

THE LISTENING PROCESS

Objectives

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

1. state why listening is important;
2. distinguish hearing from listening;
3. define listening;
4. describe the nature and stages of the listening process;
5. explain the purposes of listening;
6. identify barriers to effective listening;
7. suggest ways to improve listening;
8. identify ways to give and receive effective feedback; and
9. recognize various propaganda techniques.

INTRODUCTION

A story is told of a *balikbayan* who upon boarding a plane from San Francisco noted the usual passenger apathy as the attendants gave their safety message at the beginning of the flight. That is until a voice came over the intercom. "Ladies and gentlemen, as the song says there may be 50 ways to leave your friend, but I guarantee you there are only 7 exits from this airplane. So listen up!" And after the laughter subsided, they did.

Indeed, listening is an activity we often take for granted. We do not take our listening seriously until we face the consequences of not listening. Due to your inattentiveness in the classroom, how often have you asked your seatmate what the teacher has just said? What about the habit of engaging in passive listening until the teacher informs the class that a quiz will be given after the lecture? Poor listening takes a toll in the home as well. Marriage counselors say that many domestic break-ups are related to communication failure between spouses, among family members and listening is often at the heart of it. Moreover, poor listening in the workplace often results in lowered productivity and morale.

Having examined the communication process in an earlier chapter, let us now focus on listening, the reciprocal of speaking. In this chapter the nature and stages of the listening process will be discussed. The purposes of listening will be explained. The different barriers to effective listening and some suggestions on how to overcome or counteract these barriers will likewise be tackled. Finally, some guidelines to further improve your listening will be presented

THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING

Listening is the most basic of the four major areas of language development. S. Lundsteen notes that listening is the first language skill which we develop (Wolvin 1988). As children, we listen before we speak, we speak before we read and read before we write. The preceding statement clearly indicates that our ability to speak, read and write and master cognitive skills is dependent directly or indirectly upon our ability to listen.

Listening is also the most frequently used form of verbal communication. Many studies made to investigate the frequency of listening conclude that listening consumes more of our daily communication time compared to any other forms of verbal communication. According to Rankin, on the average, adults spend 70 percent of their waking hours engaging in communication activities. Specifically, about 10 percent of this communication time is spent in writing, 15 percent in reading, 30 percent in speaking and 45 percent in listening. Given the amount of time we spend listening, our listening behavior should be made more effective. Unfortunately, listening is a skill that does not automatically improve with practice.

It seems quite evident that despite the great allocation of time for listening, we do not listen as well as we should. We are relatively poor listeners. Listening consultant Lyman Steil notes that on the average our level of listening effectiveness is only about 50 percent. We can hear, evaluate and respond to only about half of what was said. These figures may drop after 48 hours to an effectiveness level of 25 percent. Operating on this low level of listening results in a 75 percent loss.

Listening is a skill that is of utmost importance at the various levels of communication. We listen to ourselves at the intrapersonal communication level. We listen at the interpersonal level when we listen in conversation, to interviews and in small group discussion. We listen at the public

communication level when we listen to various speakers, watch a play or a concert. We listen at the mass communication level when we listen to the radio, television and film. Listening is not limited to formal speaking situations or just the classroom. It is a skill that is vital in both formal and informal situations. It plays an integral part in our everyday lives as our attitudes, skills; and behaviors are affected by the listening that we do.

HEARING vs. LISTENING

Since hearing and listening are frequently misused as synonyms, a distinction between the two must be made. Although they are two receiving processes they are essentially two different entities.

Hearing is the physiological process of receiving aural and visual stimuli. It begins when the listener takes in the sound of the speaker's voice. It is the passive phase of speech reception since we can hear without effort. Good hearing is important to listening because hearing provides the raw material on which the listening process operates. Good hearing though is not synonymous to good listening. (Clevenger 1971)

Listening is more than hearing. It is described as the active phase of speech reception, a physiological process guided and controlled by the habits, attitudes and conscious intentions of the listener. He chooses from those complex stimuli certain information that will be useful in formulating his response. These distinctions are helpful in clarifying the meaning of listening.

DEFINITIONS OF LISTENING

Many definitions of listening have been formulated by various experts. Each of these definitions was arrived at after thorough research determining what components and characteristics are involved in the listening act. According to Nichols (1954), if "hearing is the apprehension (to become aware of through the senses) of sound and listening is the comprehension (to embrace or understand a thing) of aural symbols, then, listening can be more accurately defined as "the attachment of meaning to aural symbols." Baird and Knowler (1968) refer to listening as a term for a whole group of mental processes which enable us to interpret the meaning of messages. It is a cognitive process that involves perception, comprehension and other mental processes. Wolvin (1988) defines listening as the process of receiving, attending to and assigning meaning to aural stimuli. A last definition by Brooks (1993) whose listening model will be discussed in this chapter states that "listening is the combination of what we hear, what we understand and what we remember." All these definitions will be helpful in understanding the nature and process of listening.

