

**Public Speaking**  
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**Lecture: 04**  
**Role of Listening in Public Speaking**

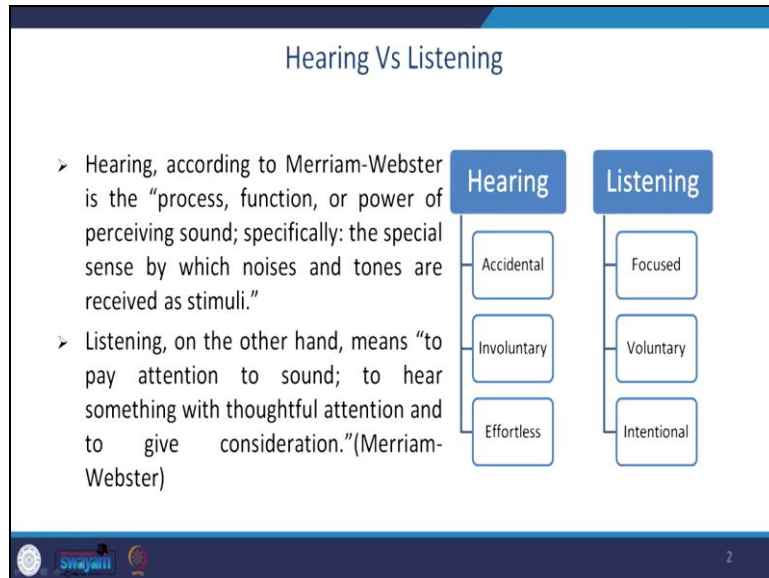
Good morning friends and welcome back to NPTEL certification course on Public Speaking. In the previous lecture that was lecture number three we discussed rhetoric. And you might be thinking that in order to be a good speaker one has to be a good rhetorician. Most of you might be thinking like that rhetoric, of course, is important. Because Rhetoric attracts you to a speaker but if you really want to copy that speaker or try to speak in the same way as the other speakers spoke.

You actually have to listen to so many such speeches, so many such talks. Rhetoric can provide you some of the persuasive techniques. But then unless and until you listen to what the other person says or if you are lost in the rhetoric of the other person, then perhaps you are not learning the right attitude to public speaking. So, what is important is--- you have to develop the habit of listening as well. Does that mean you are not listening? You are listening, of course, but then you are not listening, you are hearing and in this lecture we are going to talk about listening and its importance in public speaking.

So, I have titled this lecture as **Role of Listening in Public Speaking**. My dear friends, today we have different sorts of deviations whenever we want to listen and the real listening on most of the occasions does not take place. There is an instance where one of the very famous American writers, Ralph Waldo Emerson says--- “All the good speakers were first bad speakers.” Now, it is up to you, you want to become a good speaker. So, what you have to do is--- you have to start listening and this listening, of course, in the buzz in actually so many sounds that are around you every now and then you do not listen, you hear. I am reminded of one very beautiful poem by one of the modern poets T.S Eliot. What he says actually makes us realize that the real listening is not taking place. The words are: “My nerves are bad tonight /yes, bad stay with me/ speak to me, why do you never speak, speak./ What are you thinking what thinking, think. I never know what you are thinking; think what is the meaning?”/ The meaning is that in the present day world most of the time we are thinking but

perhaps we are not listening. My dear friends, as I said earlier you hear but you do not listen to. The question that might have cropped in your mind is: Is there a difference between hearing and listening?

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Yes, of course, hearing is something different from listening because as listening has been discussed and defined by Merriam Webster's dictionary that it is actually a process. The process, function or the power of perceiving sound specifically the special sense by which noises and the tones are received as stimuli, you will find that when you hear, you do not hear something with a purpose, it is accidental, fine? It is most of the time accidental, it is involuntary, it is effortless.

