



4

Listening Skills

The Theory of Listening

Active Listening is one of the communication skills that you will need to acquire here at Bunda College in order to succeed in your studies. Various skills relate to Active Listening; these include **note-taking, effective questioning, non-verbal communication** plus **semantic markers**. However, you will find that all these skills are relevant and necessary in other sections of this text, such as reading skills, study skills etc. In study skills for instance, you have covered some topics on note making.

Note taking is a crucial skill and one that we would encourage you to develop as early as possible in your studies here at Bunda. It is very much about listening actively as opposed to passively. This means making sense of what you are listening to at that particular point in time and keeping a record for yourself, a record that you can go back to later on, whether for revising for examinations or for making links with later parts of the course.

Effective Questioning is another important skill under Active Listening that you need to acquire here at Bunda in order to coordinate your study life and activities and the work of other people. Most of the times you need to know more of what other people are thinking, wanting, planning and you want to understand your lecturers' explanations thoroughly.

Nonverbal Communication is also one of the most important skills you need to master. It is comprised of various important elements, such as good posture that will help you to concentrate more on the speaker and avoid other distractions such as dozing, a talkative neighbour, etc. Likewise, it will give the speakers motivation to speak because they know you are interested; gesture a non-vocal bodily movement is intended to express meaning. Be aware of the gestures you show as you listen to others, such as nodding of the head, they help the speaker to know if you are following the speech or conversation. In addition, observe speakers' gestures, such as speech related gestures; they are used to emphasize the message that is being communicated; eye contact is the meeting of the eyes between two individuals. It is important to maintain eye contact with your lecturers and speakers, as eye contact has a positive impact on the retention and recall of information and may promote more efficient learning and finally, semantic markers, usually phrases that cue speakers' gestures. Active listening requires, taking full attention to even the small aspects, such as semantic markers. Small as they may appear, they play a very significant role as they point out to the speaker's meaning.

In order to benefit more during lectures and conversations in general, we require you to learn these skills and develop them as early as possible. In so doing, you will acknowledge how easy it will be for you to acquire the information you need to succeed in your studies here at Bunda. Active Listening requires the use of all these skills in every learning context, both in the classroom and outside. Nevertheless, there are obstacles and / barriers to active listening that you need to be aware of and know how to handle them when they arise.

In this chapter, you will learn about the skills that will help you become a successful active listener. These are introduced above and discussed in detail below.

OUTCOMES

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Distinguish types of listening.
- Apply the appropriate type of listening in a listening situation.
- Take comprehensive and accurate notes.
- Ask questions more creatively and open-ended.
- Observe speakers' nonverbal signals.
- Apply all necessary nonverbal skills in every listening situation.
- Maintain eye contact with conversational partners.
- Maintain good posture when listening to speakers.
- Recognize different types of barriers to active listening

WHAT IS ACTIVE LISTENING?

Active listening is a structured way of listening and responding to others. It focuses attention on the speaker. Active listening is intent to "listen for meaning". Active Listening encompass three major important points:

1. *Purpose*

When interacting, people often are not listening attentively to one another. They may be distracted, thinking about other things, or thinking about what they are going to say next, (the latter case is particularly true in conflict situations or disagreements).

Suspending one's own frame of reference and suspending judgment are important in order to attend fully to the speaker.

2. *Tactics*

It is important to observe the other person's behaviour and body language. Having the ability to interpret a person's body language allows the listener to develop a more accurate understanding of the speaker's words. Having heard, the listener may then paraphrase the speaker's words. It is important to note that the listener is not necessarily agreeing with the speaker—simply stating what was said. In emotionally charged communications, the listener may listen for feelings. Thus, rather than merely repeating what the speaker has said, the active listener might describe the underlying emotion ("You seem to feel angry" or "You seem to feel frustrated, is that because...?").

Individuals in conflict often contradict one another. This has the effect of denying the validity of the other person's position. Either party may react defensively, or they may lash out or withdraw. On the other hand, if one finds that the other party understands, an atmosphere of cooperation can be created. This increases the possibility of collaborating and resolving the conflict.

In the book *Leader Effectiveness Training*, Thomas Gordon states, "Active Listening is certainly not complex. Listeners need only restate, in their own language, their impression of the expression of the sender.... Still, learning to do Active Listening well is a rather difficult task..."

3. *Use*

Active listening is used in a wide variety of situations, including tutoring, medical workers talking to patients, HIV counselling, helping suicidal persons, management, counselling and journalistic settings. In groups, it may aid in reaching consensus. It may also be used in casual conversation to build understanding, though this can be interpreted as condescending.

The benefits of active listening include getting people to open up, avoiding misunderstandings, resolving conflict and building trust. In a medical context, benefits may include increased patient satisfaction, improving cross-cultural communication, improved outcomes, or decreased litigation.

