

## Listen to speak better

*Why the best speakers talk less — and what they do instead*

### WHAT THIS LESSON IS ABOUT

Not about vocabulary.

Not about grammar.

About what you do while the other person is talking — and why it changes how well you speak.

## THE REAL PROBLEM

Here is what most learners do while the other person is speaking. They prepare their next sentence. They stop listening. They start translating and rehearsing.

The result: they miss what was said. They give an answer that does not quite fit. And they sound disconnected.

Good speakers listen actively. They use what the other person said as their material. That means they never run out of things to say — because the conversation gives it to them.

### KEY IDEA

Listening is not waiting. It is collecting. Every word the other person says is material you can use.

## THREE ACTIVE LISTENING MOVES

### 1. The echo (one word back)

Repeat the most interesting or surprising word from what they said. Add a rising tone.

They say: 'I just got promoted.' You say: 'Promoted?'

They will explain. You did not ask a question. You gave them the signal to continue. And you get time to think.

### LISTEN AND REPEAT

**"Promoted?"**

[PAUSE]

**"By yourself?"**

[PAUSE]

**"Last week?"**

[PAUSE]

**"All the way there?"**

[PAUSE]

**"For free?"**

[PAUSE]

## 2. The pause

Do not fill silence immediately. A one-second pause after they finish signals that you were actually thinking about what they said.

Most learners rush to fill silence because it feels uncomfortable. But a short pause makes you sound more confident, not less.

Try this: count to one in your head before you respond. That one second changes the whole feel of the conversation.

## 3. Connect before you redirect

Before you change the topic or give your opinion, say one word or phrase that shows you heard.

'That makes sense.' 'I can see why.' 'That sounds tough.' 'Interesting.'

Then add your thought. The connection comes first. Otherwise you sound like you are not listening — even if you were.

### LISTEN AND REPEAT

**"That makes sense."**

[PAUSE]

**"I can see why."**

[PAUSE]

**"That sounds tough."**

[PAUSE]

**"Interesting — and did you..."**

[PAUSE]

**"Right, and what happened after?"**

[PAUSE]

## PRACTICE

Read the statement. Pause. Try to respond using one of the three moves.

#	Sentence	Answer
1	'I moved here from the Philippines three years ago.'	<i>Echo: 'Three years ago?' or connect: 'That is quite a change.'</i>
2	'I have been learning Dutch for six months.'	<i>Follow: 'What made you start?' or echo: 'Six months?'</i>
3	'Work has been really hard this week.'	<i>Connect: 'That sounds tough.' Then pause.</i>
4	'I went to Japan last summer — it was unlike anything I expected.'	<i>Echo: 'Unlike anything you expected?' Let them explain.</i>
5	'I am thinking about changing jobs.'	<i>Connect + open question: 'Interesting — what is making you consider it?'</i>

**TODAY'S SMALL ACTION**

In your next conversation, say nothing for one second after the other person finishes. Just listen. Notice what they add when you give them the space.

*Want more practice? The members edition has 20 listening response pairs, 10 error corrections, and a self-check quiz.*