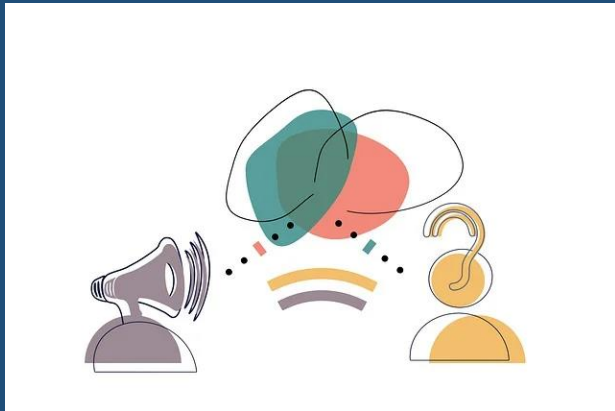


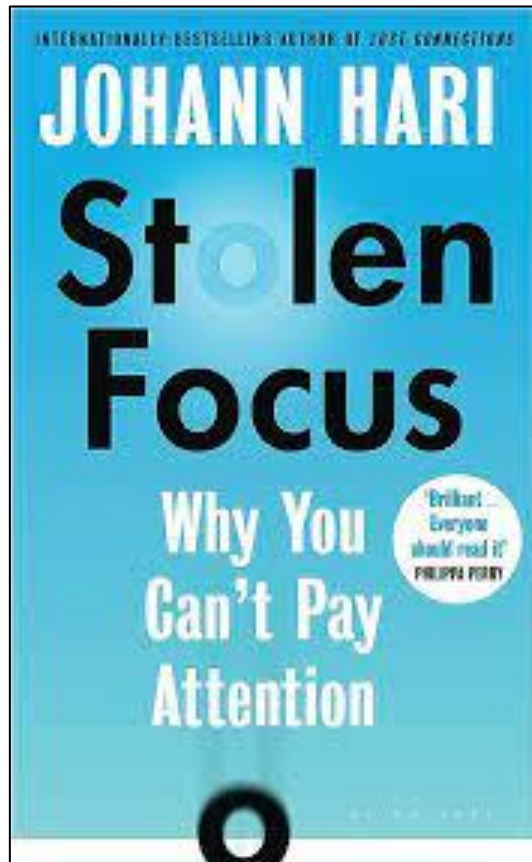
# Active Listening



Jennifer Schumm, ELT Connect



# How the journey began...



“When people think they’re **doing several things at once**, they’re actually [...] **‘juggling’**. They’re **switching back and forth**. They don’t notice the switching because their brain sort of papers it over, to give a seamless experience of consciousness, but what they’re doing is **switching and reconfiguring their brain moment to moment, task to task**—[and] that **comes with a cost.**’ (p.35)

“We now **use our phones so habitually** that I don’t think we consider doing a task and checking our phones at the same time as multitasking, [...]But it is. **Simply having your phone switched on and receiving texts every ten minutes while you try to work is a form of switching** [...]. A study at the Carnegie Mellon University’s Human Computer Interaction Lab took 136 students and got them to sit a test. Some of them had to have their phones switched off, and others had their phones on and received intermittent text messages. **The students who received messages performed, on average, 20 percent worse.**” (p. 38)

