



Learn, Teach, Inspire, Collaborate

2024
Issue 1
ISSN 2996-881X

Listening in Education and Training

A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL LISTENING ASSOCIATION
MICHAEL GILBERT, EDITOR

WELCOME

...to the first issue of *Listening in Education and Training*.

This publication is devoted to the practical usage of concepts related to listening taken from research and experience. It replaces *Listening Education*, a research-based journal, in the ILA Library.

In this issue, **Arnold** and **Stewart** suggest ways to decipher underlying hints in online communication in **How to Detect Deception and Suspicious Content in Online Messages**. They use Mediated Statement Analysis as the technique to sort through social media content.

Next, **Gilbert** discusses instructional delivery as a co-equal of curriculum in **Close the Communication Loop**. He suggests while listening may be the main mode of student reception, other possibilities exist that are tied to different student perceptions and motivation. The article is underpinned by Kahler's Process Communication Model.

Baesler offers listening to the **SONG of Life** by using a fourfold model of listening that may be used as a course or part of a course to teach listening or to measure different aspects of listening. He suggests L-SONG as either a pre-post administration or a diagnostic tool to allow self-perceptions of listening using total scores and subscores.

Finally, **Nordli** explains the use of the **Listening Circle** as a means of understanding group discussions. Specific "rules" and guidance govern this type of conversation.

My gratitude to the panel of reviewers. Their feedback was very helpful in guiding the acceptance and editing of the submissions.

With this first offering of *Listening in Education and Training*, we invite your feedback. Will you respond via the following link?

[LETS Feedback](#)

Thank you,

Michael Gilbert, Editor

LETSeditor@listen.org

EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

Listening in Education and Training is available online and in open access. It presents practical ideas for teaching and using listening in educational and training settings.

To prepare a manuscript for review, please refer to the “Guide for Authors” (below and online at <http://listen.org>). Submissions should be emailed to the editor: LETSEditor@listen.org.

Guide for Authors

Articles should be written with practitioners in mind. Style is informative and succinct. Typical articles will be 1,500-3,000 words, submitted in Word format with accompanying original figures and tables. (Please do not insert files that cannot be edited.) Papers follow the *APA Style Manual, 7th Edition*. They will undergo a blind review.

Submission of an article implies that author(s) own the copyright for the work; it is original; and not under consideration elsewhere. Appropriate attribution should be given for ideas that underpin the work.

Copyright© International Listening Association. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, transmitted or disseminated in any form or by any means without prior written permission of the author(s). All rights remain with the author(s)

CONTENTS

How to Detect Deception and Suspicious Content in Online Messages: Mediated Statement Analysis (MSA)

C. L. Arnold, University of North Florida

M. C. Stewart, University of North Florida

5

Close the Communication Loop: Employ the Platinum Rule

Michael Gilbert, ATOIRE Communications

13

The SONG of Life: Listening to Self, Others, Nature, and God (the Divine)

E. James Baesler, Old Dominion University

20

Listening Circle – A Path to Better Listening Skills

Ingrid C. Nordli, University of Tromsø (Norway)

25

How to Detect Deception and Suspicious Content in Online Messages: Mediated Statement Analysis (MSA)

C. L. Arnold, University of North Florida
christa.arnold@unf.edu

M. C. Stewart, University of North Florida
m.c.stewart@unf.edu

Abstract

Listening online for deception and misinformation is complex. In today's hyper-mediated society, the Internet promotes increasing interconnectedness of individuals online, prompting unique changes to human communication behavior. In this cyberculture, mediated deception can thrive; however, it is challenging to identify. Also, there is a lack of a standard methodology to identify untruthful, suspicious, or deceptive content online (Tsikerdekis & Zeadally, 2014). Most deception detection in listening relies on analyzing verbal and nonverbal cues in body language and facial expression. The deficit in digital deception detection has come to light in the recent climate of misinformation. There is a growing need for individuals and organizations to identify better linguistic and textual cues that may signal deception or misinformation online. This paper explains a methodology of Mediated Statement Analysis, or MSA. It applies nine mediated categories to digital messages and is designed for social listening (or listening in mediated contexts), including social media posts, digital messages, online dating exchanges, fake reviews, and similar forms of online content. MSA is a step toward deciphering deceptive messages and information online in a way that is important and increasingly necessary in today's online ecosystem.

(Note: "listener" and "listening" are used to connote interpreting online messages.)

