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COMMUNICATION SKILLS

UNIT 3

TOPIC :

- **Basic Listening Skills** : Introduction, Self-Awareness, Active Listening, Becoming an Active Listener, Listening in Difficult Situations



Basic Listening Skills

- Listening is the foundation of effective communication. It is not just hearing the words someone says, but understanding, interpreting, and responding appropriately to them. Strong listening skills are vital in personal, professional, and academic settings. They build trust, prevent misunderstandings, and improve collaboration.
- “Listening is an active process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken or non-verbal messages.”

Self-Awareness in Listening

- Self-awareness in listening refers to the ability to recognize and monitor your own thoughts, emotions, biases, and behaviors while actively listening to someone else. It involves being mentally and emotionally present, understanding how your internal reactions may affect your ability to truly hear and interpret what is being said.

Importance of Self-Awareness in Listening

1. **Reduces Biases**
Helps minimize personal prejudices or assumptions that distort the message.
2. **Improves Understanding**
You're more focused and able to understand both the content and emotions behind the speaker's message.
3. **Builds Empathy**
Allows you to respond with compassion and sensitivity, even in emotional conversations.
4. **Enhances Relationships**
Being fully present and aware during conversations builds trust and improves communication.

5. **Supports Emotional Regulation**

Helps you recognize when you're about to interrupt, get defensive, or zone out—and redirect your focus.

Active Listening

→ Active listening is the process of fully concentrating, understanding, responding, and remembering what is being said in a conversation. Unlike passive hearing, active listening requires mental focus and engagement with the speaker's message, both verbal and non-verbal.

Importance of Active Listening

1. **Builds Trust** – It shows the speaker that you care and respect their thoughts.
2. **Improves Understanding** – Reduces miscommunication and increases accuracy.
3. **Encourages Openness** – The speaker feels more comfortable expressing themselves.
4. **Strengthens Relationships** – Whether personal or professional, listening actively helps deepen bonds.
5. **Promotes Problem-Solving** – Understanding the full issue allows for better decision-making.

Becoming an Active Listener

→ Becoming an active listener means developing the skill of listening attentively and intentionally to understand the speaker's full message both verbal and non-verbal without distraction or judgment. It involves focusing on the speaker, interpreting their words correctly, and responding in a thoughtful, respectful way.

Steps to Become an Active Listener

1. *Be Fully Present*

- Avoid distractions (like mobile phones or other tasks).
- Give your full attention with both mind and body.
- Face the speaker and maintain natural eye contact.

2. *Show You're Listening*

- Use non-verbal cues like nodding, smiling, leaning slightly forward.
- Use verbal cues like "I see," "Go on," or "That makes sense."

3. *Avoid Interrupting*

- Let the speaker finish their thoughts.
- Do not jump to conclusions or give premature advice.

4. *Reflect and Paraphrase*

- Repeat what the speaker said in your own words to show understanding.

Example: "So, you're saying the new deadline is stressing you out?"

5. *Ask Open-Ended Questions*

- Ask questions that help the speaker elaborate their point of view.
- Example: "How did that make you feel?" or "Can you explain that more?"

6. *Manage Your Own Emotions*

- Stay calm even if you disagree with the speaker.
- Focus on understanding before reacting emotionally.

7. *Provide Constructive Feedback*

- Summarize key points after the speaker has finished.

Listening in Difficult Situations

→ Listening in difficult situations refers to the ability to actively listen and understand a speaker even when the environment or emotions make it challenging. These situations may involve distractions, emotional tension, conflicting opinions, or complex topics.

Common Difficult Situations for Listening:

- **Emotional Conversations** – Arguments, criticism, or conflict discussions
- **Noisy Environments** – Background noise or disturbances
- **Distractions** – Internal (stress, hunger, fatigue) or external (phone, surroundings)
- **Fast or Complex Speakers** – Using technical language or speaking too fast
- **Cultural or Language Barriers** – Accents, unfamiliar terms, or translation issues
- **Disagreement or Bias** – When the listener has opposing views or personal bias
- **Sensitive Topics** – Illness, death, failure, or personal issues

Effective Strategies to Overcome These Barriers

1. *Stay Emotionally Calm*

- ✓ Take a deep breath and remain neutral, especially during emotionally intense conversations.
- ✓ Avoid letting anger, fear, or stress cloud your listening.

2. *Practice Empathy*

- ✓ Try to see the situation from the speaker's point of view.
- ✓ Acknowledge their emotions without judgment.

Example: “I understand you’re upset—please tell me more.”

3. Ask Clarifying Questions

- ✓ Politely ask for repetition or explanation if needed.
- ✓ Example: “Could you please repeat that last part?”

4. Minimize Distractions

- ✓ If possible, move to a quieter space.
- ✓ Silence phones or turn off notifications.

5. Avoid Interrupting

- ✓ Let the speaker finish. Avoid cutting them off even if you disagree.

6. Use Positive Body Language

- ✓ Nodding, eye contact, and a calm posture show engagement and respect.

7. Paraphrase and Summarize

- ✓ Restate key points to confirm understanding.
Example: “So what you’re saying is...”

8. Hold Back Judgement

- ✓ Listen with an open mind—even if the topic or tone is uncomfortable.