TYPES OF LISTENING:

There are two major types of listening, informational and reflective.

1. *Informational Listening*

The process of informational listening focuses on the ability of an individual to understand a speaker's message. It is a huge part of everyday life, and failing to understand the concept of informational listening can be very detrimental to one's contribution to society, and indeed, detrimental to quality of life in general. Much of the listening people engage in on a regular basis, falls under the blanket of listening for information. In the office, people listen to their superiors for instructions about what they are to do. At school, students listen to teachers for information that they are expected to understand for quizzes and tests. In all areas of life, informational listening plays a huge role in human communication.

2. *Reflective listening*

This is a communication strategy involving two key steps: seeking to understand a speaker's idea, then offering the idea back to the speaker, to confirm the idea has been understood correctly. It attempts to "reconstruct what the client is thinking and feeling and to relay this understanding back to the client". Reflective listening is a more specific strategy than the more general methods of active listening. It arose from Carl Rogers' school of client-centred therapy in counselling theory.

When listening for information, you need to remember the purpose for which you are listening. This requires you to distinguish between the following subcategories of informational and reflective listening: discriminative, critical or evaluative, therapeutic or empathic, appreciative and self-listening.

Discriminative listening covers the conscious reception of all pertinent auditory and visual stimuli. This may include listening for comprehension where, basic efforts on the part of the listener to retain and understand a speaker's message are necessary.

Critical or evaluative listening describes situations where the listener makes judgments about the speaker's message. As such, critical listening often accompanies persuasive speaking. The critical listener attends closely to such matters as speaker and evidentiary source credibility and the structure of and support for the speaker's arguments.

In contrast, **therapeutic or empathic listening** emphasizes understanding a message from the speaker's perspective in situations where the speaker needs to be heard or talk

through an issue. In these moments, the listener provides the minimum necessary direction for the speaker's perspective to be clear. Counselling and psychology provide excellent exemplars of this type of listening.

Appreciative listening occurs when we listen for enjoyment, aesthetics, or sensory impressions, such as consuming a television sit-com or occupying ourselves with music.

Self-listening often gets neglected, but conscious engagement with one's own physical reactions, attitudinal biases and prejudices, or mental markers while listening comprises a helpful listening category. Such reflection mostly takes place in one's head, but still requires conscious application techniques similar to those one would apply while listening to the talk of another person.

Now that you understand what Active Listening is, it is time to look at the various skills that make up Active Listening; these include; note-taking, effective questioning and non-verbal communication. Let us look at these skills one by one.

Note-taking

Note taking is one of the active listening skills that you will need to acquire here at Bunda College in order to record accurately what you hear in lectures. However, you will find that this skill is relevant and necessary in other chapters of this text, such as reading skills, study skills etc. In study skills for instance, you have covered some topics on note making. It is important that you learn the difference between note making and note taking.

Note taking is a crucial skill and one that we would encourage you to develop as early as possible in your studies. It is very much about listening actively as opposed to passively. This means making sense of what you are listening to at that particular point in time and keeping a record for yourself, a record that you can go back to later on, whether for revising for examinations or for making links with later parts of the course. Therefore, taking notes does not imply simply taking things down more or less word for word, of what the speaker says. Rather, it is a selection and it needs to be organised and it will include the most important or interesting parts of the lecture that you have been listening to.

Active Listening requires concentration, you need to give all your attention to the lecturer and where appropriate, you have to summarize and reflect on what they say. You also need to be aware of the factors that may be personal and environmental that can interfere with your ability to receive and interpret signals. These may include, among other things, clarity of speech, noise outside the room and room temperature.

HOW TO TAKE NOTES⁴

Trying to get everything down is very time consuming. One way of both cutting down the time spent taking notes and keeping them to an appropriate length is to make use of symbols, shorthand and abbreviations. You might already know some, to which you can add others that you make up throughout your time as a student. We use a whole range of symbols and abbreviations some of which are reproduced right.

In addition, we use our own form of shorthand, which sometimes entails leaving out vowels or cutting off the end of words. This method is particularly effective where longer words are concerned. For example, concentrated becomes cone, advantage and disadvantage become adv. and disadv. respectively, and consequently becomes consq. Developing your own version that makes sense to you can be extremely time efficient and after a while it becomes a language of your own which flows from the pen easily.