But when one has to listen, it actually requires effort--- the focused efforts. One has to have a sort of voluntary way to listen, you have to listen intentionally. So, listening is to pay attention to the sound, to hear something with a purpose. Unless and until we hear with a purpose we perhaps cannot be good speakers. Now in present world it appears that listening has become a lost art and in this regard one very beautiful line which Stephen Lucas says in the book *The Art of Public Speaking*.

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## Listening as a *lost art*

Stephen Lucas illustrates the difference between listening and hearing as follows in the Chapter 3 of *The Art of Public Speaking* as follows:

- "Hearing is a physiological process, involving the vibration of sound waves on our eardrums and the firing of electrochemical impulses from the inner ear to the central auditory system of the brain."
- ✓ We grasp only 50 percent of what we hear and we can remember only 10 percent of the original message.

Hearing is a physiological process, which actually involves the vibration of sound waves on our eardrums and the firing of electrochemical impulses from the inner ear to the central auditory system of the brain. But when you listen what happens since you are listening to voluntarily, naturally you have to put a force to listen because you know an observation says that 50% of what we hear, we actually do not remember, we only remember 10% of the original message.


So, if you can have some efforts in listening perhaps that will pay you rich dividends. And in order to be an effective public speaker, one has to develop the art of listening. Of course, nowadays there are several techniques as to how you can develop the art of listening. We hear but then we forget. But when you listen something have you ever thought of why some people remember some very beautiful lines because they might have listened to it or then with intent, with a sort of intention.




Even you know of the four skills when we say four skills LSRW. What we intend at the first skill is listening, speaking, reading and writing. So, when one listens one is not only listening, one is actually speaking--- half speaking listening is half speaking my dear friend.

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### Importance of Listening

- ✓ Listening is the other half of talking. In fact, listening is the **first step for speaking**.
- ✓ Of the four basic skills of learning, i.e. Listening, **S**peaking, **R**eading and **W**riting - it is evident that listening occupies the larger part.
- ✓ Studies reveal that students with the highest grade are usually great listeners showing great attention during lectures and discussions.
- ✓ It also plays a significant role in developing workplace culture and even forming healthy interpersonal relationships.






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In fact, this is actually the first step for speaking as I said earlier that all those good speakers were first bad speakers. So, when they developed the art of listening, they converted themselves or they became good speakers. Studies have often revealed that the highest grade pupil, I mean those students who get a good grade they perhaps are good listeners in the classrooms. But, of course, in today's world there are very few people who listen. Unless and until you listen with rapt attention or with rapt interest with rapt enthusiasm.

Because when you are listening you are not only listening you are actually verifying and sometimes or the other your common knowledge--- the knowledge that you have garnered and gathered you try to verify it. Sometimes if you find that there is a difference naturally you develop a sort of distaste. So, what is important is that listening actually plays a significant role in developing workplace culture.

Nowadays in most of the corporate places, corporate organizations you will find that listening has a lot to do. Every now and then you cannot be issued a circular whatsoever. Many people I have heard often saying that the boss told me like this and the boss has already announced but then some people also might say I did not hear. Somebody could reply and say you perhaps did not listen to, is not it?

My dear friends, there are certain stages in listening and how can we develop an effective listening, I will discuss these in the slides to come. But here let us talk about the various steps in listening which are involved. The first is hearing, in the very first instance when a person

speaks what the other person does is---- he actually hears but when you hear something because hearing is a physiological activity as we have already discussed.


So, when you hear something you try to filter it out. Filtering process, no? You heard something, you try to filter it and when you are filtering, the next step after filtering is--- you try to interpret your pre-knowledge, fine? Your previous knowledge, you are trying to compare also and once you interpret what happens then perhaps you may respond because something that you do not agree with, something that you differ with the person then unless and until you have heard you cannot differ with him or her.

So, the next step is responding and when you have responded or the other person has responded, then the last stage is remembering. Don't you think that listening as a process has got a lot of advantage, my dear friend because if you listen properly then perhaps you are able to remember lots of things.