Keywords: deception detection, social listening, mediated communication, mediated statement analysis, digital messages

Introduction

Online communication has distinctive features, and the nature of social media can influence the chances of deception (Tsikerdekis & Zeadally, 2014). Mediated Statement Analysis (MSA) is a modified linguistic and textual analysis methodology derived from Statement Analysis (SA). This technique originates from law enforcement methodology using linguistic features, word count, and grammatical and sentence patterns associated with word usage to flag suspicious content in written contexts. (ACFE, 2022; McClish, 2012,

2023; Matsumoto, et al., 2015). As adapted, MSA is designed to detect deceptive or suspicious messages in online and digital formats.

Setting the Stage

“Truthful statements differ from fabricated ones in both content and quality” (Adams, 1996, p. 1). The most effective deception detection analysis comes from the written word (McClish, 2012, 2023; Varnell, 2013). While nonverbal cues tend to dominate deceptive communication behaviors, interpreting what the person says in text can reveal deceptive cues, too. MSA examines written statements for veracity and lying using coding categories (Appendix A) that are applicable to online and mediated messages. “People’s words will betray them” (McClish, 2012, p. 12).

Mediated messages, such as social media posts, are considered “cue lean.” Textual content online lacks deceptive cues available in face-to-face exchanges (Ho & Hancock, 2019). Deceivers are less specific in their details, and their messages are more general than truthful ones (Watson & Ragsdale, 1981). When a person creates an untruthful story or statement, it often results in a different pattern of language. For example, the narrative requires describing details, events and attitudes that do not exist. Untruthful stories are qualitatively different from truthful ones (Newman, et al., 2003). “Although liars have some control over the content of their stories, their underlying state of mind may ‘leak’ out through the way that they tell them” (Newman, et al., 2003, p. 665). Liars have trouble distinguishing between what did not happen and what did (Markowitz & Griffin, 2020).

Truthful social media posts contain more words, description, detailed content, different language patterns and combinations of textual and linguistic cues than untruthful posts (Arnold & Stewart, 2023). The linguistic categories are textual markers a listener can identify when listening to online messages, such as social media posts. MSA may apply to other types of digital social listening, such as online dating apps, text messaging, and product reviews.

Social Listening

Social listening emerges in how we communicate and listen via mediated communication channels, including social media and other digital platforms (Stewart & Arnold, 2017). It is an active process of attending to, observing, interpreting, and responding to a variety of stimuli through mediated, electronic, and social channels (Stewart & Arnold, 2017, p. 87). *Mediated deception* uses electronic, digital, or new technology, platforms and/or devices to communicate messages or information that are misleading or untrue (Arnold & Stewart, 2023).

Social listening occurs in a variety of contexts, including interpersonal messaging on digital applications (e.g., Snapchat, WhatsApp), online social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, “X” [formerly Twitter]), and messaging on mobile devices. Social listening is dynamic. The digital communication and mediated communication landscape influences how people listen, interpret meaning, exchange information, and interact. Learning how to flag suspicious and potentially deceptive messages online is an important and critical skill.

MSA

Categories

MSA uses nine coding categories. These categories are developed to aid an online listener with attending to and identifying deceptive messages by using these cues to flag potentially suspicious content. (See Appendix A)

Examples

Analyses of social media posts use three categories: (1) word count, (2) detail and description, and (3) a combination of both categories. Examples (in Appendix B) demonstrate the differences between truthful and untruthful social media posts. Truthful posts are both longer and more detailed than untruthful posts. The combination of detail/description and word count categories suggests suspicious/deceptive textual messages.

Procedures

MSA determines (1) what is a typical truthful statement, then (2) looks for deviations from the norm. The format explains how MSA can be used to analyze mediated exchanges. Steps 1-4 address how to determine truthful statements; steps 5-7 deal with deviations.

1. Gather or identify messages on social media or via digital channels to analyze textual and/or linguistic cues. This will establish a baseline for truthfulness.
2. Select a coding strategy to identify each of the nine MSA categories (Appendix A), such as numerical assignment, et al.
3. Apply your strategy consistently across mediated messages. This is useful when exploring combinations and patterns.
4. Organize data according to personal or research needs.
5. Determine analytical procedures (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed).
6. Conduct your analyses to align with goals to identify potentially deceptive textual and/or linguistic content.

7. If warranted, follow up with additional inquiries, probing questions, and/or data gathering to examine further mediated messages for deceptive meaning.

