

# **Chapter 2**

## **Interpreting Communication**

### **Chapter Learning Outcomes**

When students have completed this chapter, they should be able to:

- Discuss the basics of nonverbal communication and their importance in all interactions.
- Explain the mental and physical processes in listening.
- Discuss and contrast listening in casual and business settings.
- List suggestions for improving their reading skills.

### **Chapter Outline**

#### **Section 2.1 The Basics of Nonverbal Communication**

##### **Section Learning Outcomes**

When students have completed Section 2.1, they should be able to:

- Define *nonverbal communication* and explain how it applies to life situations and the workplace.
- Discuss the personal and professional importance of nonverbal communication.
- List the five categories of nonverbal communication.

##### **I. Essential Principles**

Without realizing it, communicators send numerous nonverbal messages every day.

Nonverbal communication is communication without words.

##### **II. The Importance of Nonverbal Communication**

Two well-known adages express the importance of nonverbal communication:

- Actions speak louder than words.
- A picture is worth a thousand words.

Most people agree that actions speak louder than words as they often attach more meaning to our nonverbal messages than they do to our verbal messages, because they feel nonverbal messages more accurately reflect attitudes and true feelings.

Nonverbal communication is like a mental snapshot the mind records during the communication process. The mental snapshot, or image, affects the perception of a particular situation. When interacting people will examine their own snapshots for communication clues that indicate to them how they feel about what the other person is saying.

Nonverbal communication is extremely important—so important that its absence is noticed and can be detrimental. The absence of nonverbal communication can deliver a negative message and affect relationships. When nonverbal cues contradict verbal cues, people tend to trust their perception of the nonverbal cues. Nonverbal perceptual checks are helpful in both personal and professional growth.

### III. Categories of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication can be divided into five categories.

#### A. Paralanguage

**Paralanguage** is nonverbal communication through factors such as tone, pitch, quality, rate of speech, laughter, tears, belches, and even hesitation or sighs. Paralanguage can help reinforce a verbal message. For example:

An ill student with a scratchy voice calls her professor to let him know she will not be able to give her presentation.

#### B. Kinesics

**Body language**, or kinesics, consists of the gestures, movements, and mannerisms by which a person communicates with others. Physical attributes such as appearance, facial expressions, eye contact, and posture contribute to kinesics, or body language. Facial expressions communicate our thoughts and emotions.

Here are examples of body language:

- *Physical appearance* includes clothes, jewelry, and grooming. Wearing the appropriate clothing to specific events demonstrates taste and style.
- *Facial expressions* indicate our emotions: happy, sad, confused, angry, and so on.
- *Gestures* can express many things: a friendly wave to say hello, a frantic wave from a trader on the New York Stock Exchange.
- *Posture* sends a message. Standing or sitting erect denotes that a person is paying attention to the matter at hand.

### **C. Environment**

The environment communicates many different messages. Environmental factors of nonverbal communication include objects in our surroundings or the surroundings themselves. For example: Fast-food restaurants are usually designed to move customers through quickly, using bright colors and plastic seating that is comfortable for only about 10 minutes.

### **D. Touch**

**Touch**, or haptic communication, is a primary method for achieving connection with people, indicating intention, or expressing emotion. Like other factors of nonverbal communication, the use of touch is culturally bound. For example: In a business setting, the most appropriate form of communication is the handshake.

### **E. Space**

**Space**, as it relates to nonverbal communication, is the physical distance maintained with others. How a person uses space to communicate depends upon cultural norms, the relationship between the speaker and the listeners of the communication, and the activities involved. For North Americans, space generally falls into four categories:

- *Intimate distance*—from physical contact to 18 inches. This distance is reserved for personal expression.
- *Personal distance*—from 18 inches to 3 feet. This distance is used for casual and friendly conversations.
- *Social distance*—from 3 feet to 7 feet. This distance is used in the workplace for business-related conversations, small meetings, and social functions.
- *Public distance*—7 feet and beyond. This distance is usually for public speaking.

## **IV. Conflicting Signals**

Messages are made stronger when both the verbal and the nonverbal communications convey the same thing. Sometimes, subconsciously, people send two distinctly different messages.

## **V. Using Nonverbal Communication**

As effective communicators, people strive to combine verbal and nonverbal communications to increase the efficiency and impact of their messages. In doing so, they make sure that what we express verbally and nonverbally is not in conflict. Interpretation of the nonverbal cues and messages people receive is an essential responsibility of any communicator. Nonverbal

feedback can be extremely helpful in understanding countless settings.

