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CM110-B

Professor Tim Jenkins

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Listening Project

It is peculiar how unrecognizable a characteristic, mannerism, or skill can be. When an outside source points out one of your skills—most likely in a negative, connotative way—there is that almost-immediate recant; and then denial and the truth begins to settle in; all you can do is concentrate on that one skill. I never really saw listening as a vital tool; however, in Stephen E. Lucas *The Art of Public Speaking*, listening is much more than paying attention and engaging in a conversation, it is an art. In this assignment, we were to track down when we failed to listen, more specifically when our listening lapsed. Here are my stories (cue *Law and Order: SVU* music).

Story 1: It was dinner time, about 6:00pm on a Thursday night. Since my group of friends is numerous, we always combine tables; today we combined three. As expected, we are not the only people in the cafeteria. Just like us, the cafeteria was filled with cliques, group of friends combining tables, having a great time. This created problems. Due to the loud environment, it was very difficult to engage on the conversations; most of the conversations we had did not go anywhere because half the time we could not hear what that person was saying. This affected our situation, defined by “the time and place in which speech communication occurs” (Lucas, 21). The external interference from the other people in the cafeteria and the fact that people at own table was engaging in multiple conversations created schisms between the conversational channels. The best thing to do in this specific occurrence is to be patient and allow each person to talk without any interruption so that everyone at the table can coherently be involved in the conversation.

Story 2: It was Monday, 3:00pm and I finally came back to my room from finishing my classes for the day. As normal, the first thing I did was sitting by my desk and immediately began working on my homework so that I will not fall behind. Unlike my previous semesters, I am doing more prior reading-based classes, and since I am unfortunately a slow reader, I take a lot of time out of my day to focus on reading. With such alacrity comes a short attention span, almost purposely finding ways to get distracted and focusing on less important things, for example, getting on my computer and surfing my Facebook social “family” for almost an hour. Simply to put, I was not concentrating. To be fully truthful, I get really distracted with my technology nowadays (computer, phone, TV, etc.). As stated, “…it’s so easy to let your thoughts wander rather than to concentrate…” (Lucas, 50). I feel the most appropriate way to solve such issue is when I am doing my homework, I can “hide” my possessions that I know I will use as an excuse to avoid my homework; that way, I can focus on my academics, rather than my materialistic “pride and joy.”

Story 3: It was Thursday, 9:45pm on a hot, humid evening. Every Thursday night I have an SGA (Swede Government Association) meeting. Being Junior Class President, my role is to give an update to my other fellow colleagues about what exactly is going on. During this meeting, I frankly cannot remember who was speaking at the time, but I interrupted the speaker inadvertently. I usually do not do this because I respect whoever is speaking; however, this time around was different. I was jumping into conclusions “…putting words into the speaker’s mouth” (Lucas, 52). Not only was I embarrassed about interrupting the speaker in an unprofessional way, my so-called “conclusion” was incorrect. The most appropriate thing to do in such situation is to just let the speaker voice his or her opinion and then once the speaker is through talking, then you have every right to counterclaim or agree.

To conclude this project, I am to say that I will learn from such mistakes. This class has opened my eyes to skills I would never even consider contemplating, more specifically listening. We are all imperfect, especially when it comes to listening. As Lucas states, as long as one commits and tries to become a better listener, then it will naturally improve (Lucas, 60).

Works Cited

Lucas, Stephen E. *The Art of Public Speaking*. 11th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012. Print.