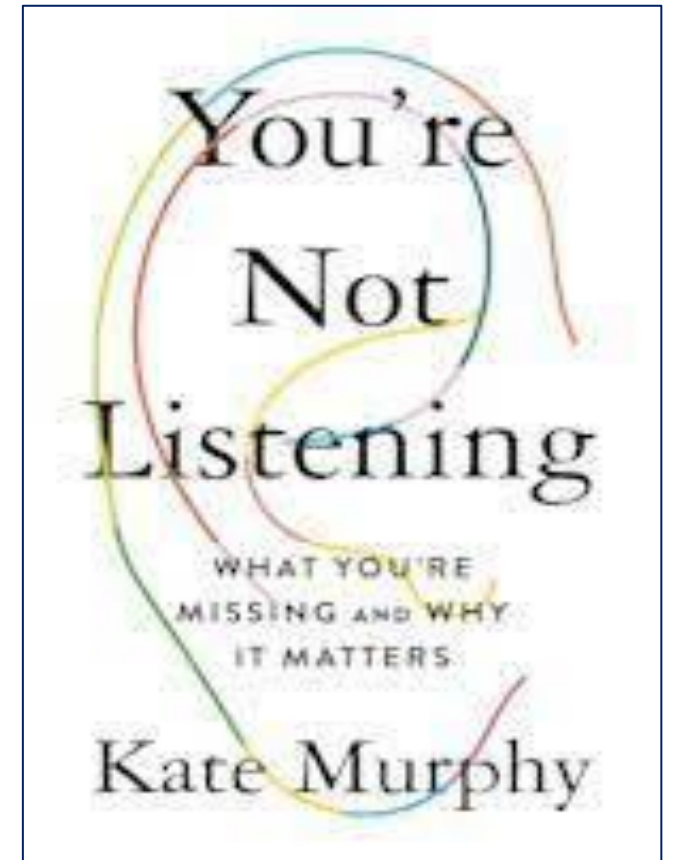
“One day, James Williams [a former Google strategist] addressed an audience of hundreds of leading tech designers and asked them a simple question: “**How many of you want to live in the world you are designing?**” There was a silence in the room. People looked around them. **Nobody put up their hand.**” (p. 118)

# How the journey continued...

**“Polling [in 2016 US presidential elections] proved a poor substitute for actually listening to people** in their communities and understanding the realities of their everyday lives and the values that drive their decisions. **Had political forecasters listened more carefully,** critically, and expansively, the **election results would have come as little surprise.”** (p. 15)

**“A study by psychologists at the University of Essex found that the mere presence of a phone on the table—even if it’s silent—makes those sitting around the table feel more disconnected and disinclined to talk about anything important or meaningful,** knowing if they do, they will probably be interrupted.” (p. 176)

**“People tend to regret not listening more than listening and tend to regret things they said more than things they didn’t say.”** (p. 200)



# New academic year's resolutions

1. To monitor my own listening outside and inside class (e.g., wait time: 3-5 second pause between asking a question and soliciting an answer).

2. To find ways to meaningfully include listening into my Professional Speaking Skills class.

3. To do prep work and corrections during the work week so that my weekends are free. 😊





# Today's Session

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1. Ways of Listening & Active Listening
2. Application in my course
3. Ways to improve listening in general
4. Some in-class listening activities

# Some ways of describing listening (Leonardo, 2020)

**Critical listening** requires the most effort:

- processing a message while using your own judgement to differentiate between facts and opinions.
- creating your own analysis and opinions of the message being conveyed.

**Reflective listening** entails:

- using your own words to repeat back what the speaker says without analysis or judgement.
- letting the speaker know that you have received and understood the message.

**Passive listening** requires nothing from the listener

- Most people listen passively, merely waiting for their turn to speak.

# Active Listening (Rogers & Farson, 1957)

The term "**active listening**" was first coined in 1957 by the clinical psychologists, Carl Rogers and Richard Farson.

Their definition emphasizes being in a "receptive mode than outward mannerisms."

**Active listening** is a method that

"requires that **we get inside the speaker, that we grasp, from his point of view, just what it is he is communicating to us. More than that, we must convey to the speaker that **we are seeing things from his point of view.****"

# Active Listening (Leonardo, 2020)

Active listening involves a combination of critical, reflective, and passive listening. Active listeners use:

- **Critical listening** to interpret a speaker's message, emotions and nonverbal cues.
- **Reflective listening** to help the listener feel heard.
- **Passive listening** to provide the speaker uninterrupted time to get their message across.



# Active Listening

William Ury, PhD. Harvard Law School

## Ordinary listening

We hear words with a **focus on our response:**

Where do I agree?

Where do I disagree?

What will I say in response?

## Genuine listening

We don't just hear words, but what's behind them.

**The focus is on the other person:**

What's being said?

What's not being said?

Why is this person telling me this?