A word of caution about nonverbal communication: Perception is the cornerstone for interpreting nonverbal signals. Misperceptions can result in misinterpretation of nonverbal signals.

## **Section 2.2 Learning the Basics of Listening**

### **Section Learning Outcomes**

When students have completed Section 2.2, they should be able to:

- Identify the five components of the listening model.
- Explain how hearing differs from listening.
- Describe the difference between active listening and passive listening.
- Describe how to overcome listening barriers.

### **I. Essential Principles**

**Listening** is hearing something with thoughtful attention. **Hearing**, on the other hand, is the physical function of detecting sound. Those who are hearing-impaired “listen” to sign language.

### **II. The Listening Model**

Listening has five components. People do not choose which sounds they will hear. But they do, however, decide on which sounds to focus their attention. Then, they assign meaning and importance to those sounds.

### **III. Listening—A Neglected Skill**

From the first years of development, people begin listening without studying how to listen or even being aware of the way they were listening. Listening is different from the other communication skills in that they were probably not taught to listen.

To become a better listener, people must be aware of the type of listening required in each situation and learn how to make their listening more productive.

### **IV. Types of Listening**

There are two types of listening: passive and active. The difference between them is the level

of the listener's involvement.

### **A. Passive Listening**

**Passive listening** means concentrating at a low level and absorbing just enough of the speaker's words to stay involved in a conversation or speech. Passive listeners actually understand or remember little of what is said. Passive listening is appropriate only when people listen for pleasure and when it doesn't matter whether or not they retain what they hear.

### **B. Active Listening**

**Active listening** requires a high level of concentration because people are listening for information. An example of active listening includes listening carefully to an instructor's explanation of an assignment or to the supervisor's directions on the procedure to follow for performing a particular task. Excluding sight, listening is the main way of learning what is going on in a person's surroundings. Active listening provides them with vital information and signals. Listening is a primary means of gathering information and is crucially necessary in most aspects of life, especially work.

## **V. Overcoming Listening Barriers**

**Listening barriers** are any distractions that interfere with listening. Some examples are:

- Not concentrating on what is being said.
- Becoming distracted by noise.
- Talking, texting, or tweeting instead of listening.

### **A. Concentrate on Speaker's Message**

One key to effective listening is realizing the responsibility to stay focused. Often the listener blames his or her lack of concentration on the fact that the speaker is boring or that the listener has something else on his or her mind.

### **B. Use Filters to Manage and Control Noise**

Noise can affect a person's ability to listen. The two basic kinds of noise are external noise and internal noise. **External noise** includes sounds from conversations, radios, televisions, CD players, machinery, and so on. **Internal noise** includes distractions such as pain, fatigue, preoccupation with other thoughts, hunger, worry, or a personality conflict with the speaker.

An effective listener filters out unwanted external and internal noise. Proactive techniques in effective listening include avoiding distracting noise when possible and managing the noise that cannot control.

### **C. Resist Talking Instead of Listening**

It is impossible to be both sender and receiver at the same time. As listeners, people may be tempted to interrupt the speaker in order to make a point or to share information they feel is important. However, a listener should resist the urge to interrupt. Wait until the speaker has finished making a point, and then respond with an appropriate comment.

### **D. Focus on the Message**

As good listeners, people will want to be sure their own ideas do not interfere with listening to the ideas of others. By listening, they will learn about the opposing view and be able to argue against it more effectively. Listening could even change their mind.

### **E. Listen with a Positive Attitude**

To be effective listeners, people do have to keep an open mind and believe the speaker might have something useful to offer. Good listeners learn to listen even when they don't want to listen.

### **F. Turning Good Listening Skills into Effective Communication**

In most listening situations, people have only one chance to absorb and comprehend a speaker's words, so they cannot afford to let their attention wander. One reason we as listeners stop paying attention is that we hear faster than most speakers can speak. Because of this ability to understand faster than people speak, listeners tend to relax and listen to only part of what is being said. However, missing a sentence or even a single word can change the speaker's message. To avoid the risk of misunderstanding the message or missing an important part of it, listen actively to everything that is said.

### **G. Paraphrasing**

One powerful and effective way of "owning" the content presented to people by a speaker is to paraphrase the message. In doing so, the listener crystallizes her or his understanding of the content, and the speaker has the opportunity to correct any discrepancies from the core of her or his intended message.

## **H. Evaluate Your Skills**

Everyone has listening weaknesses. Before people can improve their listening skills, they must identify their weaknesses.

