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BSc Degree

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English – II (Advanced English)

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Developing Effective Listening

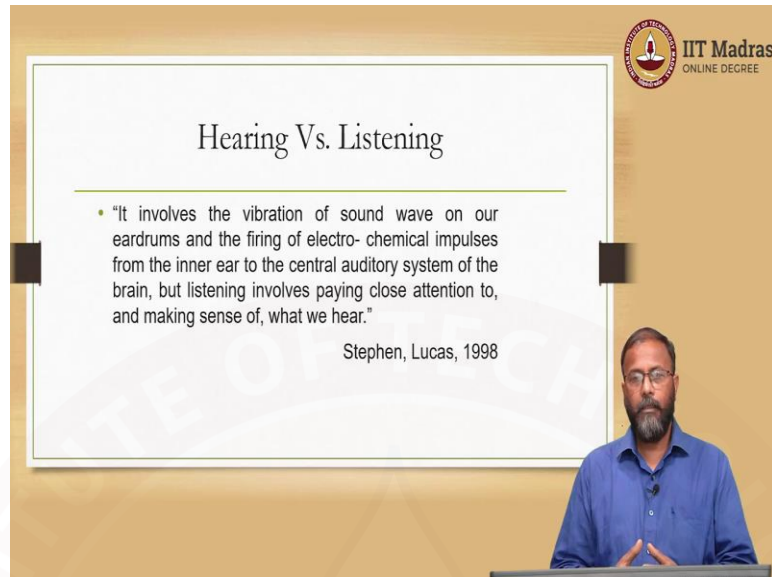
Welcome to class, today we are going to talk about a very important language skill called listening. There are four integrated language skills; when I say I know Hindi, when I say I know English, I know Tamil, I know Punjabi, what do you mean by I know, what do about it? So, broadly we can say that I am able to understand, speak, read and write in the language.

So, listening, speaking, reading and writing, these are four integrated language skills and the natural order of acquisition of this skill is called LSRW that is the order listening, speaking, reading and writing. Out of the four, listening and reading are called receptive skills and speaking and writing are called active skills.

But when we say receptive when we say listening and reading our receptive skills, that does not mean they are passive skills; they are not passive skills, they are very much active and emphatic, they are not passive. So, your mind is active. You follow the speaker and the writer actively, consciously, emphatically. So, these are not passive skills. Calling speaking and writing active skill does not implicitly under, no express or represent listening and reading as passive skills.

Listening is a very active skill, and today we are going to talk about how we can improve our listening skills. Listening brings us a lot of input that we use as an output in our speaking. So for a better output, it is always important to have emphatic and productive input. So listening works as a stimulus for all our responses; that is why listening is a very important skill.

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Hearing Vs. Listening

- "It involves the vibration of sound wave on our eardrums and the firing of electro- chemical impulses from the inner ear to the central auditory system of the brain, but listening involves paying close attention to, and making sense of, what we hear."

Stephen, Lucas, 1998

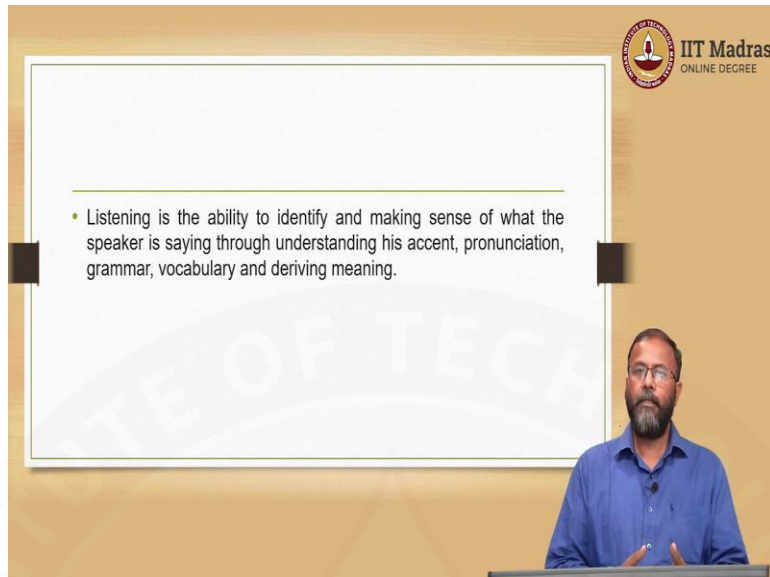
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So, today we are going to talk about how to develop emphatic and effective listening skills. If you look at Stephen Lucas, what he says listening and hearing are not the same; they are two different things, we hear a lot. So hearing or listening are not the same; they are different, and how they are different? Look at Stephen Lucas, what he says.