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### Listening as a Process

- It begins with hearing.
- According to Ernest D. Nathan, "Perceptive listening is a conscious cognitive effort involving primarily the sense of hearing reinforced by other senses and leading to understanding. When perceptive listening is inspired by a sincere desire to understand, it becomes more than a sensory process. It is an attitude well expressed as a listening spirit."



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Now is listening a process? Yes, of course, listening is a process and it begins with hearing you might have found what actually we need to develop is the perceptive listening--- perceptive. Now the word perception, everyone's perception is different. So, when we hear somebody speaking what happens is--- we try to compare our perception with whatever is being said and in this regard Nathan's lines are very important and he says--- 'Perceptive listening is a conscious' I would rather mark these words conscious cognitive effort.

So, when somebody is listening and if he is listening consciously what he does is-- cognitive effort, I mean the approach to gain knowledge. Cognition involving primarily the sense of hearing reinforced by other senses. You hear and then you verify, isn't it? So, hearing first takes place leading to understanding and once you have understood then you realize this was worth listening. When perceptive listening is inspired by a sincere desire to understand it becomes more than a sensory process.

It is also an attitude well expressed as a listening spirit. That is why listening as a habit should be developed and listening has been considered to be a skill. Now here you can see in this picture how a person who is a lawyer, he is actually discussing a case. And now what the judge will do judge is--- the judge is listening and not only the judge but all the other people who are sitting there are also listening.

Needless to mention that the lawyer of the opposite party or the other party also cannot contradict unless and until he listens that is why we say with a conscious cognitive effort which primarily involves the sense of hearing reinforced by other senses leading to understanding and then finally when this listening has taken place, something out of it will come. Now what are the various effective listening situations?

Of course, as I have been saying that in order to become a good speaker you need to develop the habit of speaking. There are several public speaking situations which actually expect a speaker to be conversant with and that can be developed only when they take into consideration these situations. The very first is conversation. Now what happens in a conversation? It is conversation, I mean, two people talking to each other not everyone is a good conversationalist.

You will often find that on several occasions while you are having a journey and if you do not break the ice the other person also wants to break the ice and there cannot be any communication. But if you find the other person to be a bit accessible then you start conversing with him, talking to him. And both the people talk to each other and then after this journey is over perhaps you come to a sort of friendship.

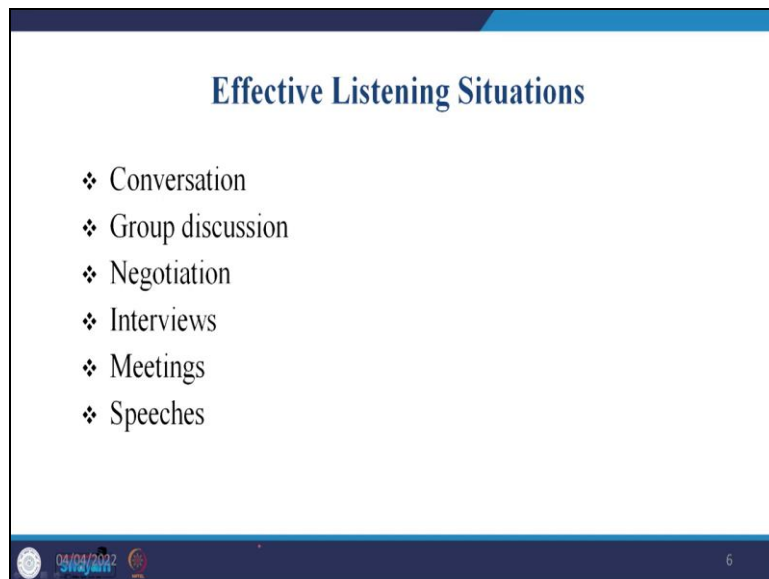
How did this happen, my dear friend only because of this listening? Two people listened to each other and then they exchanged and finally it actually resulted in a sort of bonding that

may continue for a long time. Even in another situation like group discussion many of you might get chances to participate in a group discussion I have also come across many such situations where the students say that sir I wanted to say something but I could not.

