

GST 101

COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH 1

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LISTENING AS A COMMUNICATION SKILL

- WHAT IS LISTENING?
- CONTEXTS FOR LISTENING
- PURPOSES FOR LISTENING
- IMPEDIMENTS TO LISTENING
- REASONS FOR POOR LISTENING
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- UNDERSTANDING SPOKEN DISCOURSE:
BOTTOM-UP PROCESSING AND TOP-DOWN
PROCESSING

**THE REASON WHY WE HAVE TWO
EARS AND ONLY ONE MOUTH IS THAT
WE MAY LISTEN THE MORE AND
TALK THE LESS.**

(ZENO OF CITIUM)

WHAT IS LISTENING?

- Rost (2002) defines listening, in its broadest sense, as a process of receiving what the speaker actually says (receptive orientation); constructing and representing meaning (constructive orientation); negotiating meaning with the speaker and responding (collaborative orientation); and, creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy (transformative orientation).
- ***Listening*** is a complex, active process of interpretation in which listeners match what they hear with what they already know.

WHAT IS LISTENING? (CONT'D)

- *Listening* entails giving attention with the ear; attending closely for the purpose of hearing
- *Listening* is the conscious processing of the auditory stimuli that have been perceived through hearing
- To pay attention to someone or something in order to hear what is being said, sung, played, etc is *listening*
- *Listening* is a deliberate activity; hearing is an ability.

WHAT IS LISTENING? (CONT'D)

Listening does not mean simply maintaining a polite silence while you are rehearsing in your mind the speech you are going to make the next time you grab a conversational opening.

When listening, the listener tries to see the problem the way the speaker sees it. But a good listener does not merely remain silent, he asks questions.

CONTEXT FOR LISTENING

- Academic/conference
- Situational
- Environmental
- Social

PURPOSES FOR LISTENING

When we need to understand and integrate complex information, reading may be superior.

However, listening may be a more superior learning mode for most people.

Hence, the following are the purposes for listening. We listen

- For comprehension
- To obtain accurate information
- For ideas

PURPOSES FOR LISTENING (CONT'D)

- For emotional impact
- For persuasion
- for accentuation of salient points
- For attitude shifts
- For a sense of sharing of communication events
- For long-term memory formation
- To avoid being misled
- To avoid mistakes and misunderstanding

TYPES OF LISTENING

- **TRANSACTIONAL LISTENING:** This type of listening is associated with accessing information through the spoken word, through listening to broadcast news, announcements, lectures, etc.
- **INTERACTIVE LISTENING:** This type involves dialogue, listening to another person speaking in order to decide if and how we will react to it.
- **CRITICAL LISTENING:** This involves evaluating the message, in terms of its reasoning, use of evidence, or the truth in the light of our own experience.

TYPES OF LISTENING (CONT'D)

- **APPRECIATIVE LISTENING:** This type involves a concentrated focus upon speech, song or music as we form a response based on our appreciation of it.

STAGES OF LISTENING

- **Attention:** the focused perception of both visual and verbal stimuli
- **Hearing:** the physiological act of 'opening the gates of your ears'
- **Understanding:** assigning meaning to the messages received
- **Remembering:** the storing of meaningful information
- **Responding:** demonstration of level of comprehension and interest in what the speaker is saying

IMPEDIMENTS TO LISTENING

Listening is a key interpersonal skill and a prerequisite to other communication skills.

There are many things that get in the way of listening. These things are called *barriers to effective listening* and they include:

- Trying to listen to more than one conversation at a time
- When you find the communicator either attractive or unattractive (thereby paying more attention to your feeling about the communicator)
- Lack of interest (When you are not interested) in the topic/issue under discussion.
- Lack of focus (and being easily distracted)

IMPEDIMENTS TO LISTENING

(CONT'D)

- Feeling unwell or tired, hungry, thirsty or a need to use the toilet.
- Identifying rather than empathising (when you understand what you hear but do not put yourself in the shoes of the speaker)
- Sympathising rather than empathising (you sympathise when you feel sorry for the experiences of another; to empathise, you put yourself in the position of the other person)
- When you are prejudiced or biased by race, gender, age, religion, accent and/or past experiences
- When you have already preconceived ideas or bias. (Be open-minded; try to understand. You must not necessarily agree with everything)

IMPEDIMENTS TO LISTENING

(CONT'D)

- Previous experiences
- Preoccupation (having a lot on your mind)
- Having a closed mind (We all have ideals and values we believe to be correct, hence posing difficulty in listening to the views of others which contradict our own opinions.

Hence, the key effective listening and interpersonal skills more generally is the ability to have a truly open mind to understand why others think about things differently to you and use this information to gain a better understanding of the speaker.

REASONS FOR POOR LISTENING

- **Sudden changes in topic**
- **Selective listening**
- **Daydreaming**
- **Low concentration**
- **Lack of prioritization**
- **Poor judgement**
- **Focusing on style, not substance**

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE LISTENING

- **STOP:** focus on the other person, their thoughts and feelings. Consciously focus on quieting your own internal commentary and step away from your own concerns to think about those of the speaker. Give full attention to the speaker.
- **LOOK:** Pay attention to non-verbal messages without letting yourself be distracted. Notice body language and non-verbal cues to allow for a richer understanding of the speaker's point. However, avoid getting distracted from the verbal message.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE LISTENING (CONT'D)

- **LISTEN:** Listen for the essence of the speaker's thoughts: details, major ideas and their meanings. Seek an overall understanding of what the speaker is trying to communicate, rather than reacting to the individual words or terms that they use to express themselves.
- **Be empathic:** Imagine how you would feel in their circumstances. Be empathic to the feeling of the speaker while maintaining a calm centre within yourself
- **Ask questions:** Use questions to clarify your understanding, as well as to demonstrate interest in what is being said.

