

Beyond Lectures:
Insights from Business Discipline-
(Reflections, Transformations, and the Human
Side of Teaching)

Chief Editor
Dr. Azila Jaini



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EDUCATING THE HEAD, HEART AND HAND: A LISTENING PEDAGOGY FOR THE AI ERA

Ahmad Syahmi Ahmad Fadzil, Nor Zubaidah Nor Albashri

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of higher education, the traditional lecture model is facing an unprecedented existential challenge. As we move toward 2030, the "Business Discipline" finds itself at a crossroads between technological efficiency and human-centric value. The contemporary student, a digital native immersed in a constant stream of social media algorithms, is increasingly prone to information overload, a state where the sheer volume of data outpaces the cognitive and emotional capacity to process it. Simultaneously, the integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has introduced a "shortcut culture" in learning. While AI can synthesize data and generate reports in seconds, it lacks the biological and psychological depth required for Deep Listening.

The current pedagogical crisis is not a lack of information, but a deficit of presence. Students are increasingly adept at "Head-only" learning, a transactional mode of education where AI acts as a surrogate for thought, bypassing the struggle of critical inquiry. This reliance on technological shortcuts honors the "result" but ignores the "process," leading to a fragmentation of the human element in education. To counter this, we must pivot toward a Listening Pedagogy. This is not merely the act of hearing a lecture; it is a holistic engagement that honors the Head, Heart, and Hand (Sipos et al., 2008).

As highlighted in the recent AACSB International (2025) report, "What Skills Will Future Business Graduates Need?", the market is shifting its premium from technical domain expertise, which is increasingly automated, to "durable skills" such as empathy, ethical discernment, and active listening. Business education must, therefore, transcend the "beyond lectures" mandate by fostering environments where students learn to "feel" the implications of their decisions. This article argues that by reclaiming the human side of teaching through listening pedagogy, we prepare graduates not just to be efficient operators of AI, but to be leaders who can navigate the complexities of a human-driven global economy.

The instructor must shift from a "content deliverer" to a "listening architect." In this pedagogical model, the instructor's role is to model the very human elements of empathy, presence, and discernment that students are currently outsourcing to algorithms. This transformation requires the instructor to inhabit the 3H (Head, Heart, and Hand) framework as a mentor, shaping the student not through what is told, but through how the student is heard. Figure 1 depicts the power of listening pedagogy through the heart, the head, and the hand.

The Theoretical Landscape of Listening Pedagogy

Listening pedagogy represents a fundamental shift from a "logic of transmission" to a "logic of relation". Historically, Western higher education has been dominated by *logocentrism*, the prioritization of the spoken and written word as the primary vehicles of power and knowledge, which often relegates listening to a passive, secondary role of silence. However, contemporary theory reimagines listening as an active, transformative force. This is rooted in the "dialogic" approach of Freire (1970), who criticized the "banking model" of education where information is merely deposited into passive students. In contrast, a listening pedagogy fosters a "pedagogy of witness," where the educator and learner engage in a mutual exchange that validates the student's lived experience and critical agency.

