

PENTINGNYA KETERAMPILAN MENDENGARKAN SEBAGAI DASAR DALAM BERKOMUNIKASI SECARA BAIK

THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING SKILL AS THE FOUNDATION TO A GOOD COMMUNICATION

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Abstrak

Orang bijak mengatakan bahwa manusia memiliki dua telinga dan satu mulut, secara filosofis; seseorang harus lebih banyak mendengar daripada berbicara. Dalam komunikasi, orang tidak hanya berbicara, tetapi yang lebih penting, mereka mendengarkan. Ketika seseorang berbicara, yang lain berinteraksi dengan memberikan respon. Respon ini tidak hanya secara verbal saja tetapi juga nonverbal. Sebelum mereka memberikan tanggapan, mereka harus mendengarkan agar dapat memberikan masukan. Masalahnya adalah keterampilan mendengarkan tidak sering diajarkan dalam pendidikan formal. Dalam beberapa hal, kurangnya kemampuan dalam mendengarkan dapat menyebabkan kesalahpahaman. Selain itu, mendengarkan bukanlah aktivitas pasif. Untuk menjadi pendengar yang aktif dapat dilakukan dengan dua cara, yaitu komunikasi nonverbal dan komunikasi verbal. Memiliki kemampuan yang baik dalam keterampilan mendengarkan dapat mengelola hubungan yang baik dan mempromosikan pemahaman yang lebih baik pula.

Kata kunci: Keterampilan mendengarkan, komunikasi verbal, komunikasi nonverbal

Abstract

Wise people said that human being has two ears and one mouth, philosophically; people should listen more rather than speaking. In communication, people do not only speak, but more importantly, they are listening. While someone is speaking, the other is interacting by giving responses. The responses are not only verbal but also nonverbal. Before they give responses, they have to listen to be able to give feedbacks. The problem is that, listening skill is not often taught in formal education. In some ways, the lack of ability in listening can cause misunderstanding among others. Furthermore, listening is not a passive activity. Active listening can be done in two ways. Those are nonverbal communication and verbal communication. Having a good ability in listening skill can manage a good relationship and promote a better understanding.

Key words: listening skill, verbal communication, nonverbal communication

I. INTRODUCTION

In our daily life, people communicate each other in many different ways. Some people are talking, arguing, giving advice, judging, criticizing, interrupting etc., to the other and other people are giving respond to them. Unfortunately, some conflicts are formed among the people because of misunderstanding. For examples: The speaker can feel annoyed, disturbed or rejected to communicate when the listener seems to show the cold shoulder. It is also annoying when the listener does not look at the speaker while they are talking. Furthermore, the speaker would have felt terrible when the listener does not say anything to respond the talks. It proves that it is important to be an active and good listener, especially in manner. Foster (2016) said that misunderstanding is an impact of a bad communication, while a good communication starts with listening. Foster also stated that a good communication will promote better understanding of people and it can also help people to reduce conflict, decrease their tension and build up relationship. That is why, it is important for us to improve our listening skill to conduct a good communication in a relationship.

Tropello (2016) said that according to research, almost in a conversation, one can only understand 25-50% information from listening to another's speech. If someone talks for about 10 minutes, it is only about 2.5 – 5 minutes of information that can be caught. How if the information is very important? How if the information is about directions? How if the information is containing an important order which is coming from the chairman? Those are also the importance of having a good listening skill.

To communicate means that people not only share their ideas but also listen to the other's opinion. Human being has only one mouth and two ears. Philosophically, people should listen much rather than speak. People's skill in listening might be the most important skill because based on research, 80% of people communication is listening. That is why, a good communication requires a good listening skill too. Being a listener, does not mean to be passive. A listener can take a great role in communication. They can give responses, in both verbal and nonverbal ways (Writing Centre Learning Guide, 2014: 2-3).

II. DISCUSSION

A. Listening is An Active Communication

Listening is quite different from hearing. Listening is an active process to understand the messages deliberately. Listening is one of the skills that everyone should have in order to get a good relationship with others. Having a better understanding in listening will give a good impact in society. It will bring effectiveness and quality in communication. According to Manktelow and Carlson (2016), people listen for several purposes. They listen to understand, learn, obtain information and for enjoyment. One can master active listening skill by practicing continuously.