THE NATURE OF LISTENING

1. Listening is a dynamic, transactional process.

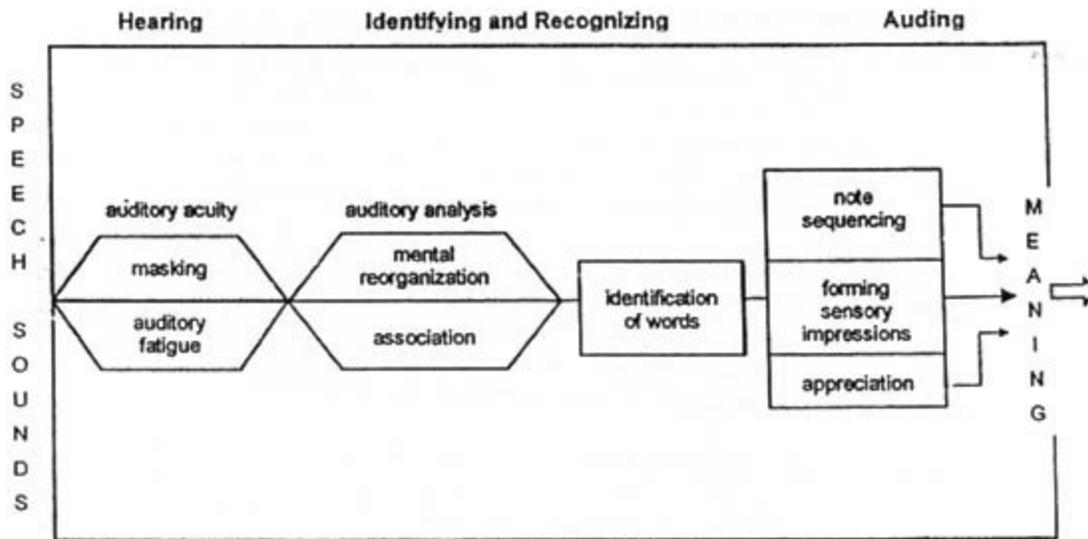
In the first chapter we learned that communication is a two-way process. It involves both the speaker and the listener as they send and receive messages. It is therefore their joint responsibility to make sure that the messages originating from the source must be understood, interpreted and evaluated by the receiver. Listening, the reciprocal of speaking, is an integral part of the total communication process.

2. *Listening is an active process not a passive one.*

Listening is not a passive state we may find ourselves in. DeVito (1982) stresses that listening does not just happen; you have to make it happen. It demands physical energy which the listener needs so that he can focus on the message cues. It requires mental energy so the listener can participate actively as decoder of the speaker/source's messages as well as encoder of his return messages or feedback. Clearly, listening is a skill that demands hard work and needs our full attention.

3. *Listening is a complex process.*

Let us understand the complex nature of listening by examining the different stages of listening as presented in the Brooks' Listening Model (Figure 1).



(Figure 1: The Brooks Listening Model)

THE STAGES OF LISTENING

According to W. Brooks (1993), listening consists of three stages: *hearing, identifying and recognizing, and auding.*

The first stage of listening is *hearing*, the process of reception of sound waves by the ear. There are three important factors which affect the hearing of sound: auditory acuity, masking and auditory fatigue. **Auditory acuity** is the ability of the ear to respond to various frequencies or tones at various intensities, referred to as levels of loudness. Human speech frequencies range from 250 to 4,000 cycles per second although the critical range of auditory acuity is 1000 and 2500 cycles per second.

Decibels are units to measure the loudness of sound. If we are referring to speech sounds, it can range from 55 decibels as in soft talking to eighty-five decibels as in loud conversation. The intelligibility of speech is affected by hearing loss. An individual is said to have hearing loss if he or she requires more than the normal amount of intensity in order to hear sounds of certain frequencies. If one needs 15 to 20 decibels over the normal, he may have a significant hearing loss.

Masking occurs when the background noise received by the ear falls within the same frequency range as the message one is intending to receive. Competing conversation often "masks" the intended oral message. Meanwhile, *white noise* results when the competing or extraneous sounds are composed of all frequencies. The cacophony of noise emanating from a jam-packed enlistment room

s an example.

