

Chapter 2 – Listening Types and Competencies

Teaching Objectives

After reading this chapter, students should be able to:

- Identify the types of comprehension needed to be a confident listener.
- Differentiate between the different types of listening.
- Discuss how empathy affects listening in multiple ways.
- Address the impacts that cultural and gender differences have on listening skills.
- Explain the different levels of listening.

Chapter Outline

- I. Listening is a critical communication and life competency.
 - A. Listening is essential to the completion of the communication act.
 - 1. Those who listen, learn.
 - 2. Those who listen can ideally understand message meanings more accurately.
 - 3. According to the National Communication Association, a competent listener should use literal comprehension to identify primary ideas and use critical comprehension to identify biases, unique perspectives, and organizational patterns.
- II. Scholars now see listening as a goal-driven communication act.
- III. Types of listening are related to differing listening goals.
 - A. Discriminative listening addresses the reception of stimuli in the listening process.
 - 1. Wolvin and Coakley define it as listening to distinguish aural and visual stimuli.
 - a) This type of listening helps us determine whether or not to pay attention to sounds and from where sounds are coming.
 - b) This type of listening helps us distinguish messages from other noise in our environment.
 - 2. Discriminative listening is critical to our survival.
 - a) Discriminative listening helps us determine if sounds are warning of danger.
 - b) We begin developing this survival skill in the womb.
 - c) Even at a very young age we can distinguish familiar voices and languages from unfamiliar ones.
 - 3. Discriminative listening helps us make sense of human sounds.
 - a) Speech intelligibility is the amount of speech understood from the sounds alone.
 - b) Speaker affect is the perception of emotion, pitch, and pattern.
 - c) This type of listening helps us distinguish our own language sounds and learn other languages, as well.
 - d) Listening barriers might occur if a listener has difficulty decoding messages sent with unfamiliar patterns, intonations, or noise.
 - B. Comprehensive listening focuses on listening for understanding.
 - 1. Comprehensive listening focuses on understanding word meanings.
 - 2. Comprehensive listening also involves interpreting nonverbal meanings.
 - a) Word meanings are affected by tone of voice, facial expressions made by the speaker, and other linguistic cues.
 - b) The meaning of a message is also affected by the communication situation.
 - 3. Comprehensive listening addresses how one stores information in memory.
 - a) We use schemata to organize information and generate listening expectations.
 - b) Schemata are the patterns used to make sense of information.
 - C. Critical listening helps us evaluate the speaker, the message, and the value of the information presented.
 - 1. Critical listening involves distinguishing between facts and opinion.
 - 2. We must also recognize discrepancies in verbal and nonverbal messages.
 - a) Messages may be perceived as inconsistent when senders have unclear or conflicting intentions when sending the message, problems in listening fidelity

- occur, information is unpleasant, or when senders uses their nonverbals to protect their image.
- b) Some research indicates that those who focus on nonverbal behavior during communication might be more accepting of cultural differences.
- D. Appreciative listening involves listening for “sensory stimulation or enjoyment.”
- 1. Listeners can have physical and emotional responses to sounds.
 - 2. This type of listening might be attributed to making people better leaders.
 - 3. Appreciative listening helps us learn to accept other music, languages, and even cultures by keeping an open mind.
- E. Therapeutic listening is often called supportive or empathic listening, but is qualitatively different.
- 1. Empathic listening occurs when we listen to understand the thoughts, feelings and beliefs of others when our goal is emotional support.
 - 2. Supportive listening is a term often used to describe empathic listening that occurs between family and friends, but can also be used when listening to others.
 - 3. Arnold’s Typology of Listening helps demonstrate how supportive listening differs from other types of listening.
 - a) Red listening involves a listener who ignores the other’s needs and focuses on his or her own.
 - b) Yellow listening involves a listener who responds to the situation from his or her own perspective without considering the other.
 - c) Green listening involves a listener who listens to the other person without judgment, focusing on the other’s needs.
 - 4. Empathic listening that occurs in formal helping situations is typically called therapeutic listening.
 - a) Therapeutic listeners have a goal to just listen.
 - b) Therapeutic listeners avoid trying to “fix” situations or offering advice.
 - c) Five skills essential for therapeutic listening are focused attention, attending behaviors, supportive communication climate, listening with empathy, and responding appropriately.
- F. Empathy is a key attribute of listening.
- 1. Empathy is the process by which we connect with others.
 - a) We use our perception of how someone feels to help us determine a response.
 - b) Empathy is feeling “with” someone, and is often confused with sympathy.
 - c) Sympathy is feeling “for” someone.
 - 2. Empathy is important to listening because it affects our response to a speaker.
 - a) Empathic responsiveness refers to a receiver’s ability to take on the emotions felt by someone else.
 - b) Perspective taking occurs when we imagine ourselves in someone else’s place.
 - c) Sympathetic responsiveness addresses the “other emotions” you feel in a situation.
 - 3. Empathy is affected by multiple factors.
 - a) Gender, sociability, and culture appear to influence levels of empathy.
 - b) Research in different countries support that women tend to be more emotionally expressive.
 - c) There are differences in how empathy is expressed in individualistic and collectivistic cultures.