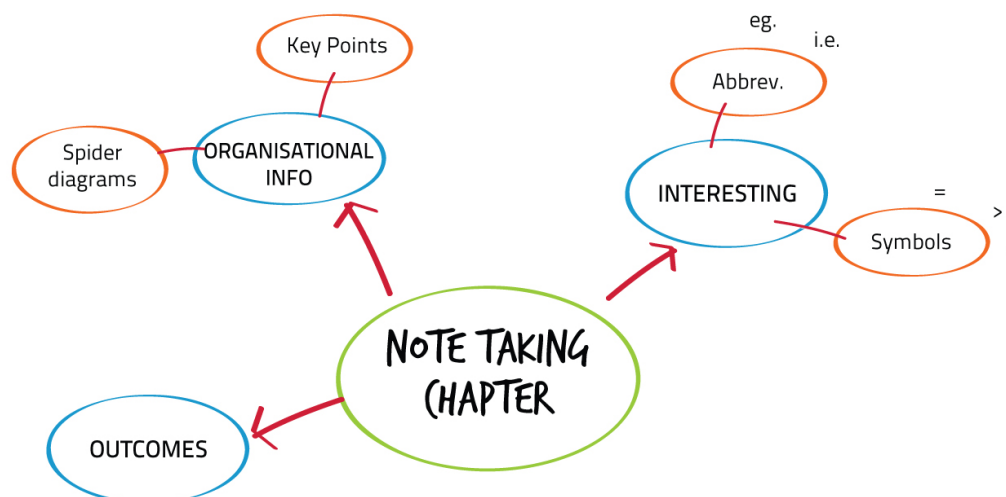
=	EQUALS
IN+	IN ADDITION
<	LESS THAN
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ie	THAT IS
//	IN PARALLEL TO
i.r.t.	IN RELATION TO
re	REGARDING
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→	LEADING TO/RESULTS IN

⁴ Adapted from OpenLearn (2009) Reading and Note Taking – Preparation for study: Open University. Accessed 2nd June 2009 at <http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/mod/resource/view.php?id=190358>. Copyrighted as CC-BY-NC-SA 2.0

HOW TO ORGANISE NOTES

Organising notes happens after the lecture, as soon as you find time. You can make notes in an organised way that is useful to you in several ways. Here at Bunda, we encourage you to use the Cornell Note Taking System (refer to Study Skills Chapter, Note Taking section), identify a list of key points and draw a diagram. Apart from using the Cornell Note Taking System to organise notes, you can use it during the actual process of taking notes from the lecturers. However, the following two strategies also work:

1. **Identify for yourself a list of key points;** probably no more than five or six, that is what we would imagine from an hour lecture. Then under each of those, you might put some subsidiary points or examples that illustrate what these main points are and so in that way you are organising your notes as you make them and when you come back to them, they are much easier to understand and they are much easier to remember later on.
2. **Draw a diagram.** You need to have a piece of paper on which you will draw circles or boxes and put some of the central questions or themes into the shapes. Then make links between ideas in one circle and another big idea in a different circle. You could have little subsidiary circles that make further links. (See diagram below). The emphasis is to identify some sort of pattern or organization.



In this section, the emphasis is on taking notes using your own words, using your own thoughts in that process, but it is also important that you keep reflecting on how you take notes. It is also important to develop a formula that works for you. As you keep on refining that process, you will realize that the notes you are taking towards the end of this course, are rather different from the notes you are taking now.

Activity



SELF STUDY ACTIVITY: Lecture Notes Evaluation

In order to check your progress in acquiring the note taking skill, you need to sit down and do some self-evaluation. Here are some activities that you can start with:

1. Take your notebooks and check your notes; whether you have incomplete sentences and instances where the logic in the sentence is lost.

2. After that, you should check how short your notes are. Your notes need to be short, because it will be easy for you to revise as you prepare for examinations, long notes are tedious.
3. While looking at your notes, ask yourself the following questions:
 - Do I use abbreviations and symbols when taking notes?
 - What formula do I use to organise my notes?
4. If you do not have a formula that you use to organise the notes, this probably means that you have not revisited your notes. Ask yourself; when was the last time I revisited my notes.

Activity



SEMINAR ACTIVITY: Comparisons

Take the notes that you evaluated above and this time, meet in your groups and do the following:

1. Compare the different ways each one has used to organise the notes.
2. Compare the central question or themes each one has extracted from the notes.
3. Compare if you have similar subsidiary points.
4. Debate on the issues in 2 and 3 and come up with the best central questions or themes and subsidiary points.
5. Write the central themes and subsidiary points individually in your notebooks. These are your main ideas from that lecture.

Note taking is one of the skills in active listening. It is a crucial skill and one that develops over time. In this section, among other things, you have learnt how to keep up with the lecturers' speed, by using abbreviations, taking the important parts of the lecture and avoid copying word for word. You have also learnt how to organise your notes using the Cornell Note Taking System, identification of the main points and drawing a diagram. It is very important to keep practicing using the ideas spelt out in this section in order to perfect your note taking skill. This will help you excel in your studies here at Bunda College.