A last factor which affects hearing is **auditory fatigue**. This results from continuous exposure to sounds of certain frequencies. The monotonous or droning voice of a lecturer, the sound of a running appliance such as an air conditioner or the continuous ringing of an alarm clock can weaken the process of hearing and consequently impede listening. Prolonged exposure to sounds of certain frequencies can bring about temporary hearing loss. Exposure to occupational and non-occupational noise sources such as high decibel level – rock and roll music, newspaper presses and power lawnmowers can have damaging effects. Members of rock bands that play heavy metal music wear earplugs to prevent hearing loss.

The second stage of listening involves **“identifying and recognizing patterns and relationships.”** A number of factors may affect this stage of listening. These are the quality of auditory analysis, mental reorganization, and association. **Auditory analysis** is the process of comparing the sounds that are heard with the ones that are familiar to the listener. The sounds are recognized according to their likenesses and differences.

During **mental reorganization**, the listener uses a system that will help him retain and structure the incoming sounds. He may recode, regroup or rehearse these sounds in his mind. He may syllabify the word while pronouncing it; he may group numbers in batches or he may repeat the series several times.

Even as the listener hears the sounds, he is making **associations** in his mind. He links these sounds with previous experiences, memories and backgrounds. He creates associations even if the sounds spoken are in a foreign language, one that is totally strange to him and even if his personal and subjective meanings differ from the speaker.

The third and last stage of the listening process is **auding**. The listener assimilates the words and responds to them with understanding and feeling. Aside from the listener’s “experiential background,” some skills in thinking can be useful to make the assignment of meaning an easy task. The diagram lists five thinking skills that the listener can engage in: indexing, making comparisons, noting sequence, forming sensory impressions and appreciating.

Indexing is arranging the listening material according to importance. As the information comes in, the listener searches for the main ideas as well as the subordinate ones. He also distinguishes the relevant material from the irrelevant. He may arrange the parts of the message to form the complete whole.

Making comparisons is another thinking skill.

Noting sequence is arranging the material according to time, space, position or some other relationship. The framework thus created will facilitate the assignment of meaning as well as the recall of the information or material.

Forming sensory impressions is translating the material to sensory images. When we listen, we often react with our different senses. We may form a visual impression thus adding an interesting dimension to the meaning of the verbal message. Although sight is the most frequently used, we may also create other impressions so that we may perhaps taste, or smell or feel the message.

Appreciating is a final function that the listener can engage in during the auding stage. Appreciating is “responding to the aesthetic nature of the message.” This may take place when the listening material (e.g. special occasion speeches) demands an emotional response.

ATTENTION and LISTENING

Do you recall why and how your grade school teacher tried to get your attention at the start of the class? Or how during drill days the platoon commander would shout the initial command "Attention!"? Let us briefly learn some facts about the nature of attention and how they apply to listening.

Attention is a key concept in effective listening. Let us examine the two parts of the term. The first part of the word is "*at*" or focuses. The second part comes from "*tension*" which pertains to the energy that a listener needs to be able to focus or in this case, perform his listening task. O'Neill and Weaver give us a more precise definition: "attention is a unified, coordinated muscular set, or attitude, which brings organs to bear with maximum effectiveness upon a source of stimulation and thus contributes to alertness and readiness of response" (Brembeck and Howell 1952).

To be in attention is not an easy thing. Understanding the duration of attention, the number of stimuli one can attend to and the selectivity of attention should enable us to listen more attentively. Duration of attention refers to the length of time one is able to attend to a given stimulus or stimuli. How long? It might surprise you to know that the length of absolute attention has been found to be only a few seconds. In 1908, Pillsbury's studies revealed that the duration of a single act of attention was three to twenty-four seconds, with most acts falling within the 5–8 second range. In 1914, M. Billings observed that the average duration of attention was approximately two seconds. Schmidt and Kristofferson in 1963 determined it to be 63.8 to 66.4 of a second. W. Scott attributed this brevity of duration of attention to the fact that our thinking is done in "spurts" There are periods of attention followed by periods of inactivity. A stimulus can be attended to for a long period of time but the attention will not be uniformly strong all the time. He added further that in public speaking we seldom are able to hold the full and undivided attention for more than a few seconds or a few minutes at best. The audience's attention is constantly wandering or decreasing in force.