And I often tell them that perhaps you did not pay attention to what the other person had to say. My dear friends, in a group discussion or in a debate unless and until you hear, you cannot score a point over the other person. Because what you are supposed to do-- you are supposed to contradict the other persons' views. The same is true when you are in a group discussion, of course, it is a sort of cooperative learning process.

Where there are so many people they talking to each other but unless and until they hear each other or listen to each other, how can they contradict and how can new ideas come to be considered. The question here is that in every group discussion you will find that you have people from diverse backgrounds and they bring forth diverse ideas. Unless and until a person develops the habit of listening perhaps one will not be able to understand what the other person said.

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The same is true of a negotiation, you will find that at a negotiating table also you have to listen very carefully to each and every word that your negotiating partner is speaking. And then you also because when you are listening to, you are half speaking only maybe you are talking to yourself but when the real time comes then you are going to share your own views. The same is true of interviews. Imagine that in one of the interviews you were asked something. But since you're over excited, over enthusiastic and you did not pay any heed to

the words of the interviewers will you be able to respond to what was asked? You will not be, that is why even in a situation like interview, you have to listen to whether it is a job interview or it is actually an interview for data collection or some other form of interview in every situation you have to listen to.

Then comes meetings. Have you never found some people not speaking anything in the meeting? Either they had decided not to contribute anything or they were lost in their own thoughts. They were not mentally present at the spot and that is why they did not pay any heed to what was being transpired in the meeting. So, in every effective or successful meeting listening plays a very important role.

And the last one is speeches. All those people who are actually eager to become good speakers should listen to. So, develop the habit of listening, listening to different sorts of speakers sometimes environmentalists, sometimes scientists, sometimes literature people, sometime poets, sometimes motivational speakers. And when you listen to all these variety of people, you will also some way or the other will also be effective, will also be affected in a manner that next time when you are going to speak. You may perhaps be able to copy some of what the other person was using. So, are these situations not important enough to induce you into the lost art of listening? It is and this listening is going to help you in more than one ways, my dear friend. What are actually the advantages of listening. The first is as I gave you one example of the lack of communication or listening while I mentioned the lines from T. S. Eliot, fine?


My dear friends it is actually a sort of strained relationship and this relationship results only when the two parties have not listened nor bothered to each other, fine? So, listening actually helps us build trust and strong relationships that is why now it is.

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## Advantages of Listening

- Builds trust and strong relationships
- Prevents you from missing important information
- Enables identification or anticipation of problems
- Empowers the individual as a leader
- Completes the Communication



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In every organization, in every forum listening is very important and if you really want to play your part well and want to continue or exist longer, you have to develop the habit of listening. Now unless and until a person listens, no? You have often heard people saying I have heard this about this person. So, you have heard but in order to verify it, you will have to listen to other people also because that will provide you a scope to prevent you from some of the missing links of an episode of an event of an occasion.

Listening also enables identification or anticipation of problems. Unless you hear why nowadays organizations are spending a lot of money inviting experts from different fields and want their own people to listen to because maybe they can come across some new experience, maybe they can come to identify some problems in the talk that was delivered by the experts from other fields. Listening actually can also enable a person an individual to emerge as a leader.

You might have often seen that all these people who are great leaders have actually to listen to the grievances of the people, requests of the people, demands of the people and they can listen to and that is why in the years to come, they develop themselves as an experienced leader because they have listened to both the sides. Not only that even in a legal case you will find that how both the party's arguments are being listened to by the judge before the judgment is given before the judgment is awarded.

Listening is actually one of the major ingredients which help a communication process to be complete, my dear friend. So, listening has a lot to pay in the present day world where

nothing can succeed unless and until we develop the habit of listening. As I say no communication is complete without listening, does that not mean that listening is also a form of communication but what sort of listening? Not passive listening, what do you mean by passive listening?