To conclude, MSA can enhance an individual's ability to *listen* for potentially deceptive or suspicious content in online mediated communication.

References

- Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) (2022). Written Statement Analysis [Online Course Completion: 09-17-2021]. Field of Study: Communications and Marketing Instructional Delivery Method: QAS Self-Study.
- Adams, S. H. (1996). Statement analysis: What do suspects' words really reveal. *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, 65(10), 12-23. Retrieved: <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/statement-analysis-what-do-suspects-words-really-reveal>
- Arnold, C. L., & Stewart, M.C. (2023, April). "Truthful or Untruthful Social Media Posts? Applying Statement Analysis to Decode Deception Online." UNF STARS (ScholarshipTransforming Academic Research Symposium). Jacksonville, FL.
- DePaulo, B. M., Lindsay, J. J., Malone, B. E., Muhlenbruck, L., Charlton, K., & Cooper, H. (2003). Cues to deception. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(1), 74-118. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.1.74>
- Drouin, M., Miller, D., Wehle, S. M. J., & Hernandez, E. (2016). Why do people lie online? 'because everyone lies on the internet'. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 64, pp. 132-142. Retrieved: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.06.052>
- Ho, S. M., Hancock, J. T., Booth, C., & Liu, X. (2016). Computer-mediated deception: Strategies revealed by language-action cues in spontaneous communication. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 33(2), 393-420. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07421222.2016.1205924>
- Markowitz, D. M., & Griffin, D. J. (2020). When context matters: How false, truthful, and genre-related communication styles are revealed in language. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 26(3), 287-310. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X2110678>
- Matsumoto, D., Hwang, H. C., & Sandoval, V. A. (2014). Cross-language applicability of linguistic features associated with veracity and deception. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 30(4), 229-241. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-014-9155-0>
- McClish, M. (2012). Don't be deceived: The definitive book on detecting deception. The Marpa Group, Inc.
- McClish, M. (2023). Detecting lies and deception using statement analysis[®]. Retrieved: <https://www.statementanalysis.com/>
- Newman, M. L., Pennebaker, J. W., Berry, D. S., & Richards, J. M. (2003). Lying words: Predicting deception from linguistic styles. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29(5), 665-675. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167203029005010>
- Stewart, M.C., & Arnold, C.L. (2017). Defining social listening: Recognizing an emerging dimension of listening. *International Journal of Listening: Special Issue on Listening in Mediated Contexts*, 32(2), 85-100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10904018.2017.1330656>

Tsikerdekis, M., & Zeadally, S. (2014, Online deception in social media.

Communications of the ACM, 57, 72-80. <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/2629612>

Varnell, S. (2013). *Statement Analysis: An ISS course workbook*. Florida Criminal Justice Standards & Training Commission [certified instructor]; St. Petersburg College [adjunct instructor]. St. Petersburg: Self-published.

Watson, K. W., & Ragsdale, J. D. (1981). Linguistic indices of truthful and deceptive responses to employment interview questions. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 9(2), 59-71. <https://doi.org/10.32657/10220/46219>

APPENDIX AMSA Coding for Analysis in Mediated Contexts
(Arnold & Stewart, 2023)

Category	Description
(1) Word Count	Length of truthful or untruthful statement based upon count of words.
(2) Detail & Description	Messages containing details and descriptions in the form of explanations, elaboration, personalization, specificity, etc. (i.e., names of individuals & specific locations), direct references to people & places).
(3) Exaggerated Claims	Statements are blatant unrealistic, enhanced, contain bogus information, fantasy, [perceived] sarcasm, oversell, or over-convince (i.e., inconceivable scenarios or phenomena, events that are highly unlikely or impossible to occur).
(4) Direct Numerical References	Specific time and date references, direct number of occurrences, numerical references (i.e., time of day, month/date/year, days of the week).
(5) Emotional & Affective language	Messages contain emotional, feeling, and affective language; Statements of expression of feelings (i.e. "I think...", "I feel", expression of emotional state, intensity of feeling).