# Some Active Listening Techniques (Leonardo, 2020)

- Paraphrasing
- Using Nonverbal Language
- Emotional labeling
- Using silence
- Redirecting
- Mirroring
- Validating



# Applications of active listening

**In a clinical setting** – when a therapist provides emotional support and helps the speaker feel heard

**In a personal setting** - when a friend attends to another person's needs so they can feel closer and more connected

**In a professional setting** – when a business partner acknowledges a speaker's concerns before expressing their opinion

**In my EFL class** – when students actively engage with a speaker and the message they are communicating

# Active Listening

“We should be teaching listening  
in school like reading.  
Listening is how you read people.”

William Ury, PhD. Harvard Law School

# Professional Speaking Skills

Persuasive Speech Task: listening to opposing views

## Focus on:

- Being mindful of internal stances/attitudes – listening without an agenda
- Understanding the other side
- Asking open-questions out of curiosity not to prove a point
- The power of the pause
  
- Devices removed from tables
- Each student is responsible for giving feedback

Facilitation Task: listening to help group achieve a satisfying outcome

## Focus on:

- Asking open-questions
- Paraphrasing/Synthesizing comments
- Using nonverbal language
- Redirecting



# Listening

“We spend roughly 60% of our communication time listening, but we’re not very good at it. We retain just 25% of what we hear.”

Julian Treasure, sound and communication expert

“After all, we were given two ears and one mouth for a reason – to listen twice as much as we speak.”

William Ury, PhD. Harvard Law School

# Conscious ways to improve listening (Julian Treasure)

1. Silence - sit in silence for 3 minutes a day
2. Mixer – listen to the world around you – How many channels can you hear? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNN7iTA57jM>
3. Savor – enjoy mundane sounds (e.g., dump truck grinding garbage)
4. Listening positions – active/passive; reductive/expansive; critical/empathetic
5. RASA – **R**eceive, **A**ppreciate, **S**ummarize & **A**sk questions afterwards

# Active Listening – RASA

*Julian Treasure* recommends practicing this approach to consciously improve our listening.

“It looks, feels and seems obvious.”

**R** eceive – make eye contact; look interested; lean slightly forward

**A** ppreciate – make little noises – hmm, oh,

**S** ummarize – So this is ... /So I hear that ...

**A** sk – open-ended questions: What do you think? How ...? Can you tell me ...? Keep the focus on the speaker – it’s not about you.





# Group Storytelling Exercise

(Beginner Improv Class – Murphy, 2019)

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1. Tell the group the title of their story.
2. Then point at someone who begins narrating the story, making it up as they go along.
3. After some time, switch narrators and continue the story – even when someone is mid-sentence.
4. Everyone must listen carefully to pick up the thread.

# Physical Self-Awareness (in pairs)

(adapted from Leonardo, 2020)

1. Begin by having one person tell the other about their (day, hobby, weekend plans).
2. The person who is listening should do so without using paralanguage (e.g., no eye contact, nodding, smiling where appropriate etc.).
3. After a few minutes, ask the class how they felt.
4. Now handout a physical self-awareness checklist and have the pair continue with the activity.
5. After a few minutes, ask the speaker to check off the behaviors that the listener used.
6. Repeat the task.

# Choosing the right mode of communication

(adapted from Leonardo, 2020)

## 1. Discuss:

- What are your preferred modes of communication and those of the people you interact most with?
- What kinds of messages do you prefer to communicate in person? Text? Phone? Video call? Email?
- Do your preferences align with the modes you find most effective? (e.g., you may prefer texting, but your message may be communicated more clearly in person)