Effective Questioning

As we wrestle with each new challenge in life, we ask others and ourselves a continuous stream of questions. Asking questions is one of the main ways that we try to get a grip on whatever is going on, but we are usually not very conscious of the quality of questions we ask. Asking questions is one of the important skills within Active Listening. Asking questions helps you to focus or concentrate more on what the speaker is saying; it helps you when making a summary of what you heard, when reflecting and interpreting the material. However, not all questions can help you get the information you are looking for. In this section, you will look at closed questions and open-ended questions and see which ones you need to attach great value. There are two major categories of questions:

CLOSED QUESTIONS

Closed questions are those that invite yes/no responses. People usually ask these types of questions but actually, they tend to shut people up rather than letting them open up.

Compare the following two questions:

1. "Did you like the food/movie/speech/doctor?"
2. "How did you like that food/movie/speech/doctor?"

The first one is an example of closed question. It requires you to answer either yes or no. The second one is an example of open-ended question and it will evoke a more detailed response than the first one.

Also, consider the difference between two versions of the same question, as each might occur in a conversation between two people in a close relationship:

1. "Well, honey, do you want to go ahead and rent that apartment we saw yesterday?"
2. "Well, honey, how do you feel about us renting that apartment we saw yesterday?"

The first version suggests a "yes" or "no" answer, it however, favours "yes" and does not invite much discussion. A person hearing such a question may feel pressured to reach a decision, and may not make the best decision.

Both versions imply a suggestion to rent the apartment, but the second question is much more inviting of a wide range of responses. Even if our goal is to persuade, we cannot do a good job of that unless we address our listener's concerns, and we would not understand those concerns unless we ask questions that invite discussion. When you are under time pressure, it is tempting to push people to make yes/no decisions. Nevertheless, pressing forward without addressing people's concerns has played a key role in many on-the-job accidents and catastrophes.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Open-ended questions are those that allow for a wide range and detailed responses. Using open-ended questions in your studies here at Bunda and life in general could help you in:

- solving problems in a way that meets more of everyone's needs,
- getting to know and understand subjects better and people around and
- creating richer and more satisfying conversations, both academic and social.

In the sub-section above you have come across two examples of open-ended questions. Below, are more examples of open-ended questions:

- "How comfortable are you with Plan B?"
- "How could I modify this proposal to meet more of your requirements?"
- "What kind of information do you need in order to go forward?"
- "What do you think about moving the office to the Aquaculture department?"
- "How are you feeling about all of this?"
- "How ready are you to ...?"

ASKING QUESTIONS MORE CREATIVELY

What sort of questions are truly worth asking? When we ask questions, we are using a powerful language tool to focus conversational attention and guide our interaction with others. Nevertheless, many of the questions we have learned to ask are totally fruitless and

self-defeating. Such as this question asked by a parent to a pregnant teen; “Why!? Why have you done this to us?” In general, it will be more fruitful to ask “how” questions about the future rather than “why” questions about the past, but there are many more creative possibilities as well. Of the billions of questions we might ask, not all are equally fruitful or illuminating; not all are equally helpful in solving problems together.

Learning to ask conscious, fruitful questions of others, of oneself, and about one’s situation or task, is an important part of the training of many professionals: psychotherapists, engineers, architects, mathematicians, doctors and others. All of these groups ask deeply penetrating questions. They do so in order to apply a body of knowledge to solve problems in a way that respects the unique elements of each new situation, person, piece of land, broken leg, canyon to be bridged, and so on.

QUESTION ASKING: A TOOL FOR EVERYONE!

The many examples of exploratory questions given by Donald Schön in *The Reflective Practitioners*, suggest that we use questions to make a kind of ‘space’ in our minds for things we do not know yet (in the sense of understand), or have not decided yet, or have not invented yet, or have not discovered yet. “Hmmm,” an architect might think, “how could we arrange this building so that it follows the contour of the land?” The answer will involve a complex mix of discovering, inventing, understanding and deciding, all pulled together partly by the creative power of the question.

This thinking process is easier to imagine when we use visual examples, such as designing a house to blend into a hillside (but not cause a landslide!). However, these same elements are present in all our problem-solving activities. Asking questions can allow us to start thinking about the unknown, because questions focus our attention, and provide a theme for continued exploration. Questions are like the mountain climber’s hook-on-the-end-of-a-rope: we throw the hook into the unknown, and we pull ourselves into the future. However, we need to learn how and where to throw, so that we pull ourselves into a better future.

Asking conscious, creative and exploratory questions is not just for professionals; it is for all of us as students. We are each engaged in the process of trying to build a better life, a better student, a better family, a better workplace, a better world, etc. We can apply in our studies some of the styles of creative questioning that engineers use to build better bridges, psychotherapists use to help their clients and negotiators use to reach agreements.

