

## Recitation C

### Active Listening

Japanese people are generally quiet and reserved. This does not mean they are good listeners. In conversations, they use frequent back channeling — *aizuchi* — and expressions like *sou-desu-ne*. To a foreigner, this means the Japanese person is agreeing. Actually this simply means that he or she heard what the speaker has said, and not necessarily that he or she is engaged in the conversation.

To be a good listener means to be an active listener. Active listening is very important in conversations, especially in intercultural communication. It is not easy for people with different cultural backgrounds to understand each other because they have different ways of thinking, feeling, and expressing themselves. Active listening involves checking with the other person if you understand correctly the message you heard. To do this, you need to verbalize your interpretation of what you heard. This means asking questions, repeating or paraphrasing what the other person said. By doing this, the speaker can check if you understood his or her intended message.

Active listening is one way to show that you are interested in what the other person is saying, and that you really want to understand the message. It keeps you from judging the other person based on your own values and ways of doing things. It shows your respect, and this is highly appreciated by the speaker. Active listening is one way to show your mind is open to what the other person has to say. It is an effective means of bringing people closer. Finally, active listening does not mean simply agreeing with the other person. It is a behavior that comes from a sincere desire to respect and to build positive relationships with others, and the practice of active listening can encourage intercultural understanding.

(294words)