KEYS TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING

- Find areas of interest
- Judge the content, not delivery
- Hold your fire
- Listen for ideas
- Be flexible
- Work at listening
- Resist distractions
- Exercise your mind
- Keep your mind open
- Anticipate. Summarize, weigh the evidence and look

ACQUISITION OF LISTENING SKILLS

- Acquisition is the development of a new skill, practice, or way of doing things.
- Listening is one of the 4 language skills. Psycholinguists maintain that it is the first language skill encountered by 2nd language learners or children learning to use language; since one cannot speak what one has not heard.
- We acquire language best by using it in communicative ways (Stephen Krashen).

- **Set up activities:** In acquiring listening skills, activities in which the learners demonstrate that they understand what is being said should be put in place to develop listening skills.
- **Participation:** in acquiring listening skills, inasmuch as silence is the key, students are encouraged to participate actively in the listening activities in class. This is the only way to confirm that they have understood.
Participation can mean as little as a nod, or a headshake, for example, or the words 'yes' and 'no' in English or their native language.
- **Presence of a speaker – artificial or natural speech.**

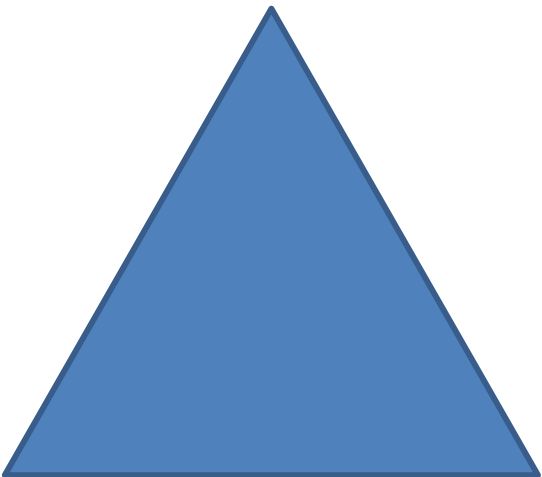
UNDERSTANDING SPOKEN DISCOURSE

BOTTOM-UP PROCESSING

AND

TOP-DOWN PROCESSING

• Bottom-up

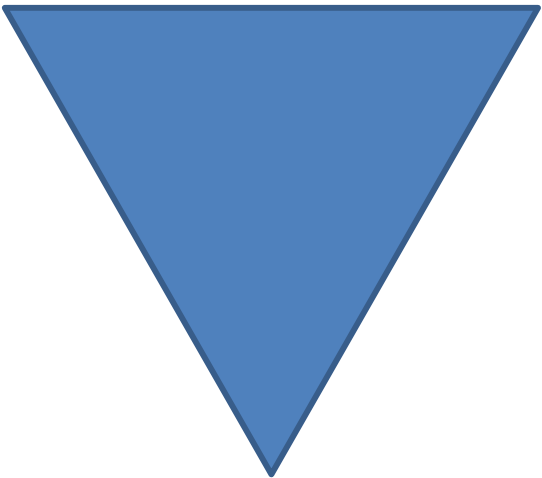


- Phonetics
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Semantics
- Pragmatics
- Linguistics



Simple
Piece together
Complex

• Top down



- Grammar
- Sentence
- Clause
- Phrase
- Word
- Sound



Complex
Breakdown
Simple

BOTTOM-UP PROCESSING

- Bottom-up processing is like piecing together or assembling bits of information to make up a complex whole.
- Bottom-up processing is the process of the senses providing information about the environment up to the brain.
- In bottom-up processing approach, perception starts at the sensory input, the stimulus.
- **EXAMPLE - INITIAL FIRE ENCOUNTER**

TOP-DOWN PROCESSING

- Top down processing refers to how our brains make use of information that has already been brought into the brain by one or more of the sensory systems.
- Top down processing is a cognitive process that initiates with our thoughts, which flow down to lower level functions, such as the senses.
- Top down processing is the development of pattern recognition through the use of contextual information.
- We form our perceptions starting with a larger object, concept, or idea before working out way toward more detailed information.

TOP-DOWN PROCESSING (CONT'D)

- In other words, top down processing happens when we work from the general to the specific; the big picture to the tiny details.
- **EXAMPLE - SUBSEQUENT FIRE ENCOUNTER**
- Engineering knowledge used to solve engineering related problems
- Another instance: you are presented with a paragraph written with difficult handwriting. It is easier to understand what the writer wants to convey if you read the whole paragraph rather than reading the words in separate terms. The brain may be able to perceive and understand the gist of the paragraph due to the context supplied by the surrounding words.

TOP-DOWN PROCESSING (CONT'D)

- Notice that a number of things can influence top-down processing. In some cases you are aware of these influences, but in other instances this process occurs without conscious awareness.
- In top down processing, one's perceptions are influenced by *expectations, existing beliefs, cognition, context and motivation*.
- Top down processing is also known as *conceptually-driven processing*.
- *Past experience/prior knowledge can help one make inferences*
- *Top down - disambiguation*