At any one time, a multitude of stimuli in the immediate environment is vying for your attention. You must be aware of this fact as you find yourself in the classroom a great deal. There are external stimuli such as the teacher's lecture, her visual aid and a chatty seatmate. Coming from outside the classroom, you may hear the grass cutter motor running and the students talking. From your seat you can see students walking up and down the corridor. There are also internal stimuli trying to grab your attention. You may be suffering from a terrible headache or are worrying about your exam in the next period. How many of these stimuli can you attend to? How many objects or ideas attended during a particular period are important? Laboratory experiments have revealed that on the average we can attend to four to five objects visually and five to eight auditorily. Our attention span is really limited and dependent on the type of stimuli as well as the person listening or attending. If there are too many objects a person has to attend to simultaneously, the quality or intensity of attention is reduced.

Furthermore, attention shifts from one stimulus to another. Imagine that you are watching a musical extravaganza on stage. There are myriad stimuli in that particular listening event. Which one will grab your eyes or ears? Generally we attend to stimuli that stand out above the others in terms of odor, lights, shape or sound.

Even as we discuss attention in the context of listening, the attention factor is also essential to the speaker. The brevity of the duration of attention, for instance, becomes important to a public speaker. He will need to focus selectivity on those stimuli upon which his speech rests. Further discussion on various factors of attention as they relate to public speaking will be covered in the last chapter "Communicating in Public."

PURPOSES IN LISTENING

Just as a speaker's purpose in speaking varies from situation to situation, so, too, does a listener's purpose in listening. Each purpose or kind of listening has its own requirements and skills that are needed to achieve the goals of the communication transaction. Listening experts identify at least four different types of listening.

1. ***Appreciative listening*** is listening for pleasure, entertainment or enjoyment. It calls for a receptive attitude and an open and relaxed mind. Listening to music, to conversations with friends, to an entertaining speech or a television sitcom demand only little or no concentration. We listen simply because we want to unwind or relieve tension.
2. ***Empathic listening*** is listening to provide emotional support. It serves a therapeutic function. We listen because the other person needs us to understand his plight and feelings. Therapeutic listening is exemplified by parents as they listen empathically to their children, by supervisors as they listen to employees who have personal problems, or by trained volunteers who help troubled callers on the telephone hotline. When we provide others a sounding board, it gives them comfort and support.
3. ***Comprehensive listening*** is listening to derive information, facts, ideas and principles. Since the focus of this type of listening is accuracy of perception, a considerable degree of concentration is needed. When you sit in class and listen to the lecture or listen to directions for finding a friend's house you are listening with the goal of acquiring knowledge.
4. ***Critical Listening*** is listening to make an evaluation in order to make an intellectual judgment, to criticize, to evaluate ideas of others. Here, appreciative listening is controlled and analytical listening is necessary. When you have all the facts, you can evaluate and then arrive at a decision based on the evidence. When you listen to a campaign speech of a political candidate or the sales-pitch of a real estate agent, you will first need to understand the message in order to make judgments about it.

Make it a habit to consciously determine your listening purpose demanded by the listening occasion. This will help you to structure or organize your listening. It will enable you to anticipate the needs of the specific level or type of listening and adapt your skills accordingly.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Have you ever played the telephone (or rumor) game? A story is told to one person and this person is asked to tell it to another person. This person then tells it another, etc. By the time the story has gone through five or six persons, it is often almost unrecognizable. Many of the distortions which take place in message transmission are due to the fact that listeners are influenced by their habits, attitudes and expectations which they bring to that listening event. All of these come into play with the other elements of the communication situation. There are many obstacles to effective listening. The listener must recognize these obstacles and know how to overcome them.

1. ***Hastily branding the subject as uninteresting or irrelevant.***

Sometimes speakers fail to show how the information they are presenting can be relevant to

their audience's needs. More often though, it is the listener who feels that the subject matter is not worth listening to. This then becomes an excuse by the listener to abandon his task. This habit does not give a chance for the speaker to prove that the hasty dismissal of the subject is wrong. Someone once said that all communication is at least potentially interesting and useful, "What can I learn or use?" is often a good question to ask. **Suggestion: Seek ways to make the subject matter interesting and useful to you.**

2. *Focusing attention on appearance or delivery*

As students, you will likely agree that it is difficult to resist the temptation to dwell on the speaker's mannerisms, gestures and vocal qualities. Delivery and physical appearance are details which influence a listener's reaction to a speaker but should not be used as excuses not to listen. This practice takes a toll on listening because it diverts time and energy. Do not be too critical of the physical appearance or manner of speaking. **Suggestion: Judge content, not delivery.**

