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COMSTD-6

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Listening

As human being, communication is very important. People are social being, they cannot live by themselves. They need to communicate with others in order to survive. People communicate through speaking and listening to get and share information and also, fulfill their social needs. However, in terms of communication, listening and speaking are the most essential aspects. Listening and speaking always happen at the same time because the process of communication is like a transaction in which the speaker speaks and the receiver receives it by listening to it. That kind of communication is called Transactional Communication; it is a good and also, the appropriate way to communicate because when someone speaks, the other listen, but if and only if, the listeners are active. So, it is like giving someone a chance to speak and respecting him or her by staying quiet and focusing on what he or she said. In the practice, people tend to do more speaking than listening. They daydream when people talk or they do not pay enough attention to the speaker. In fact, when you speak, you do not learn as much as you listen to something. When you speak you just tell what is in your mind, share your opinion, your feelings, etc. On the other hand, when you actively listen to someone, you will learn what other's thought, explanation, and then you will get thoughts and ideas that you could compare with and improve yourself. In other words, active listening is a type of listening where the listener actively

listen when the speaker talk and have evaluated the message before responding the speaker (“What is listening” par. 2).

There are five process of active listening: receiving, attending, understanding, responding, and remembering.

The first process of the active listening is receiving. It is the first and basic process of the listening. Receiving is the process to hear the message from the sender. The Receiving process also includes selecting the information you are going to hear. The receiving process does not require something special. Basically, all people can do the receiving process without any difficulties except those who have disabilities with hearing. So, if you can hear, then you can do the receiving process. There are several problems in the receiving process, they are: the receiver do not want to hear the message and the other one is the receiver could not catch the message due to hearing disability.

The second process is attending. According to Randy Fujishin in his *Creating Communication*, “Attending is paying attention to some of the sounds you receive and disregarding or filtering out the others.”(Fujishin, Randy p. 77). It is continuing the process from receiving to attending where its focus is on thinking after hearing. For example, you sent me an e-mail, and I see it in my inbox, but I need to do more. I need to open your message so that I can know what your message is. Likewise, after you hear the message from the speaker, you need to open your mind and let the words enter, it is not that you hear and then you just leave it as if you never hear it. You have to attend the message in order to be an active listener. However, even though people receive the message, they do not always attend it. They hear it but, they might

think of something else. They are faced with choices, for instance, you were in a classroom where the teacher is giving an explanation. You want to pay attention but, your friend who sits behind you start telling funny stories. At this moment, you are faced with choices. The choices are either you choose to ignore your friend and listen to the teacher or listen to the funny stories and forget about the class. Here are the factors that affect people make the choices.

Selectivity of attention. We direct attention to certain things to prevent an information overload. A common example makes the point. Suppose you are attempting to read a book and watch TV at the same time. Although some people claim they can do this, actually both activities suffer—and usually one more than the other. The material that is most engaging or interesting will attract your attention. At other times, something may interrupt or disturb your attention. Selectivity of attention explains why you “perk up” or pay attention when something familiar to you, such as your hometown or your favorite hobby, is mentioned. In fact, you may have been listening intently to a conversation when someone in a different conversation mentions your name. Immediately, the focus of your attention shifts to the conversation in which your name was mentioned.

Strength of attention. Attention is not only selective; it possesses energy, or strength. Attention requires effort and desire. In the example of reading a book and watching TV, the receiver (reader/watcher) directed his or her primary attention toward either the book or the TV. Complete attention can be given to only one stimulus at a time and necessary attention to only a limited number of stimuli at the same time. If we spend too much energy on too many stimuli, we soon will not be paying attention to any of them. We are all familiar with aircraft accidents that were caused at least in part by controllers in the tower having to process too much information. Consider also how we can be so attentive to a newspaper, a TV program, a personal

computer, a sports event, or another individual that we are oblivious to things around us. Watch a young couple in love sometime: You'll see a good example of intensity, or strength of attention. Still another measure of attention strength is the length of time that the memory of something continues to influence us. I still remember vividly the baptism of my first grandchild, the first major league baseball game I attended, and the first time I kissed my wife—not necessarily in that order, of course. Strength of attention is important.

Sustainment of attention. Just as attention is determined by selectivity and strength, it is affected by time of sustainment. Our attention wanes, and this fact is important to an understanding of listening. For example, we can listen to some public speakers far longer than we can listen to others. Duration may depend on the subject, the setting, the way the speech is packaged, and on the speaker's delivery. But no matter how articulate and skilled the speaker, or how interesting the content, our attention finally ends. If for no other reason, the human body requires sleep or attention to other bodily needs. The mind can only pay attention for as long as the body can sit still. Overall, Selectivity, strength, and sustainment determine attention.