As far as we know, there is no straightforward set of rules about how to ask questions, which are more helpful or more tuned to the needs of a particular situation. However, you can get an intuitive sense of how to do it by studying a wide range of creative questions. The seminar activity below will give you a chance to try out some of your best questions ever asked.

Activity



SELF STUDY ACTIVITY:
Open Ended Questions

In order to practice and gain success in the skill of writing open-ended questions we would like you to complete the following tasks:

1. Take each of these examples of open-ended questions and rewrite each question as an open-ended question that includes some content from your life:
 - “How comfortable are you with Plan B?”
 - “How could I modify this proposal to meet more of your requirements?”
 - “What kind of information do you need in order to go forward?”
 - “What do you think about moving the office to the Aquaculture department?”
 - “How are you feeling about all of this?”
 - “How ready are you to ...?”

Activity



SEMINAR ACTIVITY:
Comparisons

The list of questions presented below contains the most intense and creative questions we have been able to find, drawn from the works of many deep question-askers. Next to each question in the table below, we have given the field in which the question was encountered.

- In your groups, take each question on the list and imagine a situation in your life in which you might ask that question. (In real life, it works better if you let people know what kind of conversation you want to have, before you start a conversation that includes challenging questions or intimate inquiries.)
- As a group brainstorm on possible situations then,
- Each member of the group should come up with their own answers,
- Compare your answers and appreciate the similarities and differences that may have been generated.

Question	Source Fields	When and where you could ask these questions in your own life
1. How does this feel to me?	Gestalt therapy and general psychotherapy.	
2. What (am I/are you) experiencing right now?		
3. How could I have done that differently? How could you have done that differently?	General psychotherapy	
4. What could (I / you) learn from this... (situation, mistake, painful experience)?		
5. What kind of explanations do I give myself when bad events happen?	Martin Seligman’s research on learned helplessness, optimism and explanatory style 6.	

6. How easy would it be for me to view this difficult situation as temporary, specific to one location and partly the result of chance?	Conflict resolution, negotiation and management.	
7. What is the most important thing that I want in this situation?		
8. What solutions might bring everyone more of what they want?		

Asking questions is one of the skills that you would need here at Bunda in order to get other people to clarify their points and explain more. However, not every question brings up these results. Some questions, closed questions, tend to shut people up. If you are fond of using closed questions, this is the time to realize that they will only waste your precious time here at Bunda and elsewhere. Go for the open-ended questions that open people up. These are the questions to which you should attach great value. Remember, questions are like the mountain climber’s hook-on-the-end-of-a-rope: we throw the hook into the unknown, and we pull ourselves into the future. However, we need to learn how and where to throw, so that we pull ourselves into a better future! Asking questions is everyone’s tool, it is your tool; grab it now! You will see how it will help you succeed here at Bunda!

Nonverbal Communication

Another important aspect of active listening is nonverbal communication (NVC). NVC is usually understood as the process of communication through sending and receiving wordless messages. NVC can be communicated through gesture and touch, by body language or posture, by facial expression and eye contact. NVC can be communicated through object communication such as clothing, hairstyles or even architecture, symbols and info-graphics. Humans send and interpret such signals unconsciously. Speech contains nonverbal elements known as paralanguage, including voice quality, emotion and speaking style, as well as prosodic features such as rhythm, intonation and stress. Dance is also regarded as a nonverbal communication. Likewise, written texts have nonverbal elements such as handwriting style, spatial arrangement of words, or the use of emoticons.

POSTURE

Posture can be used to determine a participant’s degree of attention or involvement, the difference in status between communicators, and the level of fondness a person has for the other communicator. Posture is understood through such indicators as direction of lean, body orientation, arm position, and body openness.

Studies investigating the impact of posture on interpersonal relationships suggest that mirror-image congruent postures, where one person’s left side is parallel to the other’s right side, leads to favourable perception of communicators and positive speech; a person who displays a forward lean or a decrease in a backwards lean also signify positive sentiment during communication.

Leaning forward also helps you to concentrate more on the speaker and avoid other distractions such as dozing or a talkative neighbour. Likewise, it gives the speaker motivation to speak because they know you are interested. In this way, you both benefit

from the communication. In order to listen actively, try leaning forward. This way you will be physically and psychologically active in every lecture you take and you will excel in your studies here at Bunda.

GESTURE

A gesture is a non-vocal bodily movement intended to express meaning. Gestures may be articulated with the hands, arms or body, and include movements of the head, face and eyes, such as winking, nodding, or rolling ones' eyes.

Gestures can also be categorised as either speech-independent or speech-related. Speech-independent gestures are dependent upon culturally accepted interpretation and have a direct verbal translation. A wave hello or a peace sign are examples of speech-independent gestures. Speech related gestures are used in parallel with verbal speech; this form of nonverbal communication is used to emphasize the message that is being communicated.