3. *Avoiding difficult and unpleasant material.*

What do you consider difficult to listen to? The answer will vary depending on your interests and capabilities. Generally speaking, if the subject matter demands careful scrutiny and mental exertion, it is considered difficult material. And since most listeners do not usually want to strain their minds, these messages are avoided. Filtering unpleasant subject matter may also serve as an obstacle to effective listening. Messages which contradict personal stands or question long-held beliefs and ideals are the very things we ought to listen to. When we avoid difficult and unpleasant material we may miss a lot. **Suggestion: Practice listening in a wide variety of situations.**

4. *Getting over stimulated by what the speaker's says*

There will be many instances when you will be faced with a speaker who may say something with which you disagree. What follows is an interesting chain of events: you might allow yourself to be irritated; you might prepare an answer or rebuttal, and then continue to rehearse your response. What really happens is that you miss out on the message all together. Set your feelings about the speaker and the topic aside. If this happens when in conversation with someone, make a mental note of it and go back to it at an appropriate time. If you are listening to a speech, a good suggestion is to jot down the comment and return to your listening. Yes, we listen with both mind and heart, but we cannot allow ourselves to be irritated or distracted by something the speaker says. **Suggestion: Keep your emotions in check.**

5. *Listening primarily for facts.*

Facts are stepping stones of ideas leading to a major point. As such they are only secondary to the central idea. Do not become too preoccupied with details and consequently fail to grasp the speaker's central idea. Differentiate between main points and supporting materials. Learn to distinguish between fact and principle, idea and example, and evidence and argument. **Suggestion: Focus on ideas.**

6. *Trying to outline everything that the speaker says*

Writing down everything word for word can become an obstacle to effective listening. It

deprives you of the more exciting experience of reacting to the speaker's message. Note-taking is particularly important to comprehensive listening. It is helpful to consider a note-taking method. Here are some **suggested methods of note-taking**. Learn about their advantages and disadvantages.

Note-Taking Methods

The *key-word outline* is a common system. As the name suggests, this method briefly notes a speaker's main points and supporting evidence in an outline form. This outline can be very useful for review purposes. This method helps the listener develop skills in identifying the main ideas and noting the important details and the relationships between these ideas and the details. Although most suitable for classroom lectures and formal speeches, it is not a practical system if the message is "unoutlinable." Sometimes, the note-taker can become too preoccupied with the mechanics of outlining. By separating main points from subpoints and supporting material, the outline format exemplified below shows the relationships among the speaker's ideas.

I. First major idea

A.

- 1.
- 2.

B.

- 1
- 2.

II. Second major point

A.

B.

C.

Another note-taking method is called *précis writing or precis method*. There are three steps to follow in accomplishing this system. First, the note-taker listens for several minutes. He then mentally summarizes what was said. Finally, at periodic intervals, he writes a short paragraph or a one- or two-sentence abstract summarizing what he has heard. He may even have a series of brief abstracts covering what the speaker said. This method works well for both organized and disorganized messages. The writing though can take up too much time which may also result in losing other relevant information.

The "*fact versus principle*" *system of note-taking* requires that the note taker divide his paper into two vertical columns. In the right-hand column, he lists the important principles or main ideas derived from the speech and number them in Roman numerals. In the left-hand column, he lists the important facts and numbers them in Arabic numeral. The listener organizes the speaker's thoughts by mentally checking the facts against the principles. When

done efficiently, this method is excellent for review.

FACTS (verifiable supporting detail)	PRINCIPLES (main ideas)
1.	I. First main idea
2.	(1, 2, 3)
3.	
4.	II. Second main idea
5.	(4, 5)
6.	
7.	III. Third main idea
8.	(6, 7, 8)

A fourth method of note-taking is **mapping**. This system organizes the notes in a visual manner resembling a map. This method requires that each main idea as it is presented is written on the center of the paper and then encircled. If more than one main idea is presented, it is listed to the left or right of the center. The supporting details are then written on lines connected to the main idea that they support. If there are minor details that need to be included, they are also written on lines which are connected to the supporting details. This system works well for disorganized messages and for visually-oriented notetakers. However, the note-taker can get too engrossed in the drawing and consequently miss out on important concepts and details that are presented.

In the **annotation method**, the listener records important notes opposite the printed speech or discussion while the verbal explanation or oral presentation is being made by the speaker. As a Comm. III student for instance you may jot down the explanations made by your instructor in the left- or right-hand margins of the speech book or the hand-outs provided in the class.

To use notes effectively, the note-taker should be able to review his notes in order to retain the information more permanently. A recommended method of reviewing notes is the **Cornell System**. It was developed by Dr. Walter Paule of Cornell University. These are the steps involved in the Cornell System.