- IV. Different levels of listening, as identified by Van Slyke, help one determine how much effort is required during a listening act.
- A. The first level is passive listening.
 - 1. In this level of listening, one sits quietly while the other person talks.
 - 2. Energy is not spent truly comprehending the meaning of a message.
 - B. The second level is responsive listening, which might be better described as “responding” listening.
 - 1. Responding listening is a type of pseudo listening that occurs when listeners provides nonverbal or verbal confirmation to the speaker when they actually are not actively engaged in listening to the message.
 - 2. The listener is sending a false message that he or she is listening.
 - C. The third level is selective listening.
 - 1. The listener’s brain is engaged but only listening for what supports one’s agenda.
 - 2. This type of listening is helpful in argument and debate, but not when trying to understand the totality of a message.
 - D. The fourth level is attentive listening.
 - 1. In this level of listening, one listens with analytical mindset, listening for main points.
 - 2. This level of listening also allows for interest and curiosity from the listener.
 - E. The fifth level is active listening.
 - 1. In this level, all of one’s listening abilities are being used, and the other person’s feelings are acknowledged.
 - 2. One might use paraphrasing to encourage continued communication.
 - F. The final level of listening according to Van Slyke is empathic listening.
 - 1. We listen to understand the other person’s frame of reference.
 - 2. We are not just gathering information but also focused on understanding another person’s feelings.
- V. To be a truly effective listener, one must make choices about the type of listening and level of listening needed.

Discussion Questions

1. What type of listening do you feel like you most often engage in when you are in the classroom? Outside the classroom? Why?
2. Can you think of a time where listening fidelity was an issue for you? What was the scenario, and how did listening fidelity (or lack of it) affect your listening?
3. Do you think it is possible to ignore the impulse to fix the problems that your communication partner is discussing? Can you think of a situation where you were a therapeutic listener?
4. Are there times when it may be good to avoid engaging in empathic listening and focus one of the other types of listening?
5. Appreciative listening is not just about music. What other types of sounds do you like to listen to? Why do they appeal to you?
6. Why do you listen to music? How often do you simply sit and listen to music? Or, do you listen while doing other activities? If so, what types of activities? If you were choosing music for your classroom, what would you choose and why?
7. Think of your favorite movie. How did the soundtrack enhance the movie? If you listen to the soundtrack alone, would you be able to tell what point in the movie you would be?
8. Do you agree or disagree with the statement that most of a message's meaning can be determined by watching nonverbal communication?
9. Which levels of listening work best with which types of listening? For example, would therapeutic listening work best at a responsive level or a selective level? Why?

Activities and Assignments

1. To understand the differences in literal and critical comprehension, have students analyze an editorial column from a school, local, or national newspaper wherein both fact and opinion are presented. During analysis, students should identify what they believe is fact and what they find to be opinion. This analysis can occur in groups or as individuals, and can be used as an out-of-class assignment or in-class discussion. Students might also be encouraged to bring in their own print copy of an article or advertisement where fact and opinion can be distinguished.
2. Outside of class, have students compose a short written essay in which they identify one person whom they believe is an empathic listener. Have the students describe the qualities they see in this empathic listener, and in what scenario the student saw empathic listening in action. After reflecting on this listening skill, have students develop a goal statement in which they describe how they can improve their empathic listening abilities.

