

Listening as a relating skill of communication

Listening as an essential part of the communicative process provides the aural input that serves as the basis for language acquisition and enables us to interact in spoken communication.

Listening is less about hearing than it is about understanding – and about paying deep and genuine attention to the other. Therefore, while we use our ears to hear, we rely on much more than the ears to fully understand what the speaker is communicating. We use our eyes to see what is being said, we use our mind to learn more about the message, and we use our heart to feel the emotions behind the words. This means that we must listen not only with our ears but with our eyes, mind, and heart as well. Listening is, in that sense, a multi-tasking challenge. We distinguish the following characteristics of listening: *listening is more than hearing; listening is a skill, which we must train; listening is important; listening is persuasive; listening is beneficial; listening benefits relationships; listening involves choice-making; listening happens within a context.*

In order to avoid common listening problems we must turn attention to these suggestions: *listen actively; avoid hasty conclusions; use thinking time; listen for more than facts; listen rationally not emotionally; focus on more elements of the communication situation than just a speaker.*

To powerful listening strategies we refer: *regular listening; choosing materials at the appropriate level of difficulty; choosing materials on familiar topics; keeping listening; using background knowledge; using visual clues to help you understand; using information from the segment itself; listening for familiar elements in the segment; let your interlocutor help if you are not following what is being said; assuming that the 'here' and 'now' are relevant; learning question words; paying attention to numbers.*