He says it involves the vibration of sound wave on our eardrums and the firing of electrochemical impulses from the inner ear to the central auditory system of the brain that is hearing. There is a physiological thing where you have, you took chemical impulses and entire, acoustic phonetics involved, the physiological visual thing, but listening involves paying close attention to and making sense of what we hear.

So, hearing is a physical thing; listening is a mental thing. So, hearing happens as a physiological, physical event, but listening is the sense you make out of it, the interpretation, the deductions that you do out of it.

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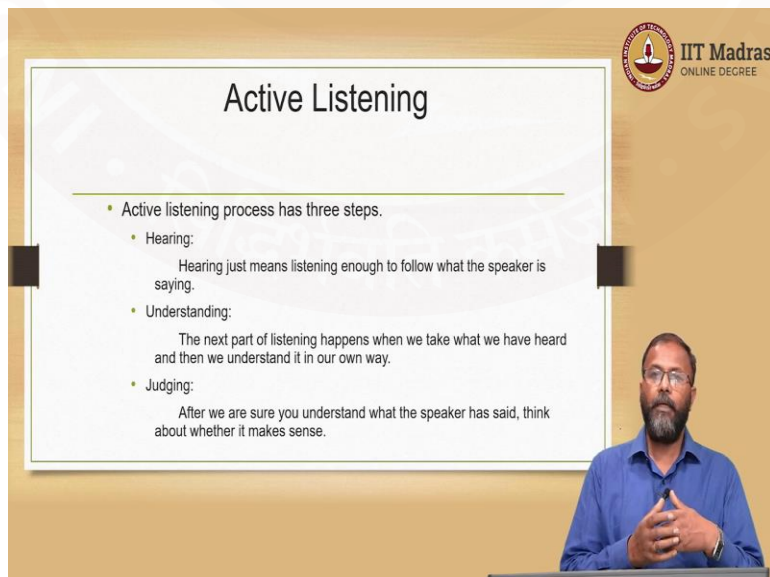
The slide is titled "Listening" and contains the following text:

- Listening is the ability to identify and making sense of what the speaker is saying through understanding his accent, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and deriving meaning.

A lecturer is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide frame.

So, we are going to talk about listening today. So listening is the ability to identify and making sense of what this speaker is saying through understanding his accent, pronunciation, grammar, structures, vocabulary, the words he or she is using and deriving meaning out of it. So receiving, registering and making sense of it. So, what can we do to improve our ability to deduct and make sense of what we get as a stimulus, acoustic stimulus, while we listen?

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The slide is titled "Active Listening" and contains the following text:

- Active listening process has three steps.
 - Hearing:
Hearing just means listening enough to follow what the speaker is saying.
 - Understanding:
The next part of listening happens when we take what we have heard and then we understand it in our own way.
 - Judging:
After we are sure you understand what the speaker has said, think about whether it makes sense.

A lecturer is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide frame.

So, you can now imagine and see that hearing that happens physically, where all auditory system is involved, but listening is the result of an active brain. So, you make you understand, and you make sense of it; you can hear a lot of things, but you may not make sense of it. So, the meaning that you make out of it and the real world interpretation that you do out of it is listening, and this is what listening is all about.