When you are hearing perhaps you are developing only a sort of passive listening. You hear. no doubt. but you do not pay attention to. What you have to do today is to develop a sort of active listening habit. What is this active listening habit? Active comes from the word act.

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**Listening is also Communicating**

- Listening is the ability to accurately receive and interpret messages in the communication process.
- Listening is key to all effective communication. Without the ability to listen effectively, messages are easily misunderstood.

**Active Listening**



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So, listening is the ability to accurately receive. As I said the various stages you not only receive you actually filter and you filter and then interpret messages in the communication process. We have in some of the lectures discussed how communication process gets complete. It gets complete only with the feedback and this feedback whether in oral communication or in written communication. When the receiver receives and when the receiver responds to but the receiver can respond to only when the receiver has been able to understand or listen.

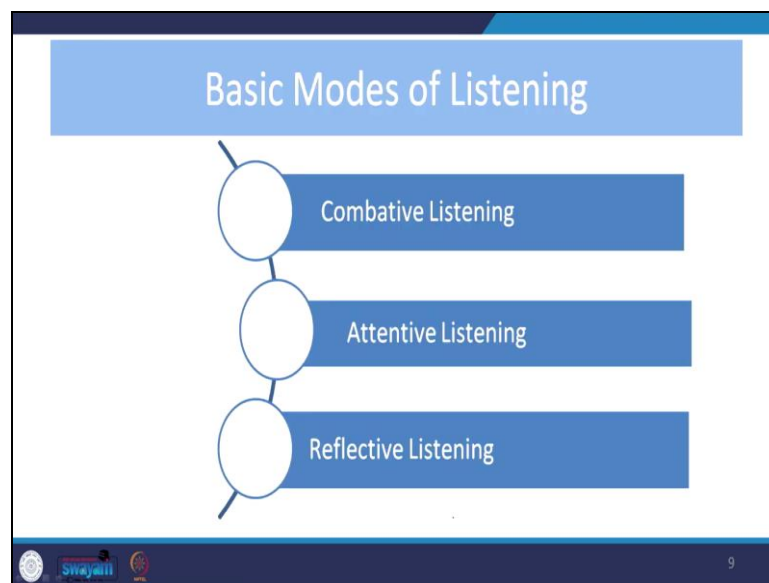
Listening is actually the key to all effective communication and without developing this ability to listen effectively messages are easily misunderstood. There have been many cases, no? There have been many cases where listening has not been made proper use of. Let me tell you one very important story which many of you might be knowing if you might have read or come across *The Merchant of Venice*. When in *The Merchant of Venice*, when the bond was signed by Antony, Antony perhaps could not have thought of what will happen.

But it so happens that Antony's bond is forfeited since Anthony was not able to pay the money in time. Now there was a crisis and this crisis was for Bassanio who was actually to marry Portia. Fine? To marry Portia and then what happened now. Portia here I am trying to make use of invention that I have discussed in the previous lecture. Now Portia knows everything and how she has to turn the tables.

So, she made a lot of research and then perhaps she could find other there was some gap and when Portia came dressed as a judge then when the case was opened Portia told Shylock --- Get ready with your scales. Because according to the bond a pound of flesh was to be cut off from Antonio's body, a pound of flesh. Now you see how Portia could invent the message that she was going to argue. She says-- get ready with your scales according to the bond you actually deserve a pound of flesh to be cut off from Antonio's body.