Alternatively, students can work in pairs or small groups to combine their descriptions. Then, compare the lists across the class groups. What attributes were common to some or all of the groups? What differences occurred? Why?

3. For 10–15 minutes (done inside or outside of class) have students observe people talking. Simply watch the nonverbal actions, and try not to eavesdrop. Based upon what is seen, have students try and determine what the relationship is between the participants and how the conversation is going. What emotions do students observe, and what nonverbal actions lead to those conclusions? This activity can be done by having everyone observe the same conversation or by having students watch different conversations and then compare and contrast how they see different emotions. (If done with a film clip, try to choose one that students are not familiar with.)
4. To show the power of nonverbal behavior, ask students to pay attention as four volunteers read the following statement while manipulating their nonverbal behaviors.

“Tonight, I am going to meet up with my best friend, and we are going to a party. It is going to be great. I can’t wait.”

- Student 1 – Deliver the phrase with excitement, giving a “thumbs up” to the audience and smiling excessively.
- Student 2 – Deliver the phrase as if you are not excited to go to the party. Roll your eyes!
- Student 3 – Deliver the phrase quickly and without looking at any audience members.
- Student 4 – Deliver the phrase as if the person you are meeting is not really your best friend, but rather someone with whom you are angry. Show your anger using facial expression.

Discuss the following questions after students have presented.

- What was the attitude of each speaker?
 - Was the speaker truthful? Believable?
 - What nonverbal behaviors were noticeable?
 - Were you focused more on the verbal statement or the nonverbal messages being sent?
 - What types of listening did you use during the activity? Explain.
5. The Library of Congress provides a variety of podcasts on the relationship between music and the brain: http://bit.ly/music_and_the_brain. They may be used with this and later chapters of the book. The podcasts “Music, Memories, and the Brain” and “Making Music Changes Brains” are particularly suited for this chapter. Discussion may center on the role of appreciative listening in their lives. Do they study while listening? When and how has music affected their personal lives?
 6. Have students identify their favorite musical artists. Why do they like their music? Is it similar or different from the music most of their friends and/or family like? Do some students primarily like one style of music, while others have more eclectic tastes? Select a couple of the audio installations highlighted in the following article, “12 Sound Artists Changing Perception”: <http://bit.ly/soundartists>. What are their reactions to what they heard? How are these artists changing the way we perceive art and sound?
 7. Tell students that for the next three class periods they will respond to a 2- to 3-minute open-ended question to orient them to class discussion for the day. While responding to the question, play a variety of music to play in the background (e.g., Braham’s, a hip-hop song, classic rock, etc.). Be sure the music has different tempos, etc. On the last day, ask them about the music they hear and how it affected their ability to respond and/or how they responded.
 8. Send students individually or in small groups out on a listening scavenger hunt. Record sound at several places and play it for students. Students then go in search of the sounds. Ideally, this will occur during a class period, but it could be part of week-long assignment. As a twist on this assignment, have them SnapChat or take and upload selfies to an online class discussion when they find the location. Based on your campus and the time of your class, ideas include: campus clock tower (ringing on quarter hour); student union, choir room, bus station, busy intersection on campus, class lecture, university chapel, etc. Class discussion can center on the nature and types of sounds we are exposed to on a daily basis that we tend to ignore or how easy/hard it was to identify and/or find the sounds.