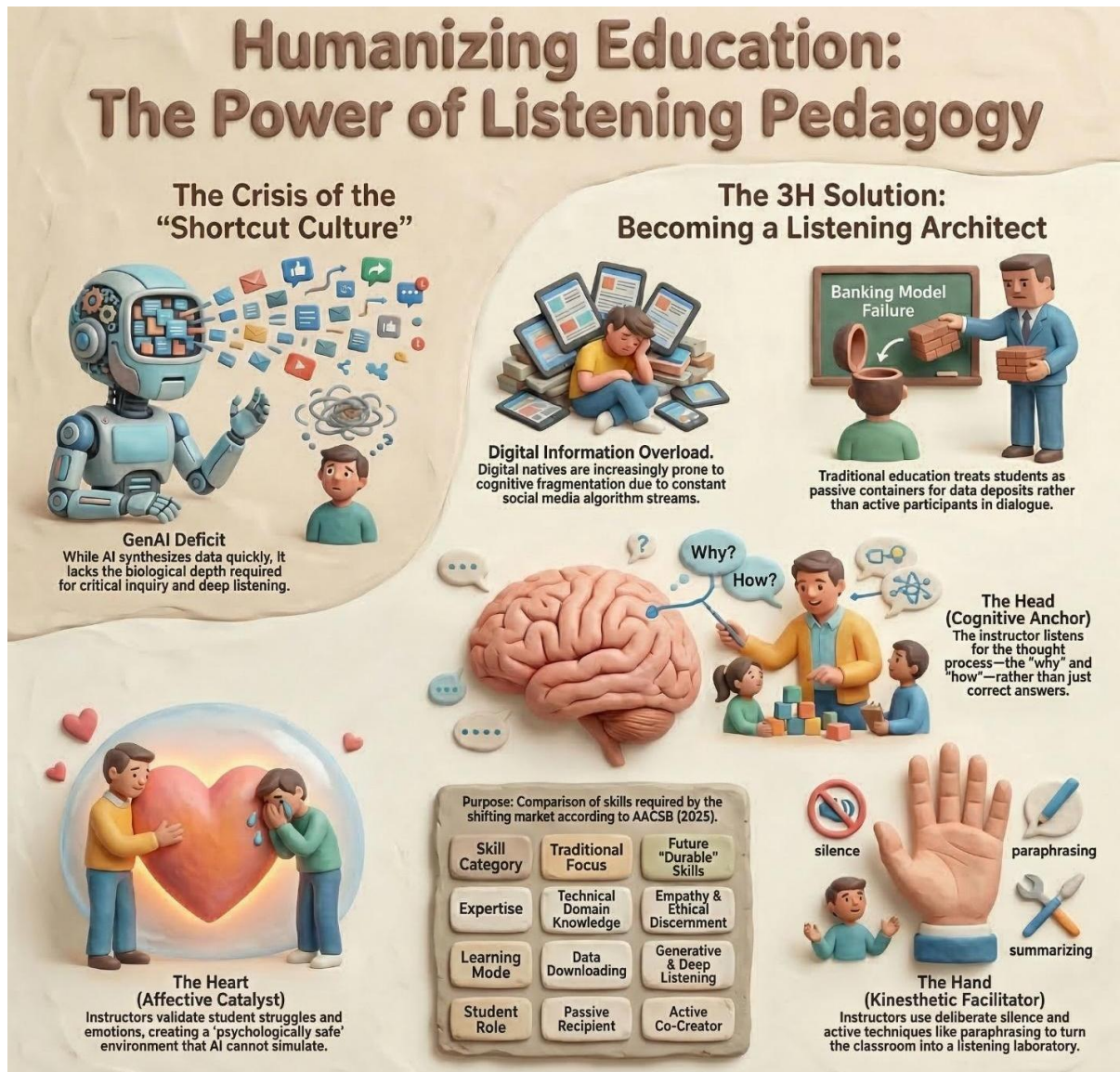


Figure 1: The 3H solution: becoming a listening architect (Source: Authors)

Further grounding is found in the work of Rogers (1951), who posited that "empathic listening" is a prerequisite for psychological growth and authentic learning. In the context of business education, this theory suggests that the classroom should be a site of "receptive attention," allowing students to move beyond the aggressive advocacy often taught in competitive disciplines. This is supported by Scharmer's (2016) Theory U, which identifies "Deep Listening" as a move away from "downloading" habitual data toward "generative listening", a state where the listener is open to being changed by the encounter. For the modern student, this theoretical grounding provides the necessary resistance against the "echo chambers" of social media and the reductive, result-oriented nature of Artificial Intelligence (AI), offering a framework for genuine intellectual and emotional resonance (Sipos et al., 2008).

Instructor and Listening Pedagogy

a) The Instructor as the Cognitive Anchor (The Head)

From the side of the instructor, Cognitive Listening involves a move away from the "Sage on the Stage" toward a "Critical Mirror." In a classroom saturated with AI-generated responses, the instructor must listen for the *process* of student thought rather than just the correctness of the output. When an instructor listens critically to a student's contribution, they are probing for

the "why" and the "how," effectively disrupting the "shortcut culture." By reflecting the nuances, contradictions, or ethical gaps in a student's argument, the instructor forces a transition from Level 1 (Downloading) to Level 2 (Factual) listening. This cognitive engagement signals to the student that their unique human perspective is more valuable than a polished, AI-synthesized answer, thereby reinforcing the high-level analytical skills mandated by AACSB International (2025).

b) The Instructor as the Affective Catalyst (The Heart)

The "Heart" of the instructor is perhaps the most potent antidote to the isolation of social media and the sterility of digital interfaces. Affective Listening by the instructor involves "honoring the human element" by validating the student's struggle with information overload. When an instructor listens to a student's hesitation, frustration, or sudden spark of interest, they create a "psychologically safe" environment that AI cannot simulate. This is the "feeling" of education; it is the moment a student realizes they are being seen as a developing professional, not just a data point. By modeling this heart-centered presence, the instructor teaches the student that leadership in the business world is fundamentally a relational endeavor, grounded in the ability to sense and respond to the human condition.

c) The Instructor as the Kinesthetic Facilitator (The Hand)

Finally, the Hand represents the instructor's active role in structuring the classroom as a "Listening Laboratory." This is the practical work of "holding space." Instead of filling every silence with a slide or a lecture, the instructor deliberately uses silence and "Active Listening" techniques such as paraphrasing, mirroring, and generative questioning to pull the student into the center of the learning experience. By physically moving through the space and engaging in real-time, unscripted dialogue, the instructor demonstrates that business is a "contact sport" of ideas. This "Hand" approach shapes the student by forcing them into the "doing" of communication, ensuring that the skills they graduate with are not just theoretical, but are "durable" habits of engagement that will serve them long after the current AI models have become obsolete.

d) The Student as a Co-Creator in the Listening Classroom

In a listening-centered pedagogy, the student is not merely a passive receiver of knowledge but an active co-creator of meaning. While the instructor models cognitive, affective, and kinesthetic listening, the learning environment becomes transformative only when students likewise engage in reciprocal listening practices. This perspective draws heavily from Freire's (1970) emphasis on dialogic learning, in which the learner participates as an equal partner in the educational encounter, breaking away from the hierarchical "banking model" that positions students as empty vessels. When students are invited to listen to one another to viewpoints, uncertainties, and emerging ideas they develop intellectual humility, a trait increasingly critical in an AI-driven world where certainty is often simulated rather than earned.