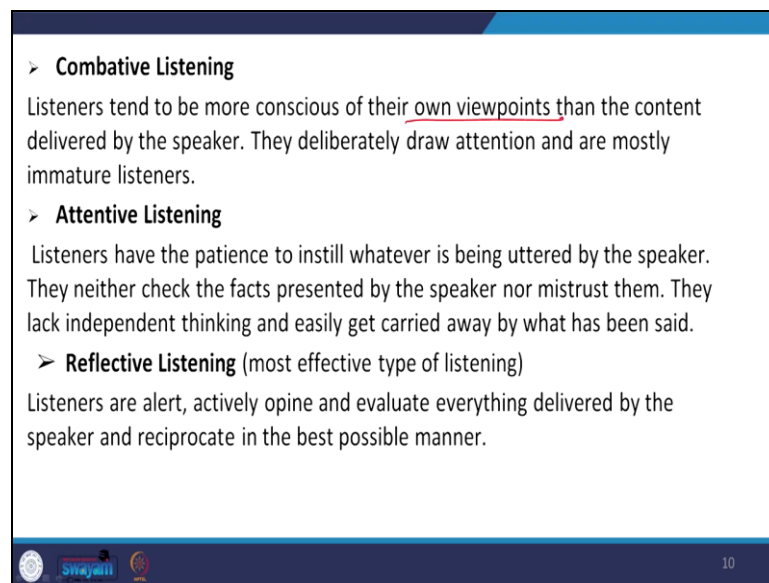
So, cut upon the flesh from Antonio's body but let not a drop of blood be shed. Now think of it. This was actually a sort of rhetoric no doubt but then there was an invention and you know perhaps Antonio could not have thought of. So, what he now listens is actually an act of invention, my dear friends. A person why I am giving this example is a person who is well versed in the act of listening can also at a critical juncture make use of what he or she might have heard to different speakers to different cases. So, without the ability to listen effectively messages can be easily misunderstood.

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Now there are three basic modes of listening all I am trying to drive home is that listening is a process and this process as a habit has to be developed. How, the first is combative listening then attentive listening and then reflective listening. Now how can we differentiate between all these three. Now when somebody is in a combative listening it comes from the word combat means to struggle or to rebel to oppose.

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- **Combative Listening**  
Listeners tend to be more conscious of their own viewpoints than the content delivered by the speaker. They deliberately draw attention and are mostly immature listeners.
- **Attentive Listening**  
Listeners have the patience to instill whatever is being uttered by the speaker. They neither check the facts presented by the speaker nor mistrust them. They lack independent thinking and easily get carried away by what has been said.
- **Reflective Listening** (most effective type of listening)  
Listeners are alert, actively opine and evaluate everything delivered by the speaker and reciprocate in the best possible manner.

So, listeners in such a situation tend to be more conscious of their own viewpoints. So, we have a view point I agree to this view, I hold this belief. So, when somebody is speaking I do not listen because it actually combats my views it actually rebels my views and he is not ready to listen to the content which is delivered by the speaker. They deliberately draw attention and are mostly immature listeners. So, a combative listener is an immature listener. He does not pay any attention to what is being said rather he is thinking his conscious, of his own idea only of his own belief only. The next is attentive listening--- here one person as the word goes attentive, one has to be very attentive listeners who have the patience to listen whatever is being uttered by the speaker. Every word of the speaker has to be listened to in such a situation. They neither check the facts presented by the speaker and they also do not mistrust them, misbelieve them, disbelieve them.

They are such persons those who are attentive listeners. They actually lack independent thinking and they are easily swayed, easily carried away by whatever has been said. Maybe at times it is the sort of rhetoric that the person applies and this rhetoric actually blinds him. And the last is reflective listening reflective. So, from the word reflection. This is actually the most challenging, of course, and the most rewarding, the most beneficial sort of speaking.