1. The listener divides his paper vertically into two columns. The right-hand column is labeled RECORD while the left-hand column is labeled RECALL.
2. The listener lists the speaker's main ideas in the "Record" column.
3. When the speaker has completed the message, the listener summarizes the recorded information by jotting down key words and phrases in the RECALL column.
4. Shortly thereafter, the note-taker covers the right-hand column (RECORD) and then using only the key words and phrases attempts to reconstruct the other column (RECALL) as he recites the message in his own words.
5. Future review sessions are conducted in the same manner.

Your choice of note-taking method will depend on the organizational pattern of the message. Keep your notes clear and brief so that they will be easy to review at a future time.

Becoming a better note-taker will surely help you become a better listener.

7. *Faking Attention*

Many think that looking like an attentive and cooperative listener will satisfy the requirements that a speaker expects of his listeners. The reality is that these actions (nodding the head periodically to indicate understanding, smiling occasionally, even obsessive note-taking) which are done to please the speaker are really superficial. You have nothing to gain in pretending to grasp the message while making a mental detour. Besides, speakers are smarter than you think. They often know when you have switched them off. They can recognize these signs that you may be unaware of. **Suggestion: Don't pretend to listen.**

8. *Creating or yielding easily to distractions*

Experience will tell you that there is hardly a perfect listening environment. There will often be distractions in the physical environment. A good example is your classroom in Communication III. It can get uncomfortably hot or noisy especially when students wait outside the hall for their next class. Overcome these distractions by closing the door, adjusting the electric fan or lights or finding a good seat. Sometimes listeners themselves create distractions in the listening environment. Latecomers can disrupt proceedings. Students play with a ballpen, doodle or chat with their seatmates. Some even entertain text messages or phone calls. These are negative behaviors which interfere with effective listening. Remember, it is your joint responsibility with the speaker to create a favorable listening environment. **Suggestion: Fight or resist distraction.**

9. *Engaging in "private planning"*

How often have you used the time for listening to an important lecture or class discussion to daydream or make plans for the weekend? Perhaps relive an argument you had with your boyfriend over the phone last night? Anyone of these seems the better option to a boring presentation. If you wish to make the most out of your listening, learn to concentrate and focus. It takes a lot of energy but it can be done. **Suggestion: Set aside unrelated personal problems or concerns.**

10. *Wasting the advantages of thought speed*

We are inefficient listeners because our "brains can understand many more words per minute than speakers can produce clearly" (Gronbeck 1994). The average rate of speaking is 125 words to 175 words per minute while the rate at which we think is 400 words per minute. These figures reveal that listeners can think four to five times faster than a speaker can speak. On the average, we need only about 20 to 25 seconds of every minute to comprehend what the speaker is saying. This is only a portion of the total listening time needed to process the information in messages. This time differential between thought rate and speech rate provides a tempting excuse to tune out the speaker. You may not realize it but these spare moments can be used to the listener's advantage.

How can you capitalize on the advantages of thought speed? Here relevant mental activities can you engage in to use the spare time wisely.

- You can anticipate what the speaker will say

- You can mentally review the points or concepts discussed so far
- You can test the use of evidence and reasoning.
- You can formulate questions
- You can search for additional meanings by listening “between the lines.”
- You can outline or re-organize the speech.
- You can relate the speaker’s examples to your personal storehouse or field of experience.

Do not allow mind to wander. Use the time wisely. **Suggestion: Capitalize on the advantages of thought speed.**

GUIDES TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING

1. Listen actively.

In the initial part of this chapter a distinction between hearing and listening was made. It was emphasized that we usually can hear without effort but we cannot listen without effort. It takes a lot of time and energy to listen effectively. For one, a certain degree of physical alertness is needed. Do you remember how you moved up close to somebody who had something important to say to you? With straight body, head brought close to the speaker and ears all set to hear, you listened attentively. This physical readiness is a sign that you are mentally ready as well. Active listening is not just participating physically but mentally and emotionally or empathically in the listening process.

2. Listen with empathy.

Listening with empathy is to be able to feel what the speaker feels. You will have to learn to see things from the point of view of the speaker. As students, it is important that you see things from the point of view of your professors. Teachers must also learn to see matters not just from their own perspectives but from the point of view of their students as well.

3. Listen for total meaning.

We would normally think that all we have to hear are the words or utterances of a source or speaker. Listening involves the total communication process. It includes visual perceptions that attend the listening situation. We have to watch the speaker, observe his use of bodily actions and audio-visual aids. What does a speaker who paces throughout his delivery communicate? These visible symbols are significant in that they help you accurately interpret the verbal message and thereby gain more information. They may sometimes dominate a communication act and become the most important source of a message.