Exam Questions

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Maddie can recall the basic and supporting details of a conversation. This ability is called _____ comprehension according to the National Communication Association.
 - a. demonstrative
 - b. critical
 - c. literal
 - d. multi-dimensional

Answer: c

2. If Ilsa listens and processes a message almost identical to the message that was being sent to her, one could say Ilsa has which of the following?
 - a. Low listening fidelity
 - b. High listening fidelity
 - c. Low speaker affect
 - d. High speaker affect

Answer: b

3. You and your little brother are discussing a recent movie you both saw. In response to your question, “How did you like it?” he responds with a sarcastic tone, “It was just awesome.” From his tone, you know he actually disliked the movie. You have payed attention to _____, an element of _____ listening.
 - a. dimensionality; supportive
 - b. denotation; comprehensive
 - c. speaker affect; therapeutic
 - d. speaker affect; discriminative

Answer: b

4. Scholars _____ and _____ use a tree as a metaphor to describe the different types of listening.
 - a. Fitch-Hauser; Worthington
 - b. Timm; Schroeder
 - c. Van Slyke; Manstead
 - d. Wolvin; Coakley

Answer: d

5. The type of listening that helps us identify if we are in danger after hearing a sound is
- discriminative listening.
 - comprehensive listening.
 - appreciative listening.
 - critical listening.

Answer: a

6. The type of listening that addresses the physical reception of a stimulus is
- discriminative listening.
 - comprehensive listening.
 - appreciative listening.
 - critical listening.

Answer: a

7. According to Wolvin and Coakley, comprehensive listening is listening to _____ the message.
- hear
 - understand
 - interpret
 - evaluate

Answer: b

8. Dylan is listening to a National Public Radio commentator who claims that people should buy electric cars and gives reasons why the public should make the switch. Dylan is most likely engaging in which type of listening?
- Discriminative listening
 - Comprehensive listening
 - Appreciative listening
 - Critical listening

Answer: d

9. According to your textbook, a good critical listener knows that when a message is unclear, a listener can rely on _____ to learn the speaker's meaning.
- situation
 - word meanings
 - nonverbal behavior
 - memory

Answer: c

10. Which of the following is NOT a reason for inconsistency in verbal and nonverbal messages?
- a. One has unclear intent for a verbal message.
 - b. The information is pleasant but the speaker is not.
 - c. One party to the communication act is trying to deceive.
 - d. One is using nonverbal behavior to protect him or herself.

Answer: b

11. Luke is listening to his younger brother talk about the bully at his school. The bully is bothering Luke's brother, and even though Luke's brother wants to deal with the issue alone, Luke decides to do something to help. Based on the standards provided in your textbook, has Luke been a good therapeutic listener?
- a. Yes, Luke listened and helped in an appropriate situation.
 - b. Yes, Luke listened to show support.
 - c. No, Luke should keep listening but not get involved.
 - d. No, Luke should listen but only give advice.

Answer: c

12. According to Arnold's Typology of Listening, a red listener
- a. focuses on his/her own needs.
 - b. provides judgment.
 - c. fixes the problems.
 - d. evaluates a message fully.

Answer: a

13. In the aftermath of Hurricane Theresa, Jadic heard the stories of Miami locals and felt not just their sorrow, but also anger at how some of the tragedy might have been prevented but was not. Which term best describes Jadic's feelings?
- a. Sympathy
 - b. Empathic responsiveness
 - c. Sympathetic responsiveness
 - d. Empathy

Answer: c

14. Women in _____ cultures are encouraged to show expression in a similar manner to men.
- a. Individualistic

- b. Gender-neutral
- c. Collectivistic
- d. Universal

Answer: c

15. Barrett is saying “Hmm...” and nodding his head as his client talks about her lunch date before the start of their appointment. Which level of listening most accurately describes Barrett’s behavior in this communication act?
- a. Passive listening
 - b. Responsive listening
 - c. Selective listening
 - d. Empathic listening

Answer: b

16. One responsive technique used during active listening to show understanding of a speaker’s message and feelings is called
- a. verbalizing.
 - b. mirroring.
 - c. memorizing.
 - d. paraphrasing.

Answer: d

17. The levels of listening most obviously address which one of the following?
- a. How much effort one puts into listening.
 - b. How we process different types of information.
 - c. Why it is normal to be a red listener.
 - d. Why one is or is not empathic.

