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Activity 2

Digital toolkit for innovative curriculum and methodological development

Module 2 – Communication enhancement

Method 3 – Active listening

Case study

Module 2 – Communication Enhancement

Case Study – Listening to Be Heard: Building Trust Through Active Listening

Related Method - Active Listening

Context and Background

Organisation: A vocational training centre in Southern Europe offering adult education for upskilling and re-employment.

Target Group: Adults aged 22–50, mixed gender, including unemployed jobseekers, employees in career transition, and migrants with limited language proficiency.

Scope: The centre aimed to improve participants' interpersonal communication skills to support employability, teamwork, and integration into multicultural workplaces.

Problem / Challenge Presented

Participants frequently struggled with **miscommunication** in both professional and personal contexts. Many learners reported difficulties understanding instructions, misinterpreting feedback, or becoming defensive in conversations. Employers had noted that weak listening skills led to workplace conflicts, decreased productivity, and strained teamwork. A training approach was needed to help learners develop the ability to listen attentively, paraphrase meaning, and respond constructively.

Actions Taken / Method Applied

The training centre integrated **Active Listening activities** into its communication skills workshops.

Key methods included:

- learners passed messages down a chain, paraphrasing each time, to highlight how meaning can shift without careful listening.
- participants practised repeating back what a partner said (echo) and adding their own contribution (expand), reinforcing understanding and collaborative dialogue.

Activities were conducted in a **supportive, interactive environment**, with facilitators modelling good listening behaviours (eye contact, nodding, clarifying questions).

Outcomes and Results

Learners reported greater confidence in accurately understanding instructions and feedback. Participants practised paraphrasing and summarising, which improved teamwork in group tasks.

Learners recognised their own listening habits (e.g., interrupting, thinking ahead) and worked to change them.



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Several jobseekers highlighted that they used paraphrasing techniques in real interviews, helping them demonstrate attentiveness and professionalism.

Lessons Learned

Active listening is a trainable skill that can be developed through structured, playful practice. Simple methods like paraphrasing and echoing can make a big difference in communication outcomes.

Reflection after activities is as important as the activity itself, helping learners link practice to real-life scenarios.

Key Success Factors

Use of short, structured activities that made listening skills tangible and measurable. Inclusion of relevant, workplace-based scenarios (instructions from a manager, customer requests) ensured practical application.

A non-judgmental environment encouraged learners to practise without fear of mistakes.

Facilitator role-modelling reinforced behaviours learners could imitate.

Challenges Encountered and How They Were Addressed

Some learners assumed listening was “too simple” and undervalued the practice. Facilitators overcame this by showing how often messages changed in the relay game, making the skill gap visible.

Migrant learners initially struggled to paraphrase accurately; facilitators provided simplified prompts, visual aids, and peer support to scaffold their practice.

Larger groups limited practice opportunities; splitting into smaller groups increased participation.

Applicability / Recommendations for Educators

Start with short, engaging listening games before moving to longer role-plays or workplace simulations.

Encourage learners to focus on listening for meaning, not memorising exact words.

Integrate reflection questions to help learners connect activities to personal experiences.

Adapt difficulty by varying message complexity, using images for low-literacy learners, or adding emotional tone for advanced learners.

Reinforce learning with real-life applications (e.g., job interviews, customer service, teamwork).