## **I. Prepare Yourself Physically and Mentally**

Listening is a combination of physical and mental activities. Although the mental part of listening is more complex, people must remember to take responsibility for the physical part of listening as well.

If a person is experiencing any hearing difficulties, he or she should schedule a hearing examination with a medical professional. The most important factor in effective listening is being mentally prepared. Mental preparation involves a receptive frame of mind and certain communication tools, such as an extensive vocabulary. Good listeners clear their minds of extraneous thoughts—meeting deadlines, making car payments, scheduling a dental appointment, deciding where to eat lunch, making plans for the weekend—so that their minds are open to receive the speaker's message.

If a person's professional goals include progressing through positions of added responsibility and reward, then their general vocabulary acquired in high school and college may not be adequate for effective listening in the workplace.

## **J. Set Listening Priorities**

Because people are often bombarded with several messages at once, they must set **listening priorities**. When more than one listening opportunity is available to them, they should determine which one deserves their focus. Continued practice at blocking out distracting sounds improves mental focusing capabilities and efficiency in work practices.

## **K. Make Efficient Use of Available Time**

A listener comprehends words at least twice as fast as most people speak. To some listeners, this seemingly extra time is a problem because they allow their thoughts to wander from the subject. Active listeners, however, use this time to concentrate on the speaker's words so that they can better understand what is being said.

## **Identify Ideas and Relationships**

As people begin to grasp the speaker's ideas, they look for relationships among them. Experienced speakers use verbal cues to emphasize important ideas. Speakers also use numerous nonverbal cues, such as pauses and changes in volume or tone of voice. Speakers reinforce certain points by using body language such as gesturing, nodding or shaking the head, or counting on their fingers. They also reinforce points by writing them on flip charts or using visual aids such as handouts, transparencies, or computer-generated slides. All of these cues help listeners identify the speaker's ideas and see the interrelationships among them.

### **Summarize Main Points**

As listeners listen, they should summarize the speaker's words by paraphrasing them in their own words. By reducing the speaker's message to its most basic terms, they will be able to understand and remember the message better.

### **Assess the Message**

As listeners summarize the speaker's message and see the organization and the relationship structure of the speaker's ideas, they will probably find themselves beginning to agree or disagree with the speaker. When this happens, they should try to trace their response to the speaker's reasons or arguments.

### **Formulate Questions**

Formulating questions helps the listener stay focused on what the speaker is saying. They might ask questions of the speaker to clarify a point that is unclear or to determine whether they have interpreted the material correctly.

### **Associate Ideas with Familiar Concepts**

As the listener listens to the speaker's ideas, relate this information to what they already know about the topic or related topics. Doing so allows them to quickly grasp the information presented by the speaker.

### **Consider Ways to Use the Information**

One of the best ways to personally integrate a speaker's message is to determine how the listener can best use the information in the message.

### **Take Notes**



Taking notes is an excellent way of recording spoken information for future reference. Notes, however, should be more than just aids to memory. They should also be tools that help the listener concentrate on the speaker's message.

## **Section 2.3 Listening in Casual and Business Settings**

### **Section Learning Outcomes**

When students have completed Section 2.3, they should be able to:

- Identify techniques for listening in casual and small-group conversations.
- Identify effective listening techniques for conference situations.
- Define *videoconferencing* and *distance learning*.
- List tips for efficient note making.

### **I. Listening in Casual Conversations**

Good listening helps build friendships and also helps forge important professional relationships. The following techniques can help people establish rapport in casual, small-group conversations.

#### **A. Listen Attentively**

The ability to listen attentively is one of the most important skills connected with effective communication. Being attentive and showing interest in what the other person has to say are two attributes of the good listener that lead to more effective communication.

#### **B. Listen for Ideas and Feelings**

A good listener listens for ideas and feelings as well as for factual information. A good listener also listens to the tone of the speaker's voice to pick up subtleties in meaning.

#### **C. Establish Eye Contact**

A speaker likes to have the listener's complete attention. One way to communicate interest in what the speaker is saying is by establishing eye contact, but do not stare at the speaker.

#### **D. Use Body Language to Show You Are Listening**

Listeners can employ body language to convey to a speaker or speakers their interest in

what they are saying. Here are a few nonverbal cues that let people know that the listeners are listening to them:

- Stand or sit facing the speaker.
- Giving the speaker undivided attention.
- People can use facial expressions to convey that they are listening intently to the conversation. Nodding affirmatively encourages a person to continue the conversation.
- Take notes about the conversation if doing so is appropriate.
- Follow the listening customs of different countries.