So, if we look at steps, there are three steps involved in the listening process. One is hearing, that is a auditory thing, physical thing. So, it is an oral and auditory system, where you get the input, and you register it. So, hearing just means listening enough to follow what the speaker is saying. Then what we do, understanding, the second process.

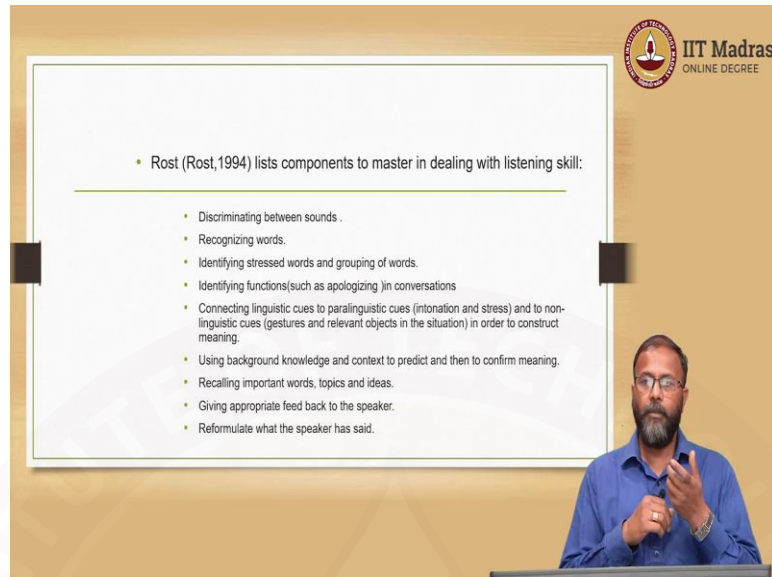
So, once you register, you try to understand, interpret with your all worldly knowledge. So the next part of listening happens when we take what we have heard and then we understand it in our own way and then finally, the third step is judging, making sense of it, making deductions, interpreting and what is that?

After we are sure we understand what the speaker has said. Then we think and relate to the sense that we make out of it. Now look at it; we all have our own worldviews. We look at the world with our own views, interpretation. So perception determines, your understanding determines what you make out of it. You may not make any sense out of it, it is possible that you have heard something you registered, but you did not make any sense out of it; it is possible.

But listening is all about what you make, what sense you make out of it. So you consciously make an effort to relate to what you register while hearing, and you make sense of it. So you interpret it in the real world situation according to your own experiences and existing knowledge. So it is important to follow these three steps, hearing, understanding and judging, this is what we do in listening, and that is why we call it a very active skill because these things are not possible when you are passively receiving something.

So you are not passively receiving anything; you are actively following what the speaker is saying, what is coming to your eardrums, you are registering it, and then you are relating to your existing knowledge confirming it making sense out of it, making deductions out of it and that is why it is a very conscious and elaborate effort that we make to understand what we hear. That is why listening is not a passive skill; it is a very active skill.

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Rost (Rost, 1994) lists components to master in dealing with listening skill:

- Discriminating between sounds.
- Recognizing words.
- Identifying stressed words and grouping of words.
- Identifying functions (such as apologizing) in conversations.
- Connecting linguistic cues to paralinguistic cues (intonation and stress) and to non-linguistic cues (gestures and relevant objects in the situation) in order to construct meaning.
- Using background knowledge and context to predict and then to confirm meaning.
- Recalling important words, topics and ideas.
- Giving appropriate feedback to the speaker.
- Reformulate what the speaker has said.

Moving on, Rost lists certain competence to master the listening skill. How can we master this art of listening, this active art of listening? So I will just first go through the list what he lists, and then we will talk about it.

So discriminating between sounds, recognizing words, identifying stressed words and grouping words, identifying functions in conversation, connecting linguistic cues to paralinguistic cues and to nonlinguistic cues in order to construct meaning out of it, using background knowledge and context to predict and then to confirm meaning, reclaiming important words recalling sorry, not reclaiming recalling important words topics and ideas, giving appropriate feedback to the speaker, reformulating what the speaker has said.

