The Power of Listening

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**Definition of Listening**

It is the active process in which one receives and responds to the message received. Receiving includes both spoken and unspoken messages and listening is the central subject studied in the field language and conversation analysis. Listening is the receiving of sounds through ears and are processed into words and sentences.

**Types of Listening**

Following are a few listening types along with their brief explanations

***Discrimination listening***

It is one of the most basic types of listening in which difference of the sounds is identified. In this type of listening, one learns to discriminate between sound of one’s own language and then he or she becomes able to discriminate within phonemes of foreign languages.

***Comprehension listening***

It is the type of listening in which sounds after being distinguished and are taken to the next stage (making sense of what is heard). This type of listening requires understanding lexicon of the words along with grasping the grammar rules and syntax in order to understand what one says.

***Critical listening***

In critical listening sounds are evaluated and judged so that opinion could be made about what is said. This type of listening also includes assessing weakness and strength so that the listener could agree or disagree with the statement (Tang, 2019, pp. 63-68). In this type, cognitive efforts and time is involved as the listener needs to analyze and relate words spoken by speaker.

***Biased listening***

In this type of listening, one only hears what he or she wants to hear and it is characterized with misinterpreting what speakers say, usually based on stereotypes.

***Empathic listening***

In this type of listening, the listener goes beyond other say or show and starts feeling what others feel while talking. In this type, the listener starts paying more attention to the emotional signals.

**Impact of Hearing and Listening**

It has been seen that when people don’t pay attention towards listening then they misinterpret things due to which confusion is created that ultimately and negatively affects interpersonal communication. Hearing is an involuntary action and while conversing, if more attention is paid towards unnecessary sounds heard, it may also affect the interpersonal communication as one would not be able to concentrate on what is important.

***For example***  
 When two individuals are talking to each other in a market place, their communication would get distorted easily if they did not pay required concentration on hearing and listening.

**Stages of Listening**

Listening process has five stages of listening which includes receiving, understanding, evaluating, remembering and responding.

***Receiving***

It is the stage in which the listener focuses on the message of the speaker. In this stage, the actual message is filtered for avoiding any confusion.

***Understanding***

It is the point at which one tries to learn about the meaning of the message, and that is not an easy thing to do. In this stage, background and context of the message is necessary for properly understanding the message (Geiman & Greene 2019, pp. 114-128).

***Remembering***

It is the stage that begins with listening, as if one remembers what is said, then he or she can listen more effectively.

***Evaluating***

In this stage, the message is evaluated or a judgment is made about what is said. Every listener evaluates the same message differently.

***Responding***

It is the stage which depicts a listener’s involvement and when one gives his or her feedback, so it is also known as feedback stage.

**Differences between Listening and Hearing**

Hearing is a simple act of perceiving any vibration, sound or wave through ears while on the other hand, listening means hearing a sound and then trying to understand what is said. Hearing could be involuntary, accidental and effortless but listening is voluntary, focused and intentional.

**Difference between Hearing and Listening**

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| --- | --- |
| Hearing is an ability | Listening is a skill |
| It is physiological act | It is psychological act |
| It involves receipt of message that is received through ears | It involves interpretation of message received through ears |

**Impact of Barriers on Interpersonal Communication**

Any hearing impairment or physical damages would affect interpersonal communication, likewise, as listening is a psychological process, if one would be thinking of other things while talking to a person, this would affect interpreting of the message which, therefore, affects interpersonal communication.

**Three Verbal and Non-verbal Cues**

***Verbal cues***

* Voice
* Sounds
* Grunting

***Non-verbal cues***

* Body language
* Eye contact
* Touch

**Conclusion**

Taking a look at the above discussion, it could be concluded that listening is one step ahead of hearing as it helps in building relations and empathy with others. The better one would listen, the better one would understand and respond accordingly. Listening attentively helps in grasping what one wants to make one understand. Unless one listens properly, one could not respond efficiently.

**References**

Geiman, K. L., & Greene, J. O. (2019). Listening and experiences of interpersonal transcendence. *Communication Studies*, *70*(1), 114-128.

Tang, K. N. (2019). Communication Skills of Business Leader. In *Leadership and Change Management* (pp. 63-68). Springer, Singapore.