<p>(6) +/- Paradigm - Pro-Social & Anti-social cues</p>	<p>Messages containing expressions of positive, negative, or neutral sentiment; Use of polarizing language within statements (i.e., excessive use of negative (anti-social) or positive (pro-social) language).</p>
<p>(7) Excessive Emphasis</p>	<p>Messages containing using extreme grammatical cues (overemphasizing through excessive punctuation (!!!), use of all CAPS, etc.).</p>
<p>(8) Use of Absolutes, Qualifiers, &/or Hedges</p>	<p>Messages containing language intended to reduce/enhance accountability or certainty (i.e., "I think," "I believe," "I intend," "Honestly," "I never," "I always," "actually," "perfect", etc.).</p>
<p>(9) Combination of Cues</p>	<p>Indicates posts that fall into multiple of the eight (8) coding categories; represents a cluster of potentially deceptive cues.</p>

APPENDIX B

Truthful and Untruthful Posts Examples for Word Count and Level of Detail/Description Combination

Scenario of Social Media Post	Truthful Statements	Untruthful Statements
Vacation	<p>I went to the Bahamas with my family and friends. I love Bahamas and have been going there my whole life. It is such a beautiful country with crystal blue water. We go boating, snorkeling, and fishing every day while we are there.</p> <p>Word Count = 43</p>	<p>I went Gainesville to see the gator game with my family. I only like going for the games. I don't really like the town itself.</p> <p>Word Count = 25</p>
Social Gathering	<p>I went to a sorority event recently. It started with the girl who was running it being 30 minutes late. Me being an on-time person I got there about 15-20 min before the start time. So myself and a few others were sitting in the car for almost an hour. We did a really cute art project and then went on to having a great catered lunch.</p> <p>Word Count = 68</p>	<p>Kelsey thank you for putting on this amazing event. I loved the whole day and would do it again!</p> <p>Word Count = 19</p>
Procrastination	<p>Tbh, procrastination is like the secret sauce to my assignments. I wrote a 5-page paper in like 2 hours and got a 100 on it.</p> <p>Word Count = 26</p>	<p>I procrastinate every once in a while.</p> <p>Word Count = 7</p>

CLOSE THE COMMUNICATION LOOP: EMPLOY THE PLATINUM RULE

Michael Gilbert, Ed.D
ATOIRE Communications
Atoirecomm@gmail.com
<http://atoire.com>

Abstract

Schools are challenged to provide meaningful learning experiences to prepare students for immediate and long-term success. Most teachers use techniques familiar to and comfortable for them. A secondary consideration is how students prefer to learn, if considered at all. Guidance would be to employ the Platinum Rule: Interact with others in ways they prefer (Regier, 2020).

Regardless of the approach, academic content is an important starting point. Varying delivery methods is the companion to connecting with students for successful learning. This article addresses how teachers might consider aspects of communication in delivering curricula effectively. The methodology is explained by examining educational applications of the Process Communication Model® (Kahler, 1982), its components and implications.

Keywords: effective communication, instructional delivery, perceptions, motivation, classroom interaction

What Is the Goal?

Today, the challenge in education is to prepare students to compete in a global economy. Traditional approaches to instructional delivery may no longer be effective.

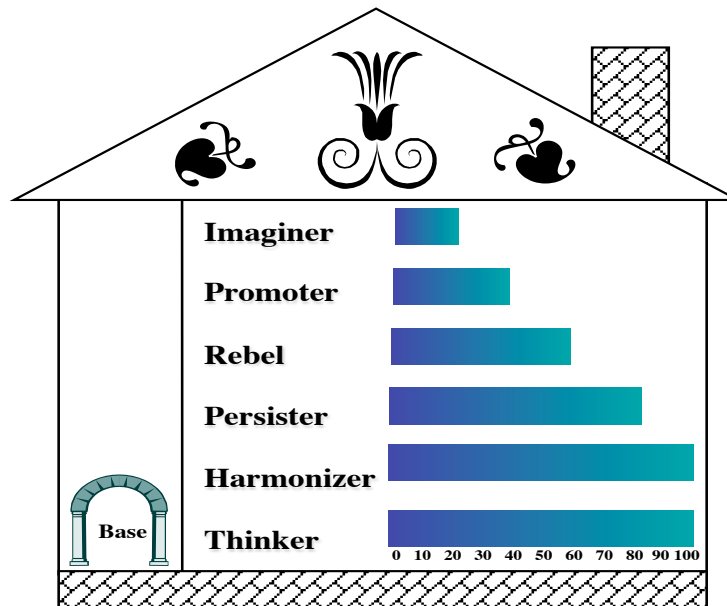
“OK! Today, you are going to be working by yourselves. If you have any questions, raise your hands, and I will come to you.”

Classroom structure and limited instructional delivery may be problems for students who see their “success” as their ability to “shut up and listen to the teacher” (Knaus, 2013, p. 16). (Compliance more than preparation.)