So, these are the components that Rost lists about listening. What do they mean? So, when we say discriminating between sounds, you have to remember that language any human language is a set of discrete sounds and the sounds, number of sounds are limited. So, we are talking about English for that matter. So, number of sounds in the language is limited and they are discrete.

Each sound stands opposed to the other sound. So, pa cannot be ba, ba cannot be ka, ka cannot be cha, cha cannot be sa. Each sound is different. So, first and foremost, we need to understand these sounds, because alternation in sounds or misinterpreting sounds may result in misinterpretation in meaning.

Then, recognizing words, so what are words? Words are the combination of these sounds, but not any combination, meaningful combination of these sounds. So, we need to understand the word, word boundaries, where one word ends, and the other begins, then identifying stressed words and grouping of words.

So, you have to understand where the stress or the emphasis is laid; you need to be familiar with this style of speaking of the speaker; you need to understand the conversation and the speech functions the speaker may employ while conversing in a while conversing or talking. Then, if it is face to face interaction, and you can see this speaker, face to face interaction is one of the most effective and rich channels of communication.

So, when you are face to face communication, then you have this advantage of looking at the speaker, you have the advantage of looking at the facial expressions looking at the movement and other nonverbal cues, gestures, look at the paralinguistic elements like intonation, stress, pauses, rhymes, they all help you make sense of them, in order to construct meaning, we need to pay close attention to these things.

Then, he says using background knowledge and context to predict and then to confirm meaning. It always happens you never sit idle while listening; your background knowledge about the topic about the theme, your anticipation, what you anticipate next, depends on your understanding and relatedness with the topic and the theme. So, your mind is actively working relating to what is being said and also anticipating what is coming.

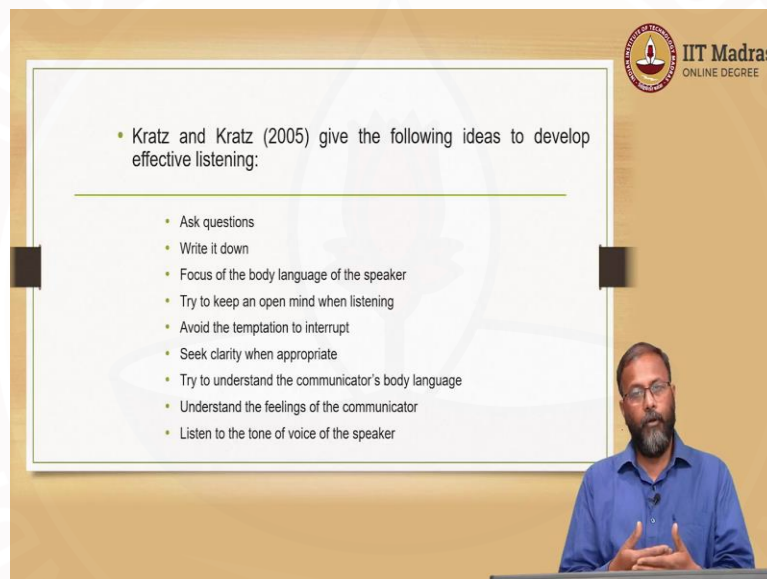
So, this is how you are engaged with the text. You need to understand key words, content words, key ideas of the particular chunk of text. So, you need to understand the key words, you need to understand the key ideas and the topics, you need to identify them and relate to them. Then, asking questions, giving feedback, seeking clarification, are things that indicate that you are actively listening.

At times, you may require clarifications; at times, you may need to ask questions. Questions can be asked for clarification, questions can be asked for an extension of your understanding, question can be asked for making a point relevant, so multiple reasons why we ask questions, but one thing is for sure, that if you ask questions while listening, it keeps you engaged with the theme at the same time and sometimes, if you are listening to some recorded audio asking

question, you may not ask question directly to the speaker because the speaker may not be in front of you.