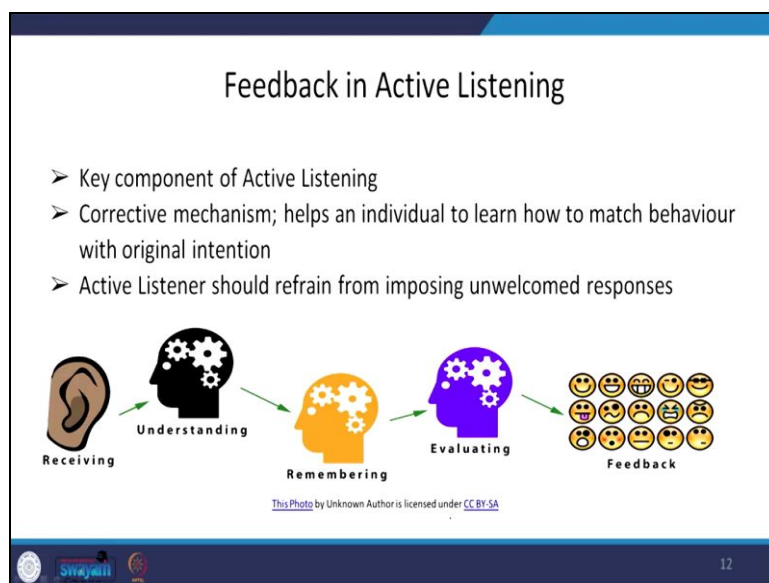
Listeners in such a situation are alert. They actually actively opine, they put forth their own opinion, they are every now and then conscious.

And they evaluate everything that is delivered by the speaker and what they do is---- they reciprocate in the best possible manner. So, what sort of a listener we expect everyone to be we expect ourselves to become a sort of reflective speaker. Because reflective speaker not only can verify the facts but then he can also put forth his own opinion and he can also share at times, he may react also, but then this sort of reaction is just for a sort of confirmation, my dear friend.

There are certain degrees of active listening, you know. So, when somebody tries to become an active listener what he does is---- when the other person speaks not only does he perceive, pays attention but then he remembers and then he, at times, reacts and repeats the same sort of message, fine. So, whatever is being spoken by the speaker is being paraphrased by these active listeners. He paraphrases it and finally he reflects it by perceiving and he can also give it his own words but then by this time he has become an adept listener.

Now one might also think that his feedback is also essential in listening, yes. There are many situations when a public speaker is speaking whether it is in an open say speech or in a classroom you will find the speaker actually tries to gather the feedback. There are several ways of gathering the feedback. So, if somebody is an active listener he provides a sort of key component in the overall process of the communication.

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So, feedback is a key component of active listening and there is a sort of corrective mechanism. So, it actually corrects something which has been spoken wrongly. So, an active listener only can correct them and it can help an individual to learn how to match behaviour with original intention. Sometimes you will find that there are many people who simply want to impede the flow of a speaker's communication but such people are actually a damage, fine?




But then there are some people who simply try to see that their listening behaviour matches with their proper intention. Active listener should always try to restrict or restrain themselves from imposing unwelcomed responses. Now here you can find how you know the receiver fine receiver will have to develop understanding and he develops understanding then naturally he will remember and then he will evaluate and finally he will provide the feedback.

So, listening is a very key process of communication it is actually also an important component of learning. The more you listen, you are going to gather more knowledge. Think of those people who are not able to read and write, so they actually develop the habit of having knowledge only through listening fine. In earlier days when we did not have all these facilities we used to listen to. Now, we have different facilities available you know and that is why we can listen to a live lecture you can see a program and you can get a lot of facts from that. A child if we take it in the context of a child you will find the child is not able to speak initially but the child actually tries to learn the sounds and how through listening is not it? So, through listening the child learns to develop the sort of communication, of course, there are several stages.

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## Advantages of Listening

- Listening is an essential element of learning.
- Child learns sounds before s/he learns to write.
- Linguists believe language is not taught but caught.
- Listening benefits the speaker as well as the listener.



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Practices of language or linguists fine: So, the linguists believe that language cannot be taught but it can be caught. Say for example, when you are learning some pronunciation what happens if you simply go by its spelling maybe you are not able to get the proper pronunciation. So, for an effective speaker when he or she is learning the art of speaking he also should devote some time in listening to the standard pronunciations because that will help him and that will help him catch.

