

Listen to Learn: Boosting Word Power through Active Listening

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Abstract : *The process of communication is a two way process where the sender and the receiver play significant roles in determining the success of the process. But it has been observed that the receiver's role is more significant as he/she is the listener. An active listener not only makes the communication process vibrant and interactive but can also learn many things through the process. The listener's response is of utmost importance especially when the listener is the learner. In this paper, I have highlighted the importance of active listening in boosting the word power of a learner. Vocabulary enhancement happens only if the listener understands and recognizes word, accent and speech patterns. Understanding is created through attentive listening and if retained appropriately, one can choose the right words to communicate his/her intentions correctly. A good listener is bound to become a good orator, which is of utmost importance in today's corporate scenario.*

Listening involves mentally participating in a conversation or lecture for the purpose of comprehending what the speaker is communicating. Listening is the most vital component of the communication process because response by the receiver is the parameter to judge the success of communication, wherein understanding is created in the mind of the receiver. In the process of learning, the learner's dynamic cooperation is required. Often when a misunderstanding occurs, it is attributed to lack of communication, which most of the time implies that whoever was delivering the message did not do an effective job. But then, what about the other component, the listener. Listening consists of the roles, receivers play in the communication process, which includes attending, perceiving, interpreting, assessing and responding.

An active listening skill is an essential mentoring skill. One of the most common mistakes which mentors can make is confusing "Hearing and Listening". Hearing is merely noting that someone is speaking. Listening however is making sense of what is heard and requires the individual to constantly pay attention, interpret and retain or remember what is being heard. A passive listener is like, a tape recorder. If the speaker is providing a clear message, the listener will probably get most of what is said, but understanding and comprehension may not be complete. Enhancing vocabulary and boosting word power can be achieved only through active listening and then consciously using it in speech and writing. Active listening requires the listener to hear the words and identify the feelings associated with the words.

We listen to instructions, briefings, reports, speeches; if we listen poorly, we are not equipped with the information we need. Careful, informative listening is crucial because only then the information can be retained and reiterated. The key variables related to informative listening are:

VOCABULARY: The precise relationship between vocabulary and listening has never been determined. But if one has a good knowledge of words, his understanding of the conversation will be better.

CONCENTRATION: Sometimes, listeners divide their attention between two competing stimuli. Listener may be preoccupied with something & fails to concentrate on the message.

MEMORY: Memory is an especially crucial variable for informative listening; you cannot process information without bringing memory into play. Without memory of concepts & ideas one cannot understand the meaning of messages.

Active listening can accelerate the learning process and boost the vocabulary of a person which in turn can make him a good speaker. Each person, can learn new information about topics, ideas and people. Listen for the meaning beyond the words and the context of communication. As an active listener, one should interpret and analyze what one hears in order to understand both the explicit as well as implicit meaning of the oral message. Inferring the meaning of unfamiliar words from contextual or internal clues and drawing inferences and conclusions from the speech is an important

aspect of active listening. Students can be mentored to imbibe active listening skills which can in turn help them improve their vocabulary skills. Retention is one very important aspect of active listening. Attentive listening helps the listener to retain everything in the memory stage and use it later in speech and writing. Appropriate choice of words to convey the message clearly can be done.

SPEECH DECODING

Speech decoding is an integral part of Listening Comprehension. It involves sound perception and recognition. Word recognition and accent recognition is an important aspect of speech decoding.

Sound Perception and Recognition

Verbal messages can be decoded precisely if one has the capacity to perceive and recognize speech sounds and sound patterns accurately and also understand the way sounds combine to form syllables and utterances. The listener has to be attentive to the sounds he/she hears because any lapse or inattention may lead to miscommunication or misunderstanding. There may be the barrier of competing sounds from the adjoining frame of reference, which may interfere with concentration and if the listener is not careful, he/she may not perceive the sounds accurately.

Word Recognition

Speech decoding also involves the ability to recognize words accurately, understand the meaning of words and in what context they are being used. It also means to identify discourse markers and attention signals.

Accent Recognition

To decode a verbal message, one has to recognize stress and intonation patterns. One needs to identify false starts, hesitations and turn taking in a conversation, discussion or other transactions involving more than one speaker.

Active listening requires conscious efforts on one's part and demands concentration, involvement and responsibility. Active listening is interactive and productive. It facilitates proper interaction and produces new understanding. It promotes effective listener-speaker relationship. In classroom teaching, students who listen actively, pick up words and understand their usage. They can retain it in their memory and use it in speech processes like presentations, talks, seminars etc.

One can enrich his/her vocabulary more through actively listening to orators, news readers, teachers etc. and then using it in speech and writing. Listening to expert speakers, understanding the context in which the words are used, accent, intonation, pronunciation etc., can improve communication skills, as it boosts word power.

Most of the time, students do not have a systematic approach to listening. They may be unable to understand a lecture, a seminar or a discussion. They may suffer from lack of concentration, boredom, ineffective listening and poor concentration. As one has to ensure high degree of understanding and remembrance, one should follow a systematic approach to listening. Listening effectiveness largely depends on an efficient method of listening which has been already discussed earlier. In order to take full advantage of listening to eminent scholars, one has to apply appropriate listening strategies for better comprehension. Retaining the matter is another important aspect of listening. Apart from active listening techniques one can participate in group interaction, seminars, discussion sessions and so on to improve their word power and delivery techniques.

In today's era of team management and decision making, value of good listening skills cannot be undermined. Communicative goals are achieved only if team members are good listeners. Finally active listening meets the ego-centric needs of listeners by enhancing their status as successful "communicators".

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