But if it is a recorded speech and listening ask yourself, pause and ask yourself, What do you understand out of it, you repeat it, you replay it, but seeking clarification, asking questions are very relevant tools to be engaged with the text at the same time, get clarification and explanation of the text and then try to reformulate, assimilate what you have got and reformulate what the speaker has said. This is what Rost lists as a certain component of skills while listening or developing listening skills.

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The slide is titled "IIT Madras ONLINE DEGREE" in the top right corner. It contains a list of ideas for effective listening by Kratz and Kratz (2005). The list is as follows:

- Kratz and Kratz (2005) give the following ideas to develop effective listening:
- Ask questions
- Write it down
- Focus of the body language of the speaker
- Try to keep an open mind when listening
- Avoid the temptation to interrupt
- Seek clarity when appropriate
- Try to understand the communicator's body language
- Understand the feelings of the communicator
- Listen to the tone of voice of the speaker

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a blue shirt, is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide, gesturing with his hands.

Moving on, Kratz and Kratz 2005 give the following ideas to develop effective listening. The first thing is to ask questions, take notes, write it down, focus on the body of language, the body language of the speaker. Try to keep an open mind while listening. Avoid the temptation to interrupt, seek clarity when appropriate. Try to understand the communicator's body language, understand the feelings of the communicator, listen to the tone of the voice of the speaker.

So these are the things Kratz and Kratz list. The general things you are familiar, but I am just trying to underline the importance of these small steps while listening to a text. Again, I say asking questions keeps you engaged with the text. So, you are not passively receiving it, you are

actively involved, and you are following what is being said and also relating to it, and in case you find a gap, it prompts you, the gap prompts you to ask questions.

So ask questions, then write it down means, make relevant notes because human memory is very short. We process a lot, but storage is not as compared to the speed of processing. So it is always advisable to take notes while you listen. List, content or the theme, keywords, key concepts; that also helps you develop your own opinion about things. So write it down.

Then, if you are following this speech face to face, if it is in interactive mode, if the speaker is in front of you, then you have this liberty and space to look at certain nonverbal cues, the expression, the facial expression, maintain eye contact, be connected with the speaker, maintain eye contact, looking at the body language, the cues, these nonverbal cues sometimes give you an idea of transition, how topic changes, how the speaker is changing the focus, what the speaker actually intends to communicate.

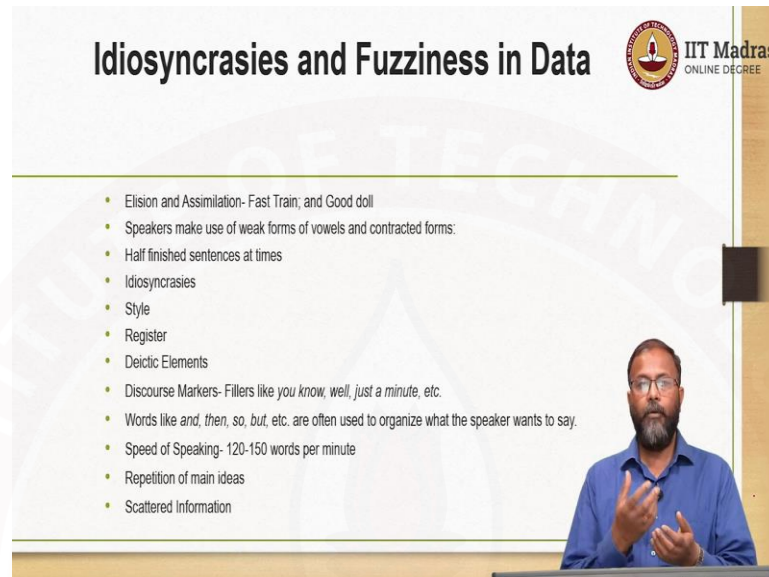
So, these are the thing, advantages we get in an interactive face to face communication, but in case you are listening to recorded speech, you do not have this space or liberty. But you can have a flexible mind, open mind to receive what you what is being said or given to you. But at the same time, we do not receive it passively. We receive it very actively. You have your own judgments. You have your own understanding. You have your own framework of interpretation. So you are actively engaged with the text.