There are some benefits of active listening. Active listening will encourage the speaker to keep talking and it also indicates that the listeners are following the conversation and set a comfortable tone. It can be inferred, therefore, active listening is a signal to the speaker that the listeners are attentive and interested in the talk

Listening is not a passive action. One can be an active listener in a conversation. Manktelow and Carlson (2016) mention some ways to develop the active listening skill. Being an active listener, one should have effort not only in listening to the words a speaker has said, but also in understanding the whole content or message. The listener should stay focused on the message very carefully. The speaker should feel that what he tells is clearly delivered, that is why the listener should let the speaker know that he has understood what is being talked. This is called “acknowledgement”.

Acknowledgement is very important to do by a listener. The listener can give acknowledgement to the speaker as a signal of understanding by nodding. Nodding does not indicate that someone agrees, rather it is a signal that the listener is paying attention. Giving some questions is also a good response to be an active listener.

B. How to Listen Actively

To gain a good communication, not only the ability of speaking is required but also listening skill. In listening, we can use both non-verbal and verbal ways in order to become an active listener. Richmond & McCroskey (2006) state that most people do not realize that almost 80% of communication is non-verbal communication. They are including gesture, eye contact, posture and other physical movements. Nonverbal activities ‘speak’ louder than verbal. They explicitly describe and send message to what people think or feel

to the speaker directly. Here are verbal and nonverbal communications that can be used in order to be an active listener.

1. Nonverbal Communication in Listening

a. Smile

As a symbol that someone pays attention to what is being said by others is by giving a small smile. The smile can indicate a pleasant feeling of understanding the message. Smile can be combined with a head movement (a nod), so that it can be a powerful signal that the message is truly understood (<http://www.skillsyouneed.com> (2016)). Smiles not only can form and sustain relationship, but also can repair interpersonal relationship.

There are two types of smiles: genuine and fake smiles. Genuine smiles which is formed by lips and pulling cheeks is more interesting than a fake smile which is formed by pressing lips tightly. When someone smiles at us and we smile to her/him back, we would feel quite better. Smile also plays an important part in society. Someone can win people's hearts and sympathy by giving genuine smiles. That is why; smiley becomes more popular applications in many text messaging.

b. Eye Contact

Eye contact is able to say many things while someone is listening to others. However, eye contact can be intimidating, especially for unconfident speakers. On the other hand, maintaining eye contact is very useful to encourage the speaker. It sends messages to the speaker that the listener is paying attention.

Eye contact is one of the important types of nonverbal communication as a visual sense and is dominant for most people. Someone's feelings can be described by the way someone looks at the other. The way someone looks at other people may communicate many things. It can imply some meanings, such as interest, attraction, affection or even hostility. Wyeth (2016) states that in a conversation, eye contact is very important to maintain the flow of the conversation and measure other people's responses.

Eye contact occurs when someone looks at others' eyes at the same time. The duration of eye contact in conversation is the most meaningful part. Many

studies explained that people interest can be seen by their eye contact, while disinterest can easily noticed by lack of eye contact in the conversation. Generally speaking, the longer someone make eye contact with other person, the greater the intimacy level they would get.

c. Posture

Posture is an important element of nonverbal communication in interpersonal interactions. It indicates whether the listener is being attentive to the conversation or not. The attentive listener tends to sideways whilst sitting or lean slightly forward. Other signs of active listening may include a slight slant of the head or resting the head on one hand.

Posture can say and affect how someone is noticed by other people. That is why people should aware of their posture when they are listening to other because it may help to get a good impression. According to Giles (2014) there are some kinds of posture. They are open posture, close posture, confident posture and postural echoing.

Friendliness and positivity can be perceived by an open posture. During the conversation, people with open posture are noticed as persuasive people. Open posture can be achieved by several steps. Those are:

- Raising our heads straight while we are sitting or standing up
- Chest and abdomen should be keep exposed
- Facial expression should be relaxed
- Maintain a good eye contact to come across as approachable and composed.
- Keeping our body facing toward the speaker during conversation

People with closed posture may give indication of hostility or boredom.