Who Are We?

The Process Communication Model® (PCM) describes six personality types: Harmonizers, Thinkers, Persisters, Imaginers, Rebels, and Promoters (Kahler, 2008). Each of us has a personality structure similar to a six-story condominium, where the first floor represents our foundation – strongest personality type and perception – and each remaining

floor represents the other personality types in order of the strength. Each type has a different set of needs, perceptions, and behaviors that influences how we learn and how we teach.



©1997 Taibi Kahler Associates, Inc.

Figure 1, Sample Personality Condominium

The condominium depicted in Figure 1 (one of 720 possible variations) shows a person who sees the world through thoughts. He (75% of people with this Base floor in North America is male) would focus on ideas and structure. As he would be “invited” to interact with others or respond to a situation, he would have varying amounts of energy on each floor to access other personality types.

In education, most students and instructors limit how they *process* reality by using only one or two of the six available floors of their personality structure. The diversity of personality types and needs described by the PCM are the focus of this article.

Unique features of the PCM include an inventory validated (Gilbert & Donlan, 2016) for purposes of determining an individual's personality structure, what one's psychological motivators are, how one takes in (learns) and gives out (teaches/shares) information, also predicting the negative behaviors a person will manifest when in distress. The PCM describes types *in* people, rather than types *of* people.

An Overview of Process Communication

Connecting with students is crucial for classroom performance. This is the beginning of the *Platinum Rule* (Regier, 2020) – treating others as they prefer to be treated. If one knows the keys to connecting with others, then communication can occur – the offer and acceptance of a message in the preferred channel (Kahler, 1992).

Getting one's needs met, being motivated, is the first step to positive interaction. Those *whose needs are not met* are going to have difficulties in learning and in meeting performance expectations. In addition, students may be excluded from the classroom when they *appear* to act out with a predictable distress (unfulfilled needs) pattern. Of course, excluding the student can only magnify the problem, even though the teacher may breathe a sigh of relief for no longer having to deal with a “problem student”.

Each personality type has preferred *perceptions*:

- Harmonizer types access the world through *emotions*.
- Thinker types use the lens of *thoughts*.
- Persister types prefer to view reality through their *opinions*.
- Imaginer types use *inactions* (reflections), preferring to be directed *into action* by someone or something.
- Rebel types connect through *reactions* (likes and dislikes).
- Promoter types prefer *actions*. (Kahler, 1992)

If teachers understand their students' perceptual preferences, they can connect with them more effectively and encourage desired behaviors. (Verbal interactions give meaningful clues into what others prefer.) Attempting to force individuals to accept a communication bias that is not theirs will result in misunderstanding and miscommunication.

Each personality type has preferences for communicating:

- Imaginer types are directable and Promoters like action (the “bottom line”); they prefer to be directed: “Do problems 4-14 on page 26 and check your answers.”
- Thinker and Persister types are task-oriented; they prefer to be asked: “Will you turn in your assignment on Wednesday?” (While a question seems to indicate a choice of compliance, it is not the case here. The question format is more stylistic than volitional.)
- Harmonizer types want to *feel* first; they prefer a personal connection: “I appreciate your nice smile. It's always a pleasure to see you.”
- Rebel types are driven by contact, the more playful the better; they communicate first through being upbeat: “Wow! You really did great stuff in knocking out that homework.”

Communicating/Miscommunicating

Many *at-risk* students have strong Promoter or Rebel energy (Bailey, 1998; Gilbert, 2018). For educators with strong Harmonizer, Thinker, or Persister (the predominant types), communicating with Promoter and Rebel types requires more effort than with the other personality types. Thus, many students (approximately 25%) may have unmet needs and experience the distress that accompanies this lack of fulfillment.

The key here is to meet student needs first and then “invite” them to accept a delivery method that may be less preferred. Another possibility is to offer instruction in a way that engages students at the outset. For Promoter and Rebel types, it would be hands-on (kinesthetic), learning by doing.

Students usually classified as “easy” to communicate with by their teachers tend to have higher GPA's. They have personality types most like their teachers and perform better than those who are less like their teachers (Gilbert, 2018). This supports the notion that grades are partially the ability of students to meet teacher expectations. Conversely, what this means is those students who are at risk (classified as “difficult”) will probably be at greater risk when confronted by teachers weak in the energy needed to communicate with those student types effectively.