Semantic markers

Usually the speaker will make it clear which ideas s/he wishes to emphasize by the way in which s/he present them. In other words, the main ideas are cued. The speaker does something (a facial expression and /or gesture) that points out to her/his meaning. This guides the listener on the action they must take. Semantic markers are usually phrases that cue speakers' gestures. For example,

- I would like to emphasize ...
- The general point you must remember is...
- It is important to note that...
- I repeat that...
- The next point is crucial to my argument...

Often also, examples and points of lesser importance are cued. The speaker may use such phrases as,

- Let me give you some example...
- For instance...
- I might...
- To illustrate this point...

Active listening requires noticing even the smallest aspects of communication such as semantic markers. Small as they may appear they play a very significant role in pointing out the speaker's meaning.

EYE CONTACT

Eye contact is the meeting of the eyes between two individuals. The study of the role of eyes in nonverbal communication is sometimes referred to as oculusics. Eye contact can indicate interest, attention and involvement. Gaze comprises the actions of looking while talking, looking while listening, amount of gaze, and frequency of glances, patterns of fixation, pupil dilation, and blink rate. In human beings, eye contact is a form of nonverbal communication and is thought to have a large influence on social behaviour. Eye contact plays a role in effective communication.

Communicating attention

A person's direction of gaze may indicate to others where his or her attention lies. Everyone knows what attention is. It is the taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought.

Focalization, concentration and consciousness are of its essence. It implies withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others, and is a condition which has a real opposite in the confused, dazed, scatterbrained state which in French is called distraction.

Facilitating learning

Recent studies suggest that eye contact has a positive impact on the retention and recall of information and may promote more efficient learning. We get useful information from the face when listening to someone.

Good posture, paying attention to speakers' gestures and semantic markers and looking into the speaker's eyes, facilitate and promote learning. Paying attention to what your lecturer and/or speaker is saying and doing is key to success in your studies and life in general.

Barriers to Effective Listening

All elements of communication, including listening, may be affected by barriers that can impede the flow of conversation between individuals. It is important for you to know the barriers to listening, so that you are able to deal with them. The following are the major types of barriers to listening: shift response, interrupting, glazing over, pseudo listening, ambushing and content-only response.

SHIFT RESPONSE

Shift response occurs when one competes for attention in a conversation by changing the subject in order to favour oneself. The opposite of this occurrence is support response, which is constructive to appropriate listening. Both genders use shift response in conversation, but men utilize shift response more often than women. The overuse of this practice is an obstacle to competent listening because it leads to conversational narcissism, which marks inefficiency in the ability to share interest in the others' topics in conversations because of an excess of shift response and a deficiency of support response.

INTERRUPTING

Interrupting is something we all do. It's natural for listeners to evaluate a speaker, but our impressions should not interfere with our listening. The content (what the speaker is saying) should be judged on its own value to you and the speaker. Sometimes you may be tempted to tune out the speaker because of his or her appearance. If an instructor is sloppily dressed and careless about their appearance, you may conclude that what is being said isn't worth listening to. Avoid the temptation and do not let your personal feelings interfere with your learning.

GLAZING OVER

Glazing over occurs when the listener's attention wanders, dozes off or daydreaming begins.

PSEUDO LISTENING

This happens when someone pretends to listen during a conversation and attempts to disguise inattention. Typical responses include “Mm-Hmm”, “Really?”, and “Uh huh”. During this time of inattention, the pseudo listener is unfocused, therefore, it can be very frustrating for the speaker.

AMBUSHING

Ambushing is an example of negative listening in which the listener ignores the strength of the message, instead looking for weaknesses in order to attack what the speaker says. Although the listener is attentive, the problem stems from the fact that responses are rebuttals and refutations of the speaker’s message.

CONTENT-ONLY RESPONSES

This type of response occurs when one focuses on the content of the message, but ignores the emotional side. This type of response does not recognize feelings and comprehends only the literal meaning of messages.

Activity



SELF STUDY ACTIVITY:

Open Ended Questions

1. Make a copy of the following list. After the next lecture, decide if the behaviour described in the first column is true of you. Yes answers indicate the need for a change in your behaviour in order to be a better listener and overcome common barriers.

