Nearly every aspect of human life could be improved by better listening -- from family matters to corporate business affairs to international relations. Most of us are terrible listeners. We're such poor listeners, in fact, that we don't know how much we're missing. Not only does developing your listening skills allow you to gain access to the complete information and make you much less likely to misunderstand or misinterpret things, but it will also help you to work well with others.

According to Kamelia Gulam (2020:1) in Business Communication, “Listening is the ability to accurately receive and interpret messages in the communication process.” She further pointed out that the processes of effective listening are receiving, understanding, Remembering, Evaluating and feedback.

Unfortunately, in today's world people have lost the desire and the patience to listen to what others have to say. Most of us are too engrossed in our own thoughts, too eager to have our own say to actually pay attention. Michale Webb (2021:1) said “More attention is usually paid to making people better speakers or writers (the "supply side" of the communication chain) rather than on making them better listeners or readers (the "demand side")”.

To be honest, effective listening is not as easy as it sounds, there are several factors that can affect how well you can listen to and understand others. According to Wiiliam Santo (2019:5):" A barrier to listening is mainly a thing that is hindering or obstructing you from understanding a message". In an Early Childhood Development (ECD) class, suppose a teacher is telling a story, but some of the learners are not getting it. The reason behind this is they are not listening properly, and the thing for which they are not able to listen is a barrier.

The writer will elaborate on the five barriers to effective listening which are **distractions, language, emotions, psychological** and **impatience** with suggestions for minimizing each.

**Distraction is** the main barrier to effective listening. Why? Because when you are listening, distractions may take you out from the track. Distractions are mainly the outside and inside. In case of outside, External distractions are anything that can interfere with your sensory input, they can be anything physical that blocks the ability to hear what is being said. Learners is an ECD classroom may be distracted by noise, obstructions, and distance. It can be anything from a construction site next door to people talking loudly in the office or the sound of traffic outside of the window. In order to minimize the noise, the teacher may lead leaners into a rhyme to suppress the disturbing noise. It can be people standing before you at a networking event or someone sitting between you and the person speaking at a meeting. Distance can also be a distraction. The further away people are from one another when they talk, the more difficult it can be to hear them clearly. An ECD teacher should make sure that whenever she is speaking to learners the distance between them should be all the learners to hear the message clearly.

Again, in the case of inside, Internal distractions are anything that can divert your mental focus, such as boredom, fatigue, or preoccupation. When you listen, anything you think a lot can come into your mind and distract you. Daydreaming can occur when the listener hears something that sets off a chain of unrelated thoughts in their head they become distracted by their ‘own world’ and adopt a ‘far away’ look. The ECD teacher should always take into consideration that the ECD listening span is short so there should be some breaks of rhymes or plays.

To minimize this barrier one need to create a conducive environment for listening, such as turning off your phone, finding a quiet place, or minimizing other sources of stimulation. You also need to be mindful of your own thoughts and feelings, and try to clear your mind of irrelevant or negative thoughts that can distract you from the speaker.

In an ECD classroom, **language barrier** is probably one of the most common obstacles to effective listening. It can exist when there is a language difference between the two individuals talking or when one person has a poor understanding of the spoken language. It could simply be a difference in dialect. Hence there is a lack of clarity or understanding of what the speaker is saying. This can also happen if the speaker uses unclear, vague, or uses unfamiliar terms or concepts termed jargon. It can also happen if you are confused, uncertain, or have gaps in your knowledge. The learners in an ECD class should be taught in the language they understand most i.e the first language should always accompany the foreign language. This barrier can also be minimized by giving learners time and opportunity to ask questions. To ask questions, they need to be curious and attentive to what the teacher is saying, and seek clarification or elaboration if they don't understand something. they also need to ask open-ended questions that encourage the speaker to explain more, rather than closed-ended questions that limit their response.

A third barrier to active listening is your own **emotions** or the emotions of the speaker. Emotions can affect how you perceive and interpret what the speaker is saying, and how you respond to them. Emotional reactions, such as anger, frustration, or anxiety, that can hinder your listening can be triggered. Words, tone, facial expressions can provoke a reaction in the listener that wasn't necessarily what the speaker intended. When that happens, the listener won't be able to hear or pay full attention to what the speaker is saying. Red flag words or expressions trigger an unexpectedly strong association in the listener's mind, often because of the listener's private beliefs or experiences. The Teacher in an ECD classroom should be friendly and approachable and try not to use harsh words when speaking to the learners. She should wear friendly facial expressions.

When a speaker uses a word or expression that triggers a reflexive association, you as a good listener can ask the speaker to confirm whether she meant to say what you think she said. When you hear a word or expression that raises a red flag, try to stop the conversation, if possible, so that you don't miss anything that the speaker says. Then ask the speaker to clarify and explain the point in a different way.

**Psychological** are based on our thoughts rather than feelings. Sometimes, we tend to assume we know what the other person is going to say, think about what we’re going to say next, or judge the person we’re listening to.

For example, if you are talking to someone and start thinking about replying, you will be less effective at listening to what that person is saying. Instead, you’ll be focused on formulating your response. You might then impatiently cut her off or try to complete the sentence for her. Even more disruptive is interrupting her by saying that you disagree with her, but without letting her finish saying what it is that you think you disagree with. That's a common problem when a discussion gets heated, and which causes the discussion to degrade quickly. Also, some people want to jump in early in a conversation and start to offer advice before they fully understand the problem or concerns of the speaker. An ECD teacher should not jump into conclusion on why a learner has acted they way they did, instead they should take time to ask and listen attentively, that way they would be able to assist effectively.

By interrupting the learner before letting them finish, they're essentially saying that they don't value what the learner saying. Showing respect to the speaker is a crucial element of good listening. A good listener tries to keep an open, receptive mind. A good ECD teacher looks for opportunities to stretch their mind when listening, and to acquire new ideas or insights, rather than reinforcing existing points of view.

A simple strategy for overcoming this barrier is to wait for three seconds after the speaker finishes before beginning your reply. That's usually a good thing, because it gives the speaker a chance to fully vent his or her feelings. Another strategy is to schedule a structured session during which only one person speaks while the other listens. You then switch roles in the next session. It's worth emphasizing that the goal of good listening is simply to listen, nothing more and nothing less.

**Impatience** is based on the idea that people feel they do not have enough time to listen. Time pressure can come from a number of different places, including from within oneself or from an external source. For example, if you are running late for a meeting, you will probably be less inclined to spend time listening to everyone’s ideas than if you had more time available.

Alternatively, if you feel impatient because the person speaking is taking too long, you might feel unable to focus on what they are saying. Because of this, it could be hard to focus on what the other person is saying, and you may stop listening and start preparing your excuse for leaving. Sometimes it becomes hard for any listener to be sitting down for 1 or 2 hours at stake. Again, it becomes harder if the Speaker speaks slowly. In this case, try to have some relaxation on your own.

The best way to eliminate barriers to effective listening is through learning and practice. It might take some time for individuals to recognize when they allow these barriers to affect their conversations. Once they do, some strategies can be implemented to improve how you listen.

It would be best if you were a listener to becoming a better speaker. Because if you can’t get what an ideal listener wants to hear, you won't reach the correct message.

**References:**

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