Sign of closed posture are:

- Crossing the two arms across the chest.
- Crossing the legs away from someone
- Sitting in a hunched forward position
- Showing the backs of the hands
- Clenching the fists

If we feel stressed, anxious or nervous, we should calm down by perceiving confident posture. The examples of confident posture are as follows:

- Pulling ourselves up to our full height
- Holding our heads high and keep our gaze at eye level
- Pulling our shoulders back
- Keeping our arms and legs relaxed by our sides.

Postural Echoing is a very effective flirting technique. This kind of posture can be perceived by imitate the speaker's style and pace of movement. For example: If the speaker recline his/ her body on the wall, the listener should do the same way and see how the speaker react. This posture describes that the listener is trying to pay attention to the speaker.

d. **Mirroring/Reflecting**

Attentive listening can be seen by automatic reflection or mirroring of any facial expressions used by the speaker. Giving emotional expressions can be a sign of attention. Mirroring/reflecting may express that the listener is showing sympathy or empathy to what the speaker says. Reflective expression can be done through facial expression. A listener's mimic is able to explain her/his attentiveness during the conversation (<http://www.skillsyouneed.com> (2016)).

e. **Remembering**

Remembering is an activity to keep in mind or recall the memory back. Remembering ideas or concepts from the previous conversation may indicate attention and is likely to send the message or encourage the speaker to continue the talk (<http://www.skillsyouneed.com> (2016)). Unfortunately, in a length of time, human mind is limited in remembering details. Therefore, making a brief note is necessary to keep our memory during the questioning and clarification session.

2. Verbal Communication

a. **Giving Positive Reinforcement**

Positive reinforcement is the offering of desirable effects or consequences for a behavior with the intention of increasing the chance of that behavior being repeated in the future (www.dictionary.com (2016)). It would be better to use positive reinforcement such as “indeed”, “yes” or “very good” or simply “Hmmm mmm” when listening to what the speaker said. Those words are strong signal of attentiveness. They would be beneficial positive verbal reinforcement to the speaker. They can encourage the speaker to continue the talk. What must be paid attention is that the positive reinforcement should be used in a very careful way to avoid unnecessary emphasis of the message. If the listener uses those kinds of positive reinforcement unwisely and frequently, the speaker can be interrupted and irritated. It is better for the listener to explain the reason to agree with the point after they use positive reinforcement words.

b. Questioning and Clarifying

To show that the listener is paying attention to what speaker said is by giving feedback. Feedback can be in form of question or clarification (Managing Diversity Handout, 1998: 2). When the listener wants to ask question, it should be relevant to the topic of conversation. By asking some questions, it can reinforce that the listener is interested in the speaker’s talk. Some useful questions for maintaining a good conversation are “What is that?” and “Which one...?”

Besides giving question, we can be an attentive listener by giving clarification to what the speaker said. The aim of clarification is to ensure that the message is correct and enable the speaker to explain further information about the point. The examples of clarifying are “Is this what you meant?” or “What do you mean?”

c. Reflecting

Reflecting in verbal ways is quite different from that in nonverbal. In verbal meaning, reflecting closely refers to paraphrasing or repeating what the speaker has said to show a better comprehension. By giving reflection, the speakers will know that the listeners has understood about the talk and felt their feelings (Managing Diversity Handout, 1998: 2). It strengthens and stresses the message

that the point has been sent and understood clearly. The examples of reflecting are “You feel that.....” or “ You must feel sad that.....”

d. **Summarization**

By summarizing, the speaker may have a chance to clarify a point of conversation when necessary. It is also the listeners’ way to repeat what has been said by using their own words in a logic and clear way. In summarization, the listener will focus only on the main point of the message. Summarization has several purposes. It may pull together important ideas, facts, etc., establish a basis for further discussion and review progress (Managing Diversity Handout, 1998: 2). The examples of summarization are “I think those seem to be the ideas,...” or “In my understanding, you feel that...”

