



Active Listening by Dr. Henry Khiat, UniSIM

Active listening helps you to focus on getting the most out of your seminar. The characteristics of active listening are listed below. You can try to practise them during a seminar.

a) Be prepared

Read the seminar objectives and agenda. Study the assigned course materials before you come to the seminar.

b) Minimise both external and internal distractions

The following ways may help you to minimise learning distractions that can arise in the seminar.

- i) Choose a seat in the front section of the seminar room and in the instructor's direct line of vision
- ii) Switch off your hand phones or put them in silent or sleep mode
- iii) Sit away from noisy or disruptive classmates
- iv) Make eye contact with the instructor at all times
- v) Try not to be bothered by work or family issues once you are in class

c) Come with an open mind

Do not conclude that any idea that contradicts your belief system or prior experiences is not tenable. Share your thoughts about this idea with your instructor and classmates. It is all right to disagree with any idea brought up by your instructor or classmates. You can even convince them of the reasons you disagree with their ideas. On the contrary, you may even be persuaded by them to accept their ideas.

d) Ask questions

If you do not understand any point the instructor has brought up, seek his or her attention politely and clarify with him/her about that point. Alternatively, you can choose to make a mental or physical note of your queries and clarify them with the instructor during the break or after class.

e) Pay attention to lecture cues

These cues tend to emphasise ideas or concepts that you need to know to do well in the course assessment. These cues can be:

- i) Emphasis of an idea in the introduction and conclusion section of the lecture
- ii) Change in volume, speed or pitch of the instructor's voice in describing an idea
- iii) Pause before or after, the elaboration of an idea
- iv) Repetition of an idea
- v) Use of emphasis phrases in elaborating an idea ("I would like to emphasise", "I want you to remember", "This is important" etc.)



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- vi) Request for students' attention before the elaboration of an idea
- vii) Show of emotions in describing an idea
- viii) Extended time spent in explaining an idea
- ix) An idea that is written on the white board or emphasised in presentations

However, not all seminars may provide such cues so the best way is to practise active listening and to pay attention.

f) Listen to other classmates

Your classmates may provide you with different perspectives of what they think about an idea. Their seminar notes may also contain certain ideas that are not captured in your notes. Therefore, it can be useful to communicate with your classmates regarding the lesson and to compare your notes with theirs.

g) Regulate negative learning emotions

There may be times that you are not doing well in the learning process. You may then feel negative emotions such as frustration, boredom, anxiety etc. You may even start to blame yourself, the environment, your lecturer or classmates for your failure to cope well in the course. The presence of such negative learning emotions can prevent a student from listening actively in class. Therefore it is essential that you are consciously aware of such negative emotions and deal with them promptly.

References

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