I usually think of this class as boring.	YES	NO
I pretended to be paying attention.	YES	NO
I didn't like the instructor's mannerisms (e.g. pacing, phrasing, cough).	YES	NO
I tried to make notes on everything that was said in class.	YES	NO
I tried to write my notes in complete sentences.	YES	NO
The subject for this class was way too difficult for me.	YES	NO
Some personal problems kept my mind busy during the lecture.	YES	NO
I didn't waste paper in copying down information from the chalkboard or the overhead transparencies	YES	NO
I was really angry about something the instructor said in class	YES	NO
I definitely enjoyed distractions (e.g. late student, books falling) more than the lecture.	YES	NO
I spent much of the lecture having a good daydream.	YES	NO
I didn't really understand the lecture but asking questions is not my thing.	YES	NO

2. In order to gain success in acquiring good posture, maintaining eye contact and paying attention to speakers’ gestures, here is evaluation exercise that you can try out. Next time you attend a lecture, ask yourself the following questions:
 - Am I seated appropriately (congruent) and close enough to the lecture/speaker?
 - Am I leaning forward?
 - Am I able to see the lecture’s face really well?

- Am I maintaining eye contact with the lecture/speaker?
 - Have I focused all my attention on the speaker's message?
 - Am I acknowledging the points in the speech non-verbally; nodding when I am following or shaking my head when I cannot follow?
 - Am I actively responding to questions and directions?
-

All questions above require you to have a 'Yes' response. However, if you have a 'No' response to some of the questions, list them down. In your free time, before another lecture if possible, try to identify any problems that made it difficult to do what you were supposed to do.

- After identifying the problems, sit down and try to find some workable solutions for each of the problems.
- Before the following lecture, go through the list of solutions to remind yourself.
- During the lecture, apply all the solutions to the problems.
- After the lecture, sit down and check how it all worked out.
- Continue this evaluation exercise, until you are able to answer 'Yes' to all questions above, after each and every lecture.

This is a constant evaluation exercise. If you get into the habit of doing this, you will acknowledge how easy it is to listen meaningfully to lectures and gain success in your studies!

Summary

In this chapter, you have learnt about the skills that will help you become a successful active listener. Note taking is one of the skills in active listening. It is a crucial skill and one that develops over time. In this chapter, among other things, you have learnt how to keep up with the lecturer's speed, by using abbreviations, taking the important parts of the lecture and avoid copying word for word. Also by now, you have learnt how to organise your notes using the Cornell Note Taking System, identification of the main points and drawing a spider diagram.

In addition, question asking has been discussed. It is also one of the skills that you need here at Bunda in order to get other people clarify their points and explain more. However, not every question brings up these results. Some questions, closed questions, tend to shut people up. It is clear from this chapter that you need to go for the open-ended questions that open people up. These are the questions to which you should attach great value. Also most importantly, is to learn how and where to throw the questions, so that we pull ourselves into a better future!

Furthermore, good posture, paying attention to speakers' gestures and semantic markers and looking into the speaker's eyes, facilitate and promote learning. These are some aspects of nonverbal communication that we have covered in this chapter. Emphasis has been put on paying attention to what your lecture and/ speaker is saying and doing as it is key to success in your studies and life in general. This is why we have listed the common obstacles/barriers to listening; by being aware of the barriers that exist in conversational situations, one is able to avoid them and/or find remedies. In order to succeed in your

studies, here at Bunda, you need to employ all the aspects of Active Listening discussed in this chapter as these aspects do not work in isolation!

Task

**CHAPTER FOUR:
Assessment Task**
Note taking

- (a) Read the following passage below entitled 'Education - For What?' from *Secondary English, Book 3*.
- (b) Identify and write down two central themes
- (c) Identify and write eight subsidiary points.

EDUCATION – FOR WHAT?

There are three kinds of education in Africa. There is the old tradition; there are the remains of the colonial schooling, which varied according to the way the European power, saw African requirements; and there is the post-Independence attempt to find an education suitable for the needs of modern Africa.

In Malawi, the merits of the traditional education that prepared youths for their role in society are now widely recognized by eminent educationists. Much of this education was informal. The child learnt through his relationship with his parents, and other people in the community. Much of the child's education was concerned with acquisition of productive skills. As soon as Malawian children were weaned, they began to learn useful skills by observing and imitating their parents. The girls learnt domestic work from their mothers, while fathers and male relatives taught boys to hunt and herd. Most Malawian tribes sent boys from the age of five onwards to help the older children herd animals. Later they were organised in age groups that went hunting, fishing, and learnt to defend themselves and their community. Youths in certain tribes like Ngoni were required to pass elaborate initiation ceremonies before they were called to the royal kraal for military training. This included long marches and other endurance tests, such as catching a bull by the horns and tail, and knocking it down.

In all tribal communities, as well as passing on skills, traditional education transmitted values of loyalty, unity and respect for elders or those above one in an organization. From an early age, the child was taught to maintain the correct relationship with others, the dead as well as the living. (The interdependent relationship between the living and the ancestors was constantly emphasized because it formed the basis of our religion).

The unity and interest of society as a whole were central to our philosophy of life. Land ownership was communal, although land use and grazing were practiced individually. However, there was an insistence in sharing what was available as widely as possible.