C. How to be A Good Listener in Manner

To gain a success in communication, the listener must have ability or skill in both verbal and nonverbal communication. A good listener involves a good character and manner in socializing with other people. Here are some manners that should be paid attention in order to be a good listener.

1. Being attentive and relaxed

To be a good listener in manner does not mean that the listener should stare at the speaker fixedly and focus on the speaker’s accent. The listeners can look away and behave as a normal person. The listener should relax and focus on the talk. The key point is that the listener should be attentive. Being attentive listener means that the listener should be present and give attention to the speaker.

2. Keeping an open mind

The speakers are trying to deliver and describe what they feel in their mind by saying in words. If someone would like to know and get certain information about what the speaker might think, he/she should listen to the speaker carefully. Finishing the speaker’s sentence or jumping/speeding up by asking the conclusion is not good manner in conversation. A good listener should open her/his mind and listen to the information until the speaker ends the talk by conclusion.

3. Not interrupting

Parents usually taught their children not to interrupt when someone is talking because it is impolite. Nowadays in a conversation, when someone is talking, interrupting has several meanings and those meanings are considered to be rude. When we interrupt someone, it may indicate that we are more important than other, our ideas are more relevant than others', and we do not care about other's opinion. A good listener may refrain from giving some solutions when the talk is in progress. If someone needs solutions, he/she will ask our advice. If we really want to figure out your solution, we may ask for permission to the speaker by saying "Would you like to listen to my advice?" or "Do you mind if I give you solution?"

4. Not distracting

Active listeners will respect the speaker, therefore, they will refrain some movements which are distracting the conversation. Distractions symbolize that they are uninterested in the topic of the speaker. It can be a signal for the speaker to end the talk as soon as possible. There are many ways to end the conversation in a good manner but those signs are not suitable to use because it is not consider being polite manner.

The examples of distractions are:

- Expressing fidget
- Looking at a watch or clock
- Doodling
- Playing with their hair
- Picking their fingernails
- Making some sounds on the table frequently

5. Waiting for the speaker to pause to ask for clarifying questions.

It is normal when the listener does not understand a certain material of what the speaker has just explained. The listener should ask a question to clarify it, but it is impolite to interrupt the talk. The speaker would be disturbed with the question. It would be better if the listener wait for the speaker's pause to deliver some questions, as like: "Sorry, I do not understand about, can you explain it again?" or "Back up a second please, what do you mean by.....? By waiting some time for the speaker, he would felt that you give him extensive space to explain more about

question. It also indicates that the listener really pays attention and interested in what the speaker has said.

6. Trying to feel what the speaker is feeling.

Putting ourselves on the position of the person whom we are talking is called empathy. This kind of feeling allows the listener to feel what is like to be the speaker in that moment. If the speaker is talking about her sadness experiences, the listener would feel sad too. Listener would feel joyful when the speaker expresses joy, and feel fearful when the speaker is talking about her fear experiences. The listener should convey those kinds of feeling honestly through facial expression and words or phrases. This is not an easy matter because it takes energy and concentration. Empathy is soul of a good listening (<http://www.forbes.com/> (2016)). Moreover, empathy is a generous and helpful thing.

III. CONCLUSION

Listening skill should be mastered by everyone in order to develop a better communicator. Listening is not a passive activity. It is truly an active one. Everyone can be a good listener in communication because listening skill can be developed and practiced continuously. One can be a good listener in both in nonverbal communication and verbal communication. Some forms of nonverbal communications in listening are smile, eye contact, posture, mirroring/reflecting and remembering. Some examples of verbal communication in listening are giving positive reinforcement, questioning and clarifying, reflecting and summarization. Good manners are also important to be a good listener. Some examples of good manners in listening are being attentive and relaxed, keeping an open mind and not interrupting, not distracting, Waiting for the speaker to pause to ask for clarifying questions, and trying to feel what the speaker is feeling. A good communication can promote a better understanding, while good communication starts with listening. That is why listening is an important skill that should be mastered to get a better communication.

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