Answer: a

18. Judy is having a conversation with her mother. Her mother is discussing why it is important to have a specific time set aside each day to complete homework. Judy acknowledges her mother’s points and can see that her mother feels passionately about the subject, but, even after asking directly, Judy doesn’t understand why her mother is so concerned about homework. In this scenario, which level of listening would best describe Judy?
- a. Critical listening
 - b. Responsive listening
 - c. Empathic listening
 - d. Active listening

Answer: d

True/False Questions

1. According to the National Communication Association, competent listeners are aware of biases.
Answer: True
2. Literal comprehension helps us acknowledge our biases.
Answer: False
3. Analysis of listening fidelity is one way to measure listening.
Answer: True
4. Early research on listening fidelity studied the listener's nonverbal reactions to a message.
Answer: False
5. The National Communication Association has standardized the dimensions of listening that should be used to measure listening skills.
Answer: False
6. Discriminative listening is the type of listening that addresses how one physically receives a sound.
Answer: True
7. Recent listening research analyzes listening as a power-driven communication act.
Answer: False
8. Speech intelligibility means the sender and receiver of a message likely have exchanged messages many times.
Answer: False
9. Elements of discriminative listening can lead to listening barriers.
Answer: True
10. Comprehensive listening is the first level of listening in which Wolvin and Coakley account for nonverbal effects on a message.
Answer: False
11. Comprehensive listening research addresses how we store information in memory.
Answer: True

12. If a nonverbal message is inconsistent with a verbal message, this is most often because the message content is unpleasant.
Answer: False
13. Sara listens to her favorite radio show in the morning because it makes her laugh. For Sara, this listening to the radio is appreciative listening.
Answer: True
14. One of the skills essential to good therapeutic listening is listening with sympathy.
Answer: False
15. Arnold's Typology of Listening includes listening types identified by color.
Answer: True
16. According to the research of Fischer and Manstead, women in all countries surveyed reported more intense emotions.
Answer: True
17. Men have an empathic edge, especially in collectivist cultures where emotions are more encouraged.
Answer: False
18. Carl Rogers is credited with developing a client-centered style of listening often used in therapy sessions.
Answer: True
19. Empathic listening studies began when researchers realized people in collectivistic cultures were more intense in their nonverbal displays.
Answer: False

Completion Questions

1. According to the authors of the text, listening is a critical _____ and _____ competency.
Answer: life; communication
2. The largest national organization for communication scholars is the _____.
Answer: National Communication Association
3. _____ listening is the type of listening that helps one determine whether a long sigh is cause for alarm or simply a deep breath.

Answer: Discriminative

4. Robert listens to a presentation to identify potential biases, part of _____ comprehension.

Answer: critical

5. _____ and _____ introduced the concept of listening fidelity.

Answer: Mulanax; Powers

6. Building one's vocabulary is one way to improve _____ listening.

Answer: comprehensive

7. Speaker _____ helps us determine emotion in speech.

Answer: affect

8. _____ are patterns we used to organize and make sense of information.

Answer: Schemata

9. _____ listening is identified as the most useful when listening to persuasive messages.

Answer: Critical

10. According to Arnold's Typology of Listening, _____ listening is listening with a tendency to evaluate without addressing the needs of the other party.

Answer: yellow

11. _____ is sharing someone's emotions, while _____ is feeling emotion for someone else.

Answer: Empathy; sympathy

12. The ability to put oneself in the shoes of another is _____.

Answer: perspective taking

13. Men and women in the United States are seen as part of a more _____ culture emphasizing self-expression.

Answer: individualistic

14. The level of listening identified by Van Slyke that involves one person sitting quietly while another talks is _____ listening.

Answer: passive

15. If Bonita only listens to political commentary when her personal ideals are being

supported, Bonita is at the _____ level of listening.

Answer: selective

Short Answer Questions

1. The National Communication Association advises that good listeners are proficient in two areas. Identify and define these two areas.

Answer: The first area is literal comprehension, which includes being able to identify main ideas and organization patterns. The second area is critical comprehension, the ability to listen with an open mind while being aware of biases and perspectives.

2. Distinguish between connotation and denotation. Which type of listening are they most closely aligned with?

Answer: Denotation refers to the literal meaning of a message, while connotation reflects the underlying meaning. Literal comprehension. Comprehensive listening requires understanding the message (denotation) and its meaning (conveyed nonverbally).

3. Name and describe the types of listening identified by Wolvin and Coakley. (Hint: Think of the tree metaphor).

Answer: Discriminative, comprehensive, critical, appreciative, and therapeutic listening.