This traditional form of education had the advantage of preparing a child for life in the community; in general, it did not encourage him to be ambitious or independent or teach him the needs of the modern world. In the colonial years, the mission schools taught the kind of things that children in Europe were taught, and these often had little to do with African needs. In Nyerere's world, colonial education was 'motivated by a desire to inculcate the values of the colonial society and to train individuals for the service of the colonial state'.

The state interest in education in Malawi was in those days based on the needs for cheap labour for the plantations, mines and manufacturing industries within the three British colonies of Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe (then called Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia respectively): hence the comparatively well-developed primary school education system.

The secondary school system was much smaller, dictated mainly by the need for local clerks and junior officials. There was thus a heavy emphasis on subservient attitudes and white-collar skills. Yet

paradoxically, the products of these schools tended to be indoctrinated with ideas of superiority and elitism, thus dividing them from the mass of the people.

In sum, the kinds of education provided, served the purpose of disengaging young people from traditional economy, which was self-sufficient, and pushing them into the labour market.

In the post-Independence era, African needs are being rethought. Not all African countries approach the problem of education from the same point of view, but they all share very similar practical concerns. For example, how many universities should a country have, when half of the age group may not gain formal education at all? Highly trained engineers are needed for the countries power stations and industries, yet Africa also needs men skilled in the relatively simple skills of wooden bridge construction, laying roads, building houses, servicing vehicles and railway locomotives, and so on. Civil servants especially need a good secondary education if they are to deal with matters ranging from organising finance for a new agricultural scheme to collecting information for government approval of a new road system. To respond to these needs, a developing continent must clearly be practical.

While an expanding education system is therefore necessary, it also has drawbacks. In many countries in Africa, secondary and college education means that young people have to leave rural areas for the towns, and later, as men, they are not returning to work on the farms and produce the food: the opportunities, amenities and leisure attractions of the towns are too tempting. Thus, a huge country like Nigeria is currently a net importer of food. It is for reasons like this that, in Malawi, attempts have been made to develop education in the rural areas.

2. Question Asking

(a) Adapt each of the following yes/no questions into an open-ended question.

(i) On talking with a person who looks disappointed...)

“So you didn’t like that, huh?”

(ii) (A pilot to a new co-pilot...)

“Did you know how to fly this thing?”

(iii) (A nurse to a patient...)

“Have you been taking your medication?”

(iv) (Parent to teen...)

“Don’t you think it would be better if you did your homework first?”

(b) Write down what problems could arise from each of the yes/no questions above.

(c) Create a table with two columns and in the 1st column record ten yes/no questions that you have encountered in your life that would have been better stated as open-ended questions. Record your open-ended question next to each yes/no question in the 2nd column.

RESOURCE



Additional Enrichment Resources

The following resources are highly recommended and will offer enrichment to your studies:

RESOURCE	LOCATION
How-to-Study.com , <i>Good Listening in Class</i>	http://www.how-to-study.com/study-skills/en/notetaking/26/good-listening-in-class/
WikiHow , <i>How to Solve Problems Using Mind Maps</i>	http://www.wikihow.com/Solve-Problems-Using-

[Mind-Maps](#)

WikiHow,
How to Take Notes Quickly

<http://www.wikihow.com/Form-a-Study-Group>

Glossary



These words and terms are used in this chapter.

WORD	DEFINITION
Evoke	Stir up or induce something
Wrestle	Struggle of fighting challenges
Value	The rate of importance you attach to something
Psychotherapist	A person whom you consult for the problems of the mind
Architect	A person who does planning and designing as his job
Gestalt	<i>Die Gestalt</i> is a German word for form or shape. It is used in English to refer to a concept of 'wholeness'
Illuminate	Revealing or helpful
Canyon	A gap or rift
Intuitive	Something that is inborn or natural
Cornell	American University in New York State, USA.
Formula	A defined way of doing things
Grasp	To understand with the mind
Passive listening	A way of listening in which listeners do nothing to assist their memory later
Theme	Major idea in a passage or a piece of writing
Shorthand	A method of writing that uses abbreviations, symbols and a special letters to speed up the recording process
Subsidiary	Supporting points
Focalization	Process of putting central attention on something
Cue	Indicate or signal something
Emoticons	Pictures that show emotions
Prosodic	The accent of a syllable
Rhythm	Sound of words as you speak
Intonation	Tone of speech (the way you raise and lower words when speaking)
Stress	Pressure you put on syllables when pronouncing/saying words
Paralanguage	Nonverbal elements contained in speech
Infographics	Symbols/devices used in writing/print to convey meaning
Winking	Closing and opening an eye
Scatterbrained	Thinking of so many things that distract attention