Together with the overt behavior of the speaker, we have to “listen” between the lines, so to speak. We listen for meanings in the context and in the total situation. We need to listen also to what is unsaid or omitted. It takes a sensitive receiver/listener to infer meanings from messages which are hidden.

4. Listen with an open mind.

A closed-minded listener will refuse to hear and understand conflicting points of view. He will not strive to hear out the other side of the story. Being dogmatic causes us to be poor listeners.

Before arriving at decisions or accepting proposals, listen with both an open ear and an open mind. It is a healthy and mature practice to listen to all sides.

5. Give effective feedback.

If speakers to be effective are expected to adapt their messages to their listeners, then listeners must be trained to send effective feedback. Feedback is defined as the response or reaction (overt and covert) of the listener as perceived by the source in the communication transaction. Reacting and responding is a necessary component of the listening act.

DeVito (1982) characterizes *effective feedback as immediate, honest, appropriate, clear and informative*. The most effective feedback is that which is *sent immediately* after the message is received. The practice of sending feedback quickly will help in the process of understanding another's messages. *Honest* feedback is a sincere response to the communication. Do not hesitate to express your doubts or disagreements. Do not feel afraid to admit that you do not understand the message. Feedback should be *appropriate* to the communication situation. Keep feedback to the message separate from feedback directed at the source or person you are listening to. Feedback must also be *clear and specific* in meaning. Avoid sending distracting and unintentional feedback. Your overt response must communicate the messages you intend. For instance, facial expressions can be misconstrued. If what you had for breakfast does not agree with you, make sure that these reactions will not confuse the source or speaker. Lastly, effective feedback is *informative*. It provides the speaker with relevant clues that can improve his subsequent communication efforts.

Consider other general guidelines for sending feedback. Make sure that you understand the message before sending directive feedback. Be certain that the speaker recognized the feedback. Use nondirective feedback until the speaker invites feedback to his message. Sending feedback is a conscious effort. It should come easy and natural once you get accustomed to it.

6. Listen critically.

An effective listener must carefully evaluate and critically analyze the messages that he receives. This responsibility becomes a real challenge in the classroom where academic interaction with teachers and classmates takes place. Evaluate the main points or arguments advanced by the speaker. Test the evidence used to support various claims. Also test the reasoning employed by the speaker. Brooks suggests that "such weighing and evaluating is most effectively done point by point rather than at the end of a message."

A critical listener must also have the ability to recognize propaganda techniques and fallacies in reasoning so he can reject false claims advanced by some speakers.

PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUES

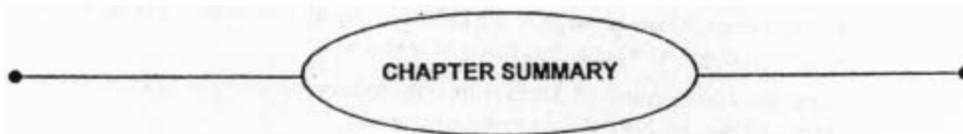
1. Name-calling is a device that affixes an unfavorable label or name to a person or thing.

Objectional labels such as crony, "*trapo*" (*traditional politician*), activist, nerd, loser or terror teacher are often used to discredit or ridicule a person and thus cause the listener to eventually reject what he represents.

2. Glittering generalities involve attaching a vague but virtuous-sounding label to a person, cause or object ("a strong proponent of justice," "defender of freedom"). Since they are approved verbal sanctions they are often used to gain acceptability of programs, plans and ideas.

