



Active Listening :An Art of Effective Communication for ‘Quality Teaching and Learning’

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Abstract

“The Systems Theory” and communications research education is viewed as a dynamic whole synthesized out of many interlocking components. From the systems frame of reference, the “role of communication” is particularly significant for education. It is possible to look teaching as a ‘communication task’ occurring within a complex system, the purpose of which is to control the behavior of students. In this active listening plays a very important role between teacher and taught for effective communication to create quality oriented teaching and learning environment in educational institutions.

The instructional system includes all the components necessary for achieving this goal together with the networks of communication linking different parts with each other and with the environment.

Introduction

‘The System Approach’ is a type of logical problem-solving process, applied to the identification and resolving of important educational issues. This approach focusses on the learner and assures that each one’s ambitions, capabilities, fears, hopes and aspirations are considered and maintained in relation with his interaction to surroundings.

‘Instructions’ according to system approach is the process in which a teacher presents subject matter to a learner so that he responds to it in a way that enables the teacher to determine the next topic of information to be presented. In this frame of reference, teaching-learning process can be viewed as ‘communication and control’ taking place between the components of the system. The teacher is the source of

communication and controlling mechanism. He works with the group of students and is responsible for implementation of a large number of communication control procedures.

The consequences of student's own behavior functions as a feedback and controls the subsequent behaviors of the students. The teacher can utilize this principal while teaching in the class by rewarding or punishing students behaviors in numerous ways on the basis of feedback and can control the students' learning behaviors. Feedback is an important principle of human growth and development. We have all become what we are today only through an incusent chain of feedbacks released by others in the family, in the school, in various social organizations and situations. In this process active listening plays a very important and crucial role for creating the entire personality of an individual as a whole.

Good listening involves attitude, attention and adjustment skills of a learner. Active listening means a structured way of listening and responding to others by observing other person's behavior and body language. Active listener should be able to describe and understand the underlying emotions of the speaker. Active listening helps speaker to open up, avoiding misunderstanding, resolving conflicts and building trust. The process of active listening focusses on the ability of an individual to understand the message of the speaker. For example, at colleges students listen to teachers for information they are expected to understand when the teacher is teaching.

Listening is emotional as it involves the absorption of the meanings of words and sentences by the brain to understand facts and ideas. It is a magnetic and strange thing and a creative force. Expressing our wants, feelings, thoughts and opinions effectively is only half the communication process for interpersonal relations while the other half is listening to understand what others want to communicate to us.

Effective communication exists between two people when the receiver interprets and understands the sender's message in the same way the sender intended it. When we listen effectively we understand what the person is thinking and feeling from the other person's own perspective. To listen effectively we must be active listeners in the communication process.

Basic Models of Listening

Four basic listening models include – passive, informative, evaluative and appreciative models. Passive model is actually not listening but hearing. It is only receiving the sound. This type of listening is involuntarily. Informative model is the first step towards comprehensive listening. Evaluative model includes evaluating what is being said and the making judgement. Appreciative model is listening to something that receiver likes to hear which helps in reenergizing and relaxing.

A good listener is one who does not distract the speaker, listens with the mind, filters out distraction, focusses on the actual topic, listens and understands with full attention, controls his emotions and reactions and gets along with the speaker. Giving full attention to the speaker is the rarest and purest form of listening.

Factors Affecting Listening Skill

Main factors which create hindrance in proper listening are:

- Too low or too high volume of the speaker,
- Many ideas making the message complicated,
- Body language not matching with words spoken,
- Paying too much attention as to how the listener is taking, and
- An unconventional method for delivering the message.

Habit of Poor Listening

Poor listening habits which may continue throughout the life of the learner in the process of teaching and learning are:

- Not paying proper attention to the speaker while he is delivering the lecture,
- Pseudo-listening which leaves the speaker with impression that the learner has heard some important information or instruction offered by the speaker,

- Not hearing properly i.e. listening only to facts or details and missing the real meaning,
- Rehearsing the speaker and then waiting for the opportunity to response,
- Interrupting the speaker in between the lecture,
- Hearing only what is expected by the listener and refusing to hear what he does not want to, and
- Listening the speaker intentionally for points on which the listener disagrees.

Advantages of Active or Reflective Listening

Various advantages of active listening can be summed up as below:

- ❖ Active listening reduces the tension of the speaker,
- ❖ One can learn more clearly about the subject matter by active listening,
- ❖ Active listening leads to better performance and cooperation among the learners,
- ❖ Eager, alert and active listening stimulates the speaker to present his best ideas,
- ❖ Attentive listening helps the listener to grasp things quicker and in a better way,
- ❖ Attentive listening boosts the confidence of learners, and
- ❖ Active listening enhances thinking, understanding and reflective levels of learning and planning in the learner.

Techniques of Active or Reflective Listening

Various techniques which should be practiced by the learners in the process of teaching and learning to become more effective learners can be categorized as :

- ✓ One must be empathetic in his approach,
- ✓ One must use eye contacts sensibly in the process of communication,
- ✓ One must inhibit his impulse to answer questions,
- ✓ One must know when to quit by active listening,

- ✓ One must clarify his doubts at the proper time, if confused, and
- ✓ One must be non-judgemental to the views of the speaker.

Conclusion

Active listening is especially important in the classroom; teachers who practice active listening connect with their students and engage them in the participatory aspects of learning. Active listening promotes understanding and sends the message to students that they are important. When students internalize these positive messages, communication and behavior in the classroom improves. When teachers really listen, students intuitively feel that the teacher cares about and believes in them. Consequently, students feel understood and empowered and are more likely to communicate their needs appropriately. Teachers who strive to integrate listening skills in the curriculum and model active listening in their every-day interaction with students connect with students in ways that support open communication and build a cooperative culture in the classroom.

The principles of ‘system analysis’, ‘input’, ‘output’ and ‘the process’ enables the teacher to analyze teaching in a more scientific manner for making learning and its organizations more realistic and practical.

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