Co-creation also aligns with Rogers' (1951) conception of authentic learning, which occurs when individuals become open to experience rather than defensively protecting preconceived assumptions. In the modern business classroom, where social media and algorithmic feeds often trap students in echo chambers, structured peer listening activities challenge them to encounter differences constructively. Through collaborative sense-making, students learn not only what to think but how to think together, an essential capacity for future leaders navigating complex, multicultural business environments.

Therefore, positioning students as co-creators reinforces the "Hand" dimension of the 3H model by engaging them in the practice of dialogic engagement, not merely the theory. Listening becomes a shared responsibility, a distributed act of presence that transforms the classroom into a participatory learning community. In this way, listening pedagogy becomes more than an instructional technique; it becomes a democratic practice that shapes students into empathetic, discerning professionals capable of leading human-centered organizations.

Barriers to Implementing Listening Pedagogy

While the promise of listening pedagogy is transformative, its implementation within higher education, particularly in business disciplines, faces several structural and cultural barriers. One of the most pervasive constraints is the dominance of the traditional “banking model” of education, which Freire (1970) critiques as a system where knowledge is deposited into passive learners rather than co-constructed through dialogue. This model remains heavily embedded in lecture-based teaching, institutional expectations, and curriculum designs that prioritize coverage over connection. As a result, educators often struggle to create dialogic spaces where genuine listening can occur.

A second barrier arises from the emotional and psychological demands placed on instructors. Rogers (1951) emphasizes that empathic listening requires authenticity, presence, and unconditional positive regard, qualities that demand time, energy, and emotional labour. Many instructors, particularly those managing large classrooms, competing for workloads, and research expectations, may find it challenging to sustain the deep relational engagement required. Without institutional recognition or professional development focused on affective listening, educators may default to more transactional teaching modes.

Additionally, the digital attention economy has reshaped how students engage with learning. Immersed in algorithm-driven feeds, students often bring fragmented attention patterns and reduced tolerance for reflective silence into classroom conditions that directly oppose the contemplative nature of listening pedagogy. This creates a mismatch between the sustained, reciprocal listening required for meaningful dialogue and the fast-paced, surface-level consumption encouraged by digital platforms.

Finally, assessment structures in many business programs continue to privilege measurable output exams, presentations, and standardized tasks that disproportionately develop the Head while neglecting the Heart and Hand. These forms of evaluation reward polished performance rather than authentic presence, curiosity, or embodied engagement. Even when more reflective assessments are introduced, the growing reliance on AI allows students to bypass the internal struggle and emotional labor that genuine reflection requires. As a result, the “reflective work” often remains cognitive in appearance but hollow in experience.

Until assessments are re-designed to cultivate all three dimensions of cognitive discernment (Head), emotional attunement (Heart), and participatory, dialogic practice (Hand), listening pedagogy will remain peripheral rather than transformational. True reform demands assessments that cannot be outsourced to algorithms: peer-listening encounters, dialogic circles, experiential reflections, and collaborative meaning-making processes that require students to show up fully as thinking, feeling, and acting human beings.

Conclusion: Reinforcing the Human Sanctuary in Business Education

As we look toward the future of higher education in 2030, the “Business Discipline” must decide whether it will become a factory for algorithmic optimization or a sanctuary for human development. The proliferation of social media and the ubiquity of Generative AI have created a “shortcut culture” that prioritizes the “Head” at the expense of the “Heart” and the “Hand.” This information overload has not made students more informed; rather, it has made them more fragmented, distancing them from the visceral, emotional, and ethical realities of their chosen profession. To counter this, listening pedagogy offers more than just a communication skill; it offers a way to honor the human element by requiring presence in an age of distraction. By moving beyond the lecture and into the “relational space” of deep listening, we provide students with the “feeling” of education—an experience that is felt in the heart, processed in the head, and enacted through the hand.

The shift toward a listening-centered classroom is a direct response to the AACSB International (2025) mandate for durable, human-led skills. When instructors pivot from content delivery to active, empathic facilitation, they model the very leadership qualities that

future business graduates will need to navigate a tech-saturated world. This pedagogy ensures that students do not simply "download" information but "present" new possibilities. It transforms the classroom into a laboratory for empathy, where the "Human Side of Teaching" becomes the primary competitive advantage for the graduate. Ultimately, honoring the human element means recognizing that while AI can simulate a response, only a human can truly listen. By anchoring business education in the 3H framework, we ensure that our students graduate not as efficient processors of data, but as compassionate, discerning leaders who understand that the heart of business is, and always will be, the human connection.

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