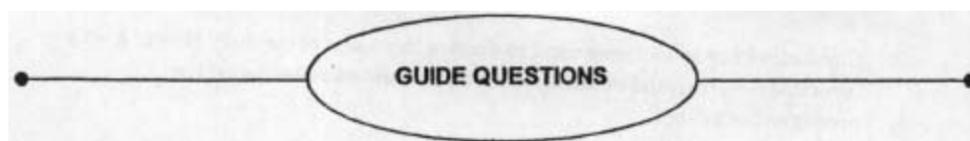
3. The use of **irrelevant personal attacks**, also known as *argumentum ad personam*, is used when there is a deficiency in logical proof. Instead of attacking the issue at hand, a speaker resorts to attacking the personal character of an opponent, his age, his relatives or even physical appearance.
4. **False appeal to authority** is another type of fallacy. Its Latin name is *ipse dixit* which means “because he says it.” Often, testimonials from famous people are used to build confidence in a product or proposition. When the authority is legitimately connected to the matter at hand the move may seem reasonable. However, if they are not authorities on them, then the speaker can be guilty of false appeal. Many television and print ads ask consumers to purchase products because sport celebrities or popular figures endorse the product(s).
5. **Transfer** shifts the authority, sanction and prestige of something known, respected and revered over to something else in order to make the latter acceptable. The flag, the church, educational institutions are common sources of emotional approval.
6. **Half-truth** is a common propaganda technique that is neither false nor true.
7. **Card-stacking** is a scheme used to deceive by means of carefully selecting only favorable evidence and omitting unfavorable evidence to support the propagandist’s cause.
8. **Plain-folks device** stresses humble origins and modest backgrounds. This is a common strategy of politicians who seek the support by portraying themselves as “men of the masses.” This appeal may be used to establish common ground particularly in introductions of public speeches. However, if it is used as pseudo-proof to justify a proposal, then, its use becomes unethical.
9. **Bandwagon** is sometimes known as *argumentum ad populum*. It is an appeal to popular opinion. It encourages belief or acceptance of an idea or product by creating the impression of universal support. It capitalizes on the so-called herd instincts.
10. **False causality** assigns a false or wrong cause to a certain happening or effect. Its Latin equivalent is *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. Sequential fallacy can be spotted in reasoning from causal relations.
11. **False analogy** results when the instances compared are not closely similar in all essential respects. Although analogy is an effective means to clarify and make vivid a point, it has limited weight when used for justifying a claim.
12. **Hasty generalization** is a claim made on the basis of too little evidence. Enough cases must be examined in order to make a justifiable claim.

An awareness of these propaganda techniques and logical fallacies and the context in which they are employed will be helpful in evaluating, weighing evidence and arguments and arriving at sound judgments about a speaker’s message.



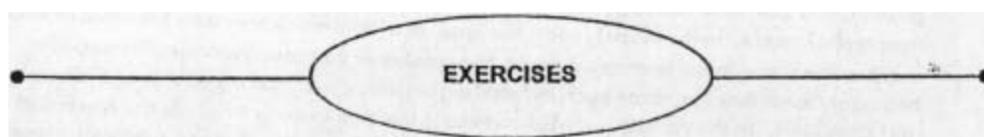
Listening, the reciprocal of speaking, is an integral part of the total communication process. It is a complex communication skill which according to Brooks involves three stages: hearing, identifying and recognizing, and auding. There are at least four purposes or kinds of listening: appreciative listening, empathic listening, informative listening and critical listening. Attention and effective

Listener feedback are crucial to good listening. Listening critically calls for the recognition of various propaganda techniques. Although there are many barriers to effective listening, these can be overcome through concentration and constant practice.



GUIDE QUESTIONS

1. Why is listening important to you as a student?
2. Why are hearing and listening not synonymous terms?
3. Explain the stages of the listening process.
4. Differentiate the various purposes in listening.
5. Identify the barriers to effective listening.
6. Suggest ways to capitalize on the advantages of thought speed.
7. How important is the recognition of propaganda techniques to critical listening?
8. What are the important characteristics of effective feedback?



EXERCISES

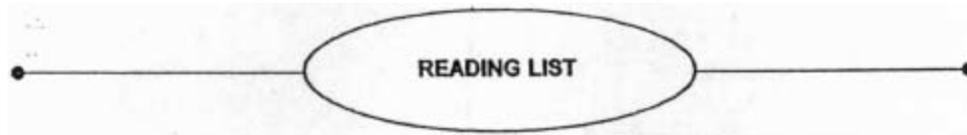
1. Evaluate your major strengths and weaknesses as a listener. What steps do you need to become a better listener?
2. Begin a listening journal. For a period of two to three days log in or record your listening transactions. Note the following.
 - who you were listening to
 - what your purposes in listening were
 - how effectively you listened.

After the specified period, review your log and examine your listening patterns. What changes in your listening behavior should you make?

3. Attend a class. Observe the listening behavior of your classmates. Describe both positive and negative behaviors that you observe.
4. Listen to a class lecture. Make an outline the lecture using any one of the methods suggested earlier. Keep these notes for review.
5. Make a list of judgments /biases you have made about three friends or classmates that may serve as a barrier to listen to them effectively and objectively. What can you do to help suspend these judgments as you prepare to listen to their speeches?
5. Make a conscious effort to send feedback to speakers in various communication settings: interviews, panel discussions and public speaking. How well does making an attempt to give feedback affect your listening? Share your observations with the class.
7. Interview a person who you think is particularly effective as a listener. Some suggestions include a guidance counselor, a parish priest or a friend who is known to be a good listener. Find out what

listening strategies/ techniques have worked for them.

3. Make a written critique of a speech you recently listened to. Evaluate both the speaker's content and delivery.



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