4. How does appreciative listening differ from therapeutic listening?

Answer: Appreciative listening is listening for pleasure, while therapeutic listening is listening to show support.

5. How does comprehensive listening differ from critical listening?

Answer: Comprehensive listening is listening to understand the entire message, including nonverbal displays. However, critical listening goes another step by including the process of evaluating the message. Discrepancies in nonverbal and verbal messages are analyzed in critical listening.

6. The authors of your text describe five reasons why people send an inconsistent message. Describe and provide a personal example of three of the five reasons.

Senders may not be clear/ have conflicting goals or intent; senders may have mixed motives; there may be inconsistencies between verbal and nonverbal messages; the information being relayed is unpleasant for the receiver.

7. Early research found that we respond to inconsistent messages in one of three ways. Describe each way and give a personal example of each.

Answer: Messages may be perceived as inconsistent when senders have unclear or conflicting intentions when sending the message, problems in listening fidelity occur, information is unpleasant, or when senders use their nonverbals to protect their image.

8. How can appreciative listening help us develop cultural awareness?

Answer: Every culture uses languages and musical or vocal expressions that are unique to that civilization. A good appreciative listener keeps an open mind to these unique expressions.

9. Identify and define the types of listening presented in Arnold's Typology of Listening.

Answer: Red, yellow, and green listening are defined in Arnold's Typology of Listening. Red listening is listening without addressing the needs of the speaker. Instead, the listener focuses on his or her own needs. In yellow listening, a listener has judgment on the speaker's ideas and problems, and the listener from his or her own perspective. In green listening, the listener acknowledges the speaker's point of view in a supportive manner.

10. What is the definition of empathy?

Answer: Empathy is the process by which we emotionally connect with others.

11. What are three specific ways in which empathy might affect your response to a speaker?

Answer: Empathic responsiveness, perspective taking, and sympathetic responsiveness

12. Briefly describe how sociability is related to empathy.

Answer: Research suggests that young girls might initiate greater social interaction, use more expressive language and develop broader vocabularies at an earlier age than boys. Thus, the qualities needed to show empathy, like nonverbal expressiveness and broad language skills, are more developed through the social interactions young girls typically engage in.

13. Elaborate on the relationship between paraphrasing and self-esteem.

Answer: Paraphrasing shows that a listener is processing word meanings of a speaker as well as the feelings being expressed. As such, the speaker will have more confidence in the listener, and the listener could experience a boost in self-esteem.

14. What are the six levels of listening identified by Van Slyke?

Answer: The levels are passive, responding, selective, attentive, active, and empathic listening.

15. According to Van Slyke, how is the empathic level of listening different than the other levels?

Answer: The empathic level of listening requires a listener to try and understand the speaker's frame of reference, changing our own attitude about the purpose of listening from information gathering to acceptance.

16. Define listening fidelity.

Answer: Listening fidelity is the degree of congruence between the cognitions of a listener and the cognitions of a source following a communication event.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the ways in which discriminative listening has an impact on our ability to learn other languages.

Answer guidelines: A good answer will address that discriminative listening is used to identify common patterns and speech sounds. Humans become used to and begin identifying speech patterns that are common around them. One must use good listening skills to understand the distinctions of their own language and in order to be able to learn other languages. The research of Akiyo Hirai indicates that listening is necessary to developing a proficiency in a second language.

2. List the five reasons for inconsistencies between verbal and nonverbal messages mentioned in the text.

Answer guidelines: A sender may not be clear on his or her intent of the message, he or she might have conflicting intentions, or there is a difference between what is said and what is meant. The sender might be delivering unpleasant news with positive nonverbal. Lastly, the speaker might be manipulating his or her nonverbal to prevent being seen in a negative light.

3. Fischer and Manstead studied men and women in different cultures, measuring specific aspects of emotional response. Identify and define these specific aspects.

Answer guidelines: Intensity, duration, and nonverbal expression were identified by survey participants. Intensity refers to the strength of emotional response, duration was time spent in the emotional response, and nonverbal expression identifies the behavior performed to express the emotion.