## 2. Think about a message you want to get through to someone:

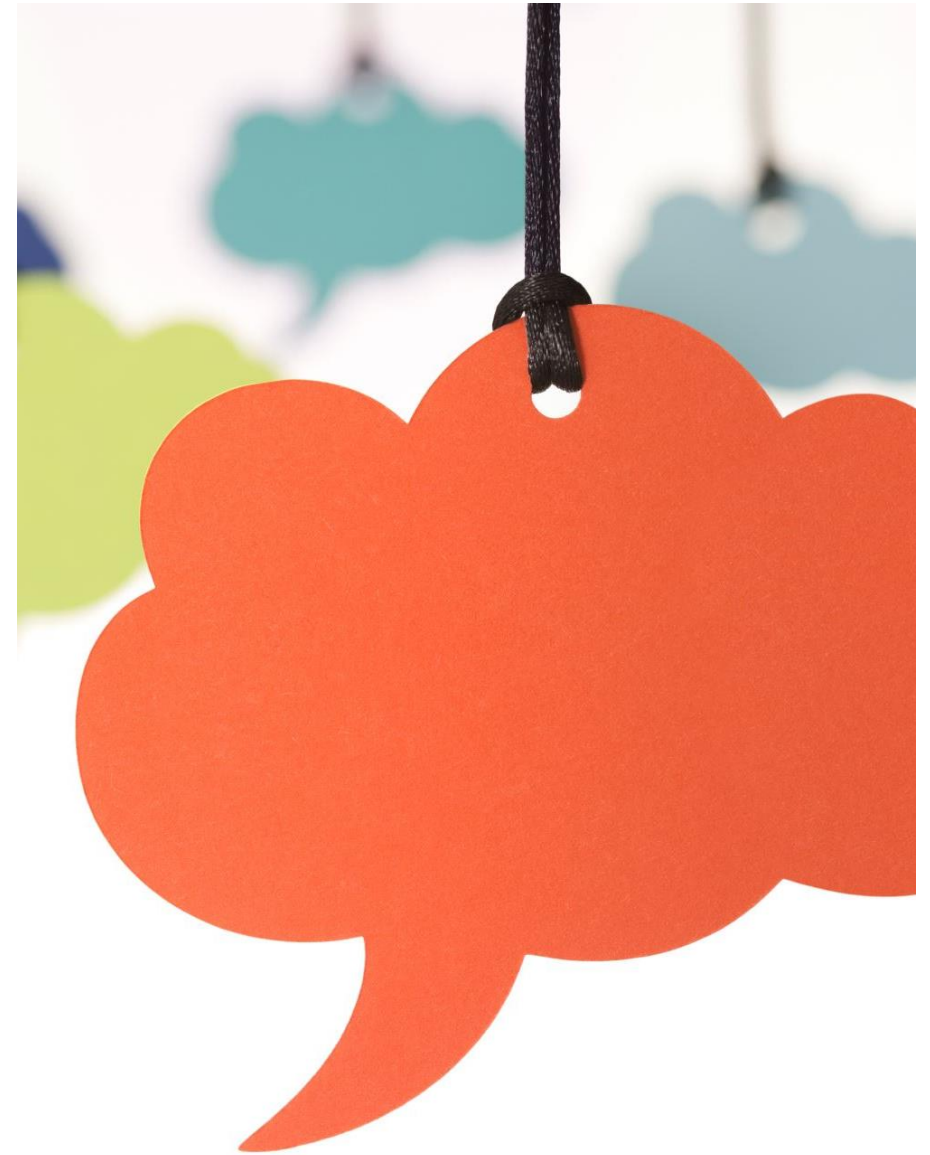
Imagine discussing it by using various modes of communication. Consider the personality of the listener, how they have responded to previous modes of communication and if they will fully understand your message using different modes.

## 3. Complete the chart to decide on the best mode to communicate your message.

Thank you for listening ...

“Done well and with deliberation, listening can transform your understanding of the people and the world around you, which inevitably enriches and elevates your experience and existence. It is how you develop wisdom and form meaningful relationships.”

(Murphy, 2019, p. 4)



# References

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Murphy, K. (2019). *You're Not Listening. What you're missing and why it matters*. First Celadon Books.

Rogers, C. R., & Farson, R. E. (1957). *Active listening*. Industrial Relations Center of the University of Chicago.

## **Useful online sources:**

Communication Essentials Harvard Business Review: Active listening <https://csumb.edu/hr/employee-development/pearls-of-wisdom/active-listening/>

Alexander Lyon PhD: Active listening skills <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wUCyjiyXdg>

TEDx Talk, San Diego by William Ury: The Power of Listening <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saXfavo1OQo>

TEDx Talk, Danubia by Julian Treasure: Conscious listening <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKayQthlwts>

TED Talk, Julian Treasure: How to speak so that people want to listen <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIho2S0Zahl>

TEDx Talk, Birmingham by Scott Pierce: How to actively listen to others (improv) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yq5pJ0q3xuc>

Scene from The Big Bang Theory: Active Listening [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3\\_dAkDsBQyk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_dAkDsBQyk)