The third process is, understanding. In active listening, Receiving and attending are prerequisites or the foundation for the rest of the active listening process. After receive and attend the message, we need to understand it. Despite you receive and attend the message, you might not understand it. Understanding is an important and basic step wherein you can analyze about the exact situation. At some point, people misunderstand each other while communicating. It is occurred because of the high expectations and failure to get the point. But the major reason for not understanding the message from the sender is probably something else. It is the words the sender used and the manner in which he/she arranged them. Neither of sender and receiver is

necessarily “wrong” because both the sender and receiver have different perception of the words. The sender attached one meaning to those words, and the receiver attached another. So, people communicate effectively with each other is only as we share meanings for the symbols—verbal or nonverbal—that we are using. (Kline, A. John, par 4)

There are 2 symbols, verbal and nonverbal. *Verbal symbols*. Verbal communication means communicating through the use of words, whether spoken or written. Two barriers obstruct our understanding of verbal communication.

The first barrier, *the same words mean different things to different people*. This barrier is a common one, and it may be experienced whenever any two people attempt to communicate. For example, a friend tells me he will come over in five minutes. For him, five minutes means “soon”—perhaps any time in the next half hour. I, on the other hand, assume it as five minutes. Five minutes means five minutes. Then, *the second barrier is Different words sometimes mean the same thing*. These two barriers same words meaning different things and different words meaning the same thing can be overcome if you realize the following fact: *Meanings are not in words, meanings are in people*. We listen more effectively when we consider the message in relation to its source. Good listeners always consider who the sender of the message is. Knowing something about the sender can help you understand the message.

The second symbol is nonverbal symbols. Nonverbal symbols can transmit more information than verbal symbol does. We communicate nonverbally through action factors and vocal factors. Each suggests a barrier to listening.

Barrier #1: Misinterpretation of the action. Eye contact, gestures, and facial expression are action factors that affect the meaning we attach to a message. For that matter, any movement or action carries meaning. When someone walks quickly away from a conversation or taps a

pencil on the desk during a conversation, we may conclude that the person is in a hurry or is bored. Our conclusions may or may not be correct.

Barrier #2: Misinterpretation of the voice. The quality, intelligibility, and variety of the voice affect the listener's understanding. Quality refers to the overall impression the voice makes on others. Listeners often infer from the voice whether the speaker is happy or sad, fearful or confident, excited or bored. Intelligibility (or understandability) depends on such things as articulation, pronunciation, and grammatical correctness. But variety is the spice of speaking. Variations in rate, volume, force, pitch, and emphasis are some of the factors that influence our understanding of the speaker's message.

Receiving, attending, and understanding are all crucial if effective listening occurs, for communication can accurately be defined as the sharing or understanding of meaning. Often, however, the steps of responding and remembering are part of the listening process. Responding and remembering are indicators of listening accuracy.

The listening process may end with understanding, since effective communication and effective listening may be defined as the accurate sharing or understanding of meaning. But a response may be needed—or at least helpful. And there are different types of responses.

1. Direct verbal responses. These may be spoken or written. After I have received, attended to, and understood the message you sent, I may respond verbally. If your message asked a question or sought my coordination, I might type a response on my computer and reply to you. Perhaps you requested that I call you or come to see you, in which case I do so. Or you might have asked me to write a position paper or think about an issue and give you some advice, in which case I might send a quick E-mail response indicating that I will get back to you later.

2. Responses that seek clarification. I may use E-mail to ask for additional information, or I may talk to you either on the telephone or face-to-face. I may be very direct in my request, or I may just say, “tell me more about it.”

3. Responses that paraphrase. I may say something like, “in other words, what you are saying is. . . .” A paraphrase gives the sender a chance to agree, or to provide information to clarify the message.

4. Nonverbal responses. Many times, a nonverbal response is all that is needed; indeed, it may even be the preferred type of response. The knowing nod of the head, an understanding smile, or a “thumbs up” may communicate that the message is understood.

Responding, then, is a form of feedback that completes the communication transaction. It lets the sender know that the message was received, attended to, and understood.

Finally, the last process of listening is remembering. Remembering is the process to memorize the message from the sender. It is not that we have to memorize the whole message. If we can at least remember the main idea or some few key words from the message, we have done the remembering process of listening. However, memorization of facts is not the key to good listening. Yet memory is often a necessary and integral part of the listening process. Some would go so far as to say, “if you can’t remember it, you weren’t listening.” This statement is often untrue. Long-term memory allows us to recall information and events hours, days, weeks—even years—later. You remember, for example, things that happened to you when you were growing up, songs you learned, people you knew. You may have been unaware of those memories for long periods of time, and then the right stimulus caused you to recall them.

In conclusion, listening is a process that will happen in every normal person. Listening is very important because the way human learn language is started from listening. For example, baby slowly learns to say words that his or her mother always says. During my research, I found that there are 5 processes of an active listening. Receiving, attending, understanding, responding, and remembering. First, receiving is the step where you hear and get the message. Attending is more likely to focus on what you heard. Understanding is to understand the message that you just heard, so it is not that you hear it and then you forget it, you have to understand it. Responding is the step where you respond to the person who sends the message, so let them notice that you are paying attention. The last one is remembering, remembering is the point where you memorize the message that you received. In order to be an active listener, remembering is important as well as the previous 4 steps. However, in the daily life, active listening rarely happens, as you can see in every class or presentation, not all students are paying attention. There will be some students who sleep, daydreaming, etc. I hope my research paper will help people to be an active listener or at least know how important it is to be an active listener.

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