At times we had this temptation to interrupt that breaks the thought process. So, hold your question and raise your hand or ask your question at the right time. So, abrupt interruption is not advisable but you must ask question that is advisable. So, you have to like turn taking and turn giving, you have to take the time, you have to see where it is possible to interrupt or ask, and you can take the time.

Then, in case you find a gap in what is being said, and what you are interpreting or possibly, you are not clear about what is being said, then you need to seek clarification seeking clarification also indicates that you are actively involved and overall other nonverbal cues like, eye contact, gesture and posture, body orientation, then paralinguistic elements tone, pitch, rhythm, stress and then the overall appearance of the speaker also fills the gap between what is being said and what you are receiving.

And the tone and the tenor of the speaker also suggests and pauses how to interpret pauses? Pauses are very important in listening; you may have a lot of idiosyncrasies in the speech of an individual. So we will talk about the idiosyncrasies very short, very shortly.

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Idiosyncrasies and Fuzziness in Data

- Elision and Assimilation- Fast Train; and Good doll
- Speakers make use of weak forms of vowels and contracted forms:
- Half finished sentences at times
- Idiosyncrasies
- Style
- Register
- Deictic Elements
- Discourse Markers- Fillers like *you know, well, just a minute, etc.*
- Words like *and, then, so, but, etc.* are often used to organize what the speaker wants to say.
- Speed of Speaking- 120-150 words per minute
- Repetition of main ideas
- Scattered Information

Moving on, what idiosyncrasies and fuzziness that we have in the data? You do not get a very ideal, well-constructed speech all the time or input all the time. Input is always idiosyncratic and fuzzy because we all have our own style of speaking, we all have our own style of sharing, we have registers, we have diction, styles different from each other, you may have registers or technical words used for a technical domain, a particular domain, you need to be familiar with that.

So, there are certain things in the oral text that we need to pay attention to, in English, particularly elision and assimilation, that you must understand and what is that, at times you fail to mark the word boundary and when do you help him out one boundary when you do not understand assimilation of sounds.

So suppose, there is a group of sound where, a group of words where one word ends and the other begins in the same sound like fast a word, another word train, in both the words if you look at ta, fast ta in the first word, last sound and train the first word, a second word, sorry, second word and initial sound ta, fast train.

So when we say it in connected speech, if you are saying fast as an isolated word it is fine, if we are saying train as an isolated word, it is fine. But in connected speech, when they are said in a flow, you may find that the two sounds assimilate. So how do we say that fast train, fas-train, fast-rain. We do not say faster train.

Good dog, good da sound at the end and dog da sound in the beginning. When we say in a flow, in relative to speech, you have we have assimilation of these two sounds, the last sound of the first word and the initial sound of the second word and we say goo-dog. So we need to understand such assimilation. It helps us understand the word boundaries.

Lots of speaker makes a lot of contracted forms and vowels, contracted words and vowels. They do not use full words. So we need to understand what actually they mean. It is a very common idiosyncrasy and a very common character of oral speech where oral text where you have half-finished sentences. So you have droppings, a lot of droppings, and it depends.

So, usually, subjects have dropped on time. However, in written English, we cannot drop the subject, an English sentence cannot stand without subject, but this speaker assumes you to understand what is being dropped. So, you have to recover that. So, you have half-finished sentences; it is also an idiosyncrasy, style and register are different, you need to understand that you need to be familiar with their style, you need to be familiar with the register only then you can make sense of it.

