

## **LISTENING, NOTE-TAKING AND NOTE-MAKING**

### **Introduction**

#### **LISTENING**

Listening is very vital to effective communication. Without effective listening, messages will not be well received which may result in misunderstanding and breakdown of proper communication. However, listening is an aspect of verbal communication.

Considering the importance of listening to effective communication, it is also pertinent that students learn this skill effectively because in the teaching and learning process students get their instructions in the universities mainly through the oral-aural interactions with their lecturers.

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

It is always good to start with defining the topic under discussion (which is listening in this case). Listening has been defined by many writers. It is defined as “the ability to identify and understand what others are saying”

Thus, **hearing, on the one hand, is mainly physiological** in nature, on the other hand, **listening is a psychological** act. Hearing is, however, a necessary pre - requisite for listening. The difference between them is essentially a degree of intention which results to paying attention to the sounds one intends to focus on. Bromwell (2006) brings out some of the psychological characteristics of an effective listener. He writes that effective listeners “are open-minded and interested in a wide variety of subjects” (p. 52). Therefore, willingness to listen and a positive psychological disposition are crucial for competent listening.

Moreover, Purdy and Deborah (1997), present that a study conducted on 900 college students ages 17 to 70 in the late 1990s, highlighted twelve characteristics of competent and ineffective listeners. These are:

#### **A competent listener:**

1. Uses eye contact appropriately.
2. Is attentive and alert to a speaker's verbal and nonverbal behavior.
3. Is patient and does not interrupt, waiting for the speaker to finish.
4. Is responsive, using verbal and nonverbal expressions.
5. Asks questions in a nonthreatening tone.
6. Paraphrases, restates or summarizes what the speaker says.
7. Provides constructive verbal and nonverbal feedback.
8. Is empathic, makes an effort to understand the speaker.
9. Demonstrates interest in the speaker as a person.
10. Demonstrates a caring attitude and is willing to listen.
11. Does not criticize, is nonjudgmental.

12. Is open-minded.

**An ineffective listener:**

1. Interrupts the speaker, demonstrates impatience.
2. Does not make eye contact, allows his or her eyes to wander.
3. Is distracted and/or fidgety, does not pay attention to the speaker.
4. Is not interested in the speaker.
5. Gives the speaker little or no verbal and/or nonverbal feedback.
6. Changes the subject.
7. Is judgmental.
8. Is close-minded.
9. Talks too much.
10. Is self-preoccupied.
11. Gives unwanted advice.
12. Is too busy to listen.

**Objectives of Listening**

In everything we do, we have some reasons for doing it. Listening in this module is described as the mixture of hearing and paying attention to some sounds. As such, there must be some reasons for focusing on such sounds. These reasons defer from one situation to another. Whatever those reasons are, are the objectives of one's listening to those sounds. According to Lindsay and Knight, **people have four different purposes when they listen** "but this purpose can be very different depending on the situation: **listening for specific details, listening for general meaning, listening for the general idea or gist.** There is also a difference **between listening: for information; for enjoyment or social reasons**" (2006, p. 46).

Other objectives of listening comprise of:

1. Understanding the speaker
2. Developing relationship
3. Retaining the information ( and this can be either temporarily or permanently)
4. Getting knowledge
5. Participation in the communication process.

**Listening Process**

Kline (1996) identifies a listening process with five steps which are:

1. Receiving
2. Attending
3. Interpreting/Understanding
4. Responding
5. Remembering

## **Types of Listening**

1. **INFORMATIONAL:** Informative listening is the name given to the situation where the listener's primary concern is to understand the message.
2. **APPRECIATIVE:**
3. **CRITICAL/ANALYTICAL/EVALUATIVE:** this is a type of Listening that one does in order to evaluate, criticise, pass judgment, form an opinion or make a decision on what someone else has said. Three things are very important in this type of listening: the speaker's credibility, the logic of the argument, and the psychological appeal of the message. If one of those areas is lacking, we may make a poor decision or fail to make any decision at all.

Critical listening in classroom aims at:

- a. Separate facts from opinions and help students to prevent opinions from influencing their understanding of the facts.
  - b. Evaluate speakers' qualifications, motives, biases etc, and help students to understand how to weight fact and arguments.
  - c. Test ideas for effectiveness and appropriateness and help students to test ideas they learn.
  - d. Recognize the speaker's reasoning and help students to understand the speaker's logic or lack of logic (Rost, 1991).
4. **DISCRIMINATIVE LISTENING:**

## **Barriers to Effective Listening**

## **NOTE-TAKING**

### **What is Note-Taking?**

Note-taking can be seen as writing down of relevant piece of information or points from a speech or a written document. Notes can be taken for so many reasons, depending on the purpose of taking it. In an academic context, note-taking is done mainly for two purposes: examination and research. Although note-taking can occur by using written materials, students take notes mostly in the class (and laboratories). To take an effective note, students need to start their preparation before getting to their classes for lectures. There are certain things that students are required to do before, during and after the lecture.

Before the lecture, students should:

- Review their previous lecture notes
- Check the course outline for the topic to be treated next and try to have an idea about the topic.
- Complete outside reading related to the next lecture.
- Complete and review any assignment or reading expected to be submitted or discussed in the next lecture.

During the lecture, the students should:

- Write down the title of the lecture, the name of the course and the date.
- Listen carefully to the introduction.
- Try to write their notes in their own words and be brief.
- Try to recognise main ideas.
- write down what support the main ideas
- Pay attention to the conclusion to ensure their understanding of the lecture.
- Ask questions about points they did not understand.

After the lecture, students should:

- Revise their notes as quickly as possible (preferably not long after the lecture).
- Review their lecture notes at least once a week.

## **Advantages of Note-Taking**

## **Methods of Note-Taking**

### **Outline Method**

It is a method of note-taking in which a student listens and then writes his/her notes in an orderly form based on space indentation.

A fully developed outline that includes numerous details should follow the pattern shown below:

### **Title**

I.

A.

B.

1.

2.

C.

1.

2.

II.

A.

1.

a.

b.

2.

B.

1.

2.

a.

1)

2)

a)

- b)
      - 3)
    - b.
  - 3.
- III.
- A.
  - B.

### **Cornell Note-taking Method**

This method consists of creating three sections on each page.

### **Mapping Method**

This form of note-taking is a graphic representation of the content of a lecture.

### **SOME GUIDELINES ON NOTE-TAKING**

- Mundsack, J. Deese and E. Deese, (2003, p. 47) write on the 5 R's of Note-Taking that are essential for students to know. These are:

#### **Record**

During the lecture, write down, legibly, the main ideas as much as you can.

#### **Reduce**

Summarise these ideas your own words.

#### **Recite**

Repeat over the ideas of the lecture in your own words. That can be done by telling someone else about the lecture.

#### **Reflect**

Think about what you have learnt and how it relates to other ideas in the course.

#### **Review**

Students need to spend some time to go through what they have learnt. And this has to be as frequently as possible.

- **Use Abbreviations and Symbols for note-taking:**

Abbreviations can be classified into common, discipline-specific and personal abbreviations.

#### **Common Abbreviations**

#### **Discipline-Specific Abbreviations**

#### **Personal Abbreviations**

### **NOTE-MAKING**