING**

### **6.7.1 Comprehensive listening**

- Used to understand the sender's message

### **6.7.2 Deliberate listening**

- Also called active or critical listening
- The focus is on what the sender is saying; the content, information and facts

### **6.7.3 Empathic listening**

- It is about feelings and/or emotions conveyed by the sender
- The focus is not on what the sender says, rather on HOW it is said

## **6.8 POOR LISTENING HABITS**

- Jumping to conclusions
- Boredom
- Daydreaming
- Creating or allowing distractions
- Assumptions
- Criticism
- Faking attention

## **6.9 BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING**

- Semantic/Language
- Perceptual
- Physical
- Physiological
- Psychological

*Refer to the communication barriers you learned in Unit 5*