## **II. Listening in Traditional and Teleconference Situations**

A **teleconference** is a meeting held by means of advanced telephone and sometimes computer technology that enables people from several locations to participate simultaneously.

Depending on the parameters of the conference and the technology available at various locations, the conference may be one-way, without interaction between the speaker and the listeners, or two-way, which allows interaction between the speaker and the listeners.

Individuals and small businesses can use a free video calling service over the Internet to communicate with a person at a different location. Examples of this service are **Skype** and **Google Talk**. In addition to participating in conferences, employees must attend meetings held by their supervisors. In most cases, the employees are responsible for retaining the information disseminated.

### **A. Determine Your Listening Objectives and Prepare Accordingly**

Find out the subject matter to be covered, and learn something about it before attending the session. This preparation will give the listeners a frame of reference that prepares them to absorb the information they will hear.

### **B. Overlook Personal Characteristics of the Speaker**

Don't prejudge a speaker on the basis of distracting personal characteristics such as mannerisms, voice, speech patterns, or appearance. Good listeners do not confuse the speaker's message with the manner of speaking or the speaker's appearance. Also, the listeners will sometimes encounter speakers with unusual voices or accents. In these instances, very active and focused listening is required to adapt to the challenging characteristics of the speaker's voice. In situations like these, maintaining their mental focus on the speaker's message is their main priority. Listeners can manage any adverse feelings they may have for the speaker by putting themselves in the speaker's place.

### **C. Choose Strategic Speaking**

Arrive early and, if possible, choose a seat at the front and center of the room. Select a location that limits distracting sights and sounds. The listener should choose a seat away from the windows if they think that the sun glare might be a distraction. If the listener has either visual or hearing impairments, they should choose a seat that offers the best opportunity to see and hear the speaker. Some meeting rooms have inconsistent lighting, and choosing a seat in a well-lit area has clear advantages.

### **D. Prepare for Comfort**

Physical discomforts are big distractions. Considering attire for settings like weather and physical conditions is wise. Preparing for comfort also includes ensuring that any equipment the listener will be using in the meeting—laptops or other devices—are fully charged and ready to use so that it will be an aid rather than a distraction to work. The listeners should also make sure that they are permitted to use the WiFi connection and can successfully log on at the meeting location.

### **E. Ask Questions if Permitted**

Most speakers indicate a specific time for questions. Some allow questions during the session. Other speakers prefer to answer questions at the end of the session. Asking questions at very large or formal conferences is often inappropriate or impossible. Listeners jotting down their questions with their notes, while waiting for the opportunity to question the speaker, is a valuable use of their time.

### **F. Take Notes**

Listeners should concentrate on taking notes on key ideas or concepts. Here are some tips that people can use for taking notes:

- Avoid substituting note taking for active listening
- Read the notes within 24 hours
- Highlight major points
- Keying and printing notes as a learning strategy

## **Section 2.4 Reading Business Documents**

### **Section Learning Outcomes**

When students have completed Section 2.4, they should be able to:

- Discuss the difference between reading and comprehending a text.
- Explain the purpose of scanning or previewing material before reading it.
- Describe strategies to improve retention.
- Define *distance learning*.

## **I. Strategies for Comprehending and Retaining Content**

The amount of information on any subject in every field is growing at an astounding rate. Thus, the ability to read well will be even more important in the future than it is today.

### **A. Understanding What You Read**

Reading is more than the physical act of looking at words on a page or on a computer screen.

### **B. Improving Reading Comprehension**

The ability to read quickly is important in our productivity-oriented business world. But even more important than reading speed are **comprehension** (understanding) and **retention** (remembering).

#### **Scan or Preview Material**

Before a listener commits to reading a body of content, they should scan the material. This preliminary overview will help them assess their objectives for reading and will also help them identify important points. If they are reading a textbook for a course, they should always read the exercise or assigned work before reading the chapter. Reading this material first helps focus on what needs to be learnt, and helps them identify information on which they need to take notes. To preview material, follow:

- Read headings.
- Read the first paragraph of the chapter, section, or article.
- Read the first sentence of each of the remaining paragraphs.
- Read the last paragraph of the chapter, section, or article.
- Review any illustrations.

By previewing material, the listener can anticipate what information will be presented. After reading the whole piece, read the most important points a second time to reinforce the comprehension and retention of the information.

### **Read the Material**

While reading, readers should focus their full attention and concentrate on reading. Reading is the receiving of the raw input of written communication. However, *reading* is not synonymous with *absorbing and mentally processing* the information contained in the written communication. Comprehending what is read is an active process. The mind must work to understand the information the reader is reading. The more complex the written information is, the harder the reader must work.