So, language cannot be taught but language can be caught. Listening benefits not only the speaker but also the listener. So, listening has a dual advantage it helps the speaker it also helps the listener. So, it is both ways my dear friend. But of course at times you will come across different sorts of impediments are there obstacles are there which actually can destroy the beautiful art of listening and what are they? They are quite a good in number we cannot discuss all of them but you will find pre-judging.

So, when a listener judges the speaker beforehand by looking at his appearance, by looking at the way he comes. So, you just. So, pre-judging is an important impediment that actually stops the listening process. Then ambiguity. So, somebody says something and you are trying to relate it in a very ambiguous manner fine. So, somebody has a good intention but you are actually referring to it or contextualizing it in a different context, naturally you are not allowing a proper listening.

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**Impediments to Listening**

- Prejudging
- Ambiguity
- Illusion
- Rigidity
- Abstracting
- Slant
- Premature evaluation
- Hurried conclusions
- Cognitive dissonance

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Then comes illusion. We have already mentioned in the third lecture how the biggest illusion about communication is that it has taken place and how does it help because at times you simply think that what the other person says because you do not have trust in the other person and that is why there is a sort of illusion. So, illusion will also allow you not to listen. Rigidity what I know is the ultimate reality what this person will tell me. So, in a way you are going to just destroy the beautiful art of listening. Then abstracting, then slanting. Whatever is being said by a person you simply try to slant, you simply to pass it off, fine? Not paying any attention. And sometimes you actually make a premature evaluation of the speaker, fine? I have heard him several somebody told me I have heard from several quarters that he is now he is great bore, he does not speak well. You have heard you have not listened to. So, you need to develop the habit of listening.

And then sometimes without taking into consideration everything you provide a hurried conclusion and this hurried conclusion may actually bring a sort of worry and you will not be able to listen. And then there are cognitive dissonance fine cognitive dissonances knowledge you do not have the knowledge proper of a particular area or a particular field but then that actually puts you at a sort of discriminatory attitude.


And develops in you a sort of rebellious attitude and you do not listen to my dear friend. But then there are ways which can be adopted in order to become an effective listener.

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### How to listen effectively?

- ✓ Pay full attention and respect.
- ✓ Listen actively - one thing at a time.
- ✓ Focusing on the message than the details.
- ✓ Look out for evidence supporting the main message.
- ✓ Develop note-taking skills.
  
- ✗ Concentrate not on the speaker's delivery or appearances, but the speech.
- ✗ Avoid presumptions and judgements.
- ✗ Avoid distractions - both physical and mental.

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Here, I have provided other ways how to listen. So, when you are trying to become an active listener please pay full attention and respect I hope you are listening to me you are not slanting me, my dear friend. Listen actively you have to listen actively one thing at a time. When you are listening please let your attention be concentrated you should not start thinking of something else. Focusing on the message then the details fine while you are listening listen to the content do not think about any other thing.

I mean external are disturbances which are going to harm you. External reputation of the person. Look out for evidence supporting the main message when a person speaks he has actually made it very systematic and all you can do is are to provide him the respect that he deserves. And if you really want to develop listening as a habit, you should also develop the habit of note- taking. The certain things that could be avoided and those are concentrate not on the speakers deliver your appearance but the content.

Do not have any pre- judgments do not have any distractions if you really want to listen. My dear friends, we have already discussed that listening is a key component in public speaking, and in order to become a good speaker, one has to have developed a sort of listening and that is active listening, perceptive listening not a passive listening. I have already discussed in the beginning or referred to in the beginning that all hearing is not listening.

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*“Hearing is through ears, but listening is through the mind.”*

Thank You



And let me also end this talk by saying or by having an anonymous quote which says—  
“Hearing is through ears but listening is through the mind.” We hear a lot but what we have to do is we have to develop the habit of listening. I do hope you will mind what I have discussed today and will try to develop the habit of active listening in order to become an active speaker and influencer speaker at large. With this I come to the end of this talk, thank you very much for your active listening. Have a nice day.