Deictic elements where we indicate the direction, the position, the location, you have a lot of discourse markers and fillers, which usually mean nothing. They do not have a literal meaning, but they are there to fill the gap. So while speaking, we use a lot of discourse markers. Well, precisely, absolutely these are markers we use when we speak, but they do not literally mean anything; they are there to mark the discourse and fill the gaps.


The speakers have a tendency to speak at varied speed; it can be very fast, it can be very slow, or it can be a normal natural speed. Speed or the pace of delivery is individual preference and style, we have to be familiar, and we have to be quickly following the speed. Usually, we do not get the extraordinary speed of delivery, but sometimes in case of native speakers were speaking English to you, you will have a high speed of delivery.

So you have to be very, very particular about following the word boundaries, clause, boundaries, sentence boundaries, where one sentence ends other begins, where one word ends, the other begins if there is assimilation, mixing of the sounds, dropping off some words as casual speech, you need to understand all the styles and things.

You might find a lot of repetition in oral speech. So, if somebody is talking to you, unlike the written text, the oral text will have a lot of repetitions, a lot of gaps, a lot of pauses, a lot of droppings of items and also repetition. Sometimes, the repetitions are done as a reinforcement of the main idea or the content, main content, keyword. Sometimes you find repetition of words or maybe entire clause or sometimes maybe entire sentence.

Sometimes you find repetition in the theme in the topic; sometimes you find repetition in the argument or paraphrasing of the argument. So, these are all part of oral text, and as a good listener, we need to understand and understand and make sense of this underlined idiosyncrasies of individual speakers. You may find the information not as synchronized and organized as you find in written text. Oral texts or speech may have scattered information, a lot of referential information. So, in that sense, you need to collect, organize and understand the information.

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The slide is titled "Developing Listening Skills" and lists the following skills:

- Active Listening
- Understanding accent
- Understanding individual words and structures
- Understanding connected speech
- Coping with speed
- Understanding details
- Understanding overlapping speech
- Understanding appropriacy
- Understanding cross-cultural information
- Understanding a range of topics

In the bottom right corner, there is a video feed of a male speaker with a beard and glasses, wearing a blue shirt, who is gesturing with his hands while speaking. The IIT Madras Online Degree logo is visible in the top right corner of the slide.

So, what do we deduct out of all these? Number one, listening is a very active and productive skill. Number one, it is not passive. Number two, we need to actively be engaged with the oral

text. Number three, we need to understand idiosyncrasies and distinct style of this speaker. So, what is the demand? Developing listening skill demands active listening developing active skills in listening, and what does that mean?

Hearing, understanding and judging; so, you hear, you register, understand, and you make sense to deduct meaning out of it, understanding accent because you need to understand that if all the speakers have their own style of speaking on silo pronunciation and the pace of the delivery of the speech, understanding individual words and the structure coping with speed, understanding details, the factual details in the speech, deducting the essence of this speech.

So, you may have idiosyncrasies, half any sentences, long pauses, repetitions. So, you have to deduct information out of all these. So, you need to understand these idiosyncrasies. If you are into multiple speakers talking discussing things, you might have overlapping speech. In that, you need to relate to the content and understand the overlap; you need to understand the appropriacy of the context and appropriacy of the theme.

Because text without context makes no difference, if you cannot make sense out of it; so you need to understand the context in order to understand the text. Then, you may have a lot of cross-cultural information, the references you are supposed to know. So, there are certain implied backgrounds you need to be prepared in to understand the text, oral text and that allows you to understand a range of varied topics.

So, this is what we understand by developing effective listening and the myth that listening is a passive exercise is a misnomer and not appropriate. Listening is a very active exercise, and we need to be actively engaged with the listener, the oral text and most importantly, it does not come in a flash easily with you, we need to have a lot of practice we need to have a lot of exposure to different accents, different styles, different speakers, native speakers, non-native speakers.

We need to be exposed to a variety of oral texts that will help us develop our listening skills, fine-tune our interpretation, and it will make you a very productive speaker by being a good listener or patient listener. Thank you very much.