As an efficient reader, the reader will target the information they need, and then relate it to knowledge they have already acquired. Look for the main ideas, and constantly relate what they already know to the new material being presented. Their environment and state of mind will enhance or detract from their comprehension. It is important for the readers to learn to focus their full attention on the material they are reading in order to comprehend and retain the information.

### **Take Notes**

To help remember what the reader has read, they should take notes that include the main ideas. How to find these main ideas? Usually, writers deal with only one main idea per paragraph, and they often place the main idea in a topic sentence, often the first sentence in the paragraph. In addition to noting the main idea, a reader should also note the facts, examples, and supporting points that explain, support, or develop each main idea. Noting page numbers in their notes is helpful for future reference to the book.

### **Make an Outline**

One way to organize reading notes is to make an outline. In an outline, list the main ideas on separate lines, with supporting points listed underneath. Number the main ideas, beginning at the left-hand margin, and indent supporting points.

### **Reread and Review**

How often the reader rereads or reviews material will depend on its difficulty and how they plan to use the information. Often, quick scanning or rereading of their notes will be adequate for review if the first reading was done carefully.

## **II. Effective Note Taking while Reading**

The process of writing information increases a reader's ability to comprehend and remember

it. The purpose of taking notes while reading is to highlight the most important points in the material.

### III. Take Useful Notes

#### A. Find the Important Points

In written material, important points are often indicated through formatting techniques. Text material is usually broken down into sections by headings, and important words or phrases are in **bold** or *italic* type. Sometimes key points are formatted in a special way, such as in a box or with shading around or behind the text, or are presented in special positions, such as in the margins as in this book. Another method of emphasizing important points is to number them or put them in a bulleted list.

#### Margin Notes and Underlining Techniques on Other Documents

Sometimes readers need to add notes to the source such as a handout, a textbook, a periodical, or computer documentation. If they have their own copy or a photocopy of the material, they could:

- Underline or highlight important points
- Make notes in the margins

Section	Title	Text
2.1	<b>Overview</b>	Section 2.1 explains nonverbal messages, such as body language, environment, facial expressions, and handshakes speak volumes more than words. Because nonverbal communication is so important, one must always be mindful of appearance and how it may be interpreted; likewise, its absence can be interpreted as negative.
2.1	<b>Teaching Suggestions</b>	Discuss differences regarding verbal and nonverbal communication. Students can identify obvious types of nonverbal communication, such as facial expressions, hand gestures, eye contact, and body language. To clarify the difference between paralanguage and verbal communication, have students analyze less obvious nonverbal communication elements, such as vocal usage, touch, environmental symbols, distance, and time. Have students identify examples where the volume, tone, pitch, and rate of a person's speech could send a nonverbal message. Excerpts from the film "At First Sight" can

		promote discussion regarding the interpretation of nonverbal messages. The game “Guesstures” (similar to charades) can help students experience the challenge in communicating a word without being able to verbalize its meaning.
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Overview</b>	Section 2.2 explains how listening is an integral part of the communication process, yet it is often taken for granted as much of the routine workday is spent using this skill. Listening effectively requires active concentration. There are two types of listening: passive and active. The difference between these two kinds of listening is the level of the listener’s involvement.
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Teaching Suggestions</b>	Create a set of directions to get from one fictional place to another. The directions should include several details mentioning landmarks, turns, shapes, objects, and colors. Use your discretion as to the length of the directions. Next, remove two students from the class so they cannot hear the directions being read. Then, select one student to read the directions to another while a third student “eavesdrops” on the conversation. (Have the third student distracted in some way.) After listening to the directions, let each student who “heard” the directions repeat them to other students who were removed from the listening exercise. Finally, let these students repeat the directions to the rest of the class. Discuss the two versions of the directions as to the differences, if any, and whether active listening can be distinguished from passive listening.
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Overview</b>	Section 2.3 explains the importance of effective listening is important in both business and casual settings. The section helps students identify techniques for effective listening in both casual and business situations. Teleconferencing is on the rise, making it mandatory for employees to possess basic understanding of this technique. The section makes suggestions at how employees can take steps to get better at it. Note making is also a skill that good listeners must possess and the section guides the students to do the same effectively.

2.3	<b>Teaching Suggestions</b>	<p>Ideally, use two separate distance-learning rooms for this exercise. If not possible, two monitors and two video cameras could be used in separate but adjoining rooms with the cables passing under the door. Another possibility would be a single video camera and two VCR monitors.</p> <p>Divide the class into four separate groups and have each group prepare an oral presentation on an agreed topic that will require the groups to accumulate information before the date of the actual event. The presentations should include specific questions to be asked and will require interaction from the other groups. The assignment will be to generate a joint report or finding. On the day of the assignment, send two of the groups into a separate room—one will be the production group while the other makes its presentation. If in distance-learning rooms, let the conference begin with interchanges between the two presentation groups and develop the final report. If in two rooms with video equipment, the monitor in each room becomes the representative of the opposite group and the interchange will be through camera and screen. If with only a single video camera and two monitors, tape the presentations as if they were on a time-delay utilizing the production teams as go-betweens in both groups. Tape in sections, rewind that portion, deliver to second group, view (with appropriate note taking and discussion), tape the process of the second group's viewing, progress, discussion, and response to first group. Repeat this process back and forth until the final report can be generated. By this time, a complete tape of the whole process will be available for the class to analyze and discuss. In all situations, the production groups will be responsible for observation and critical analysis of the process.</p>
2.4	<b>Overview</b>	<p>Section 2.4 explains how the ability to read quickly is important in our productivity-oriented business world. But even more important than reading speed are comprehension (understanding) and retention (remembering). Many of the suggestions made for increasing reading speed, such as taking notes, outlining, and reviewing, also contribute to greater comprehension. The section also provides a basic</p>



		understanding of distance learning and webinars.
<b>2.4</b>	<b>Teaching Suggestions</b>	Bring several textbooks to class or have the students bring several books to class for this exercise. Have each student select a book they have not used or read. Skim the table of contents, the introduction, any promo comments on the covers, etc., for basic information about the book. Open the book to the leading overview or opening paragraphs for the first chapter and skim the information briefly, taking any notes necessary to help remember. In a brief description to the class, have each student tell the class about the book based on the limited information gathered. If possible, either the instructor or the student to whom the book belongs may confirm the assumed content reported. Discuss how our opinions may inform our comprehension of the actual text.
<b>Additional Teaching Material</b>		
<b>ESL</b>		<p><b>Oral Presentation</b></p> <p>Learning about the cultures of foreign-born students in class will promote tolerance and acceptance. The teacher may want to encourage ESL students to give an oral presentation about their home countries to the class. This information could include videos showing their native clothing, cities, means of transportation, customs, myths and legends, religious practices, etc.</p> <p><b>Group Activities</b></p> <p>Activities that encourage the students to interact are beneficial. The foreign-born students may want to make food from their countries and bring it in for the other students to taste. Recipes could be provided. The ESL students may want to teach the others dances or songs from their countries. Arts and craft projects are a good means of generating interaction and interest.</p> <p><b>Cultural Biases</b></p> <p>Students from countries that are at war with each other might bring their cultural biases into the classroom and not want to listen to what the others have to say. This might include students whose countries were previously at war. The teacher might explain that America is a great country because people from many countries have made contributions here.</p>

	<p><b>Slang and Idioms</b></p> <p>Foreign-born students often have trouble understanding American slang and idioms, until they become more familiar with the language. If the teachers use slang, they should take care to explain the terms.</p> <p><b>Speed</b></p> <p>Foreign-born students often complain that Americans speak too fast. In the ESL classroom, the students understand because the teachers speak more slowly. The teachers should explain to the ESL students that when they become more familiar with the language, they will understand more fully what is being said.</p> <p><b>Teaching Styles</b></p> <p>Many teachers in American colleges and universities use the lecture style of teaching. If there are foreign-born students in their classes, they should also write notes on the board, use a flip chart, or hand out notes to the ESL students so they can more easily follow the presentation. This will also help eliminate words that sound alike.</p>
<b>Service-Learning</b>	<p>Practice your listening skills while collecting the life stories of patients at the veteran's hospital or residents of a local retirement center. Transcribe the stories and give a copy of each person's oral history to the hospital or center. Bind the collection of stories together in a book to give to the hospital or retirement center. Remember to get permission from the appropriate administrator before interviewing patients and residents. Contact the International Student Center on your campus to volunteer as a "conversation buddy" with international students who want to brush up on their language skills. Keep a journal of your own listening behavior. Do you believe you are a good listener? How did your listening and communication skills improve? If you could model the communication process between people from different countries, how would it look? What are the specific communication issues involved in cross-cultural communication? How are verbal and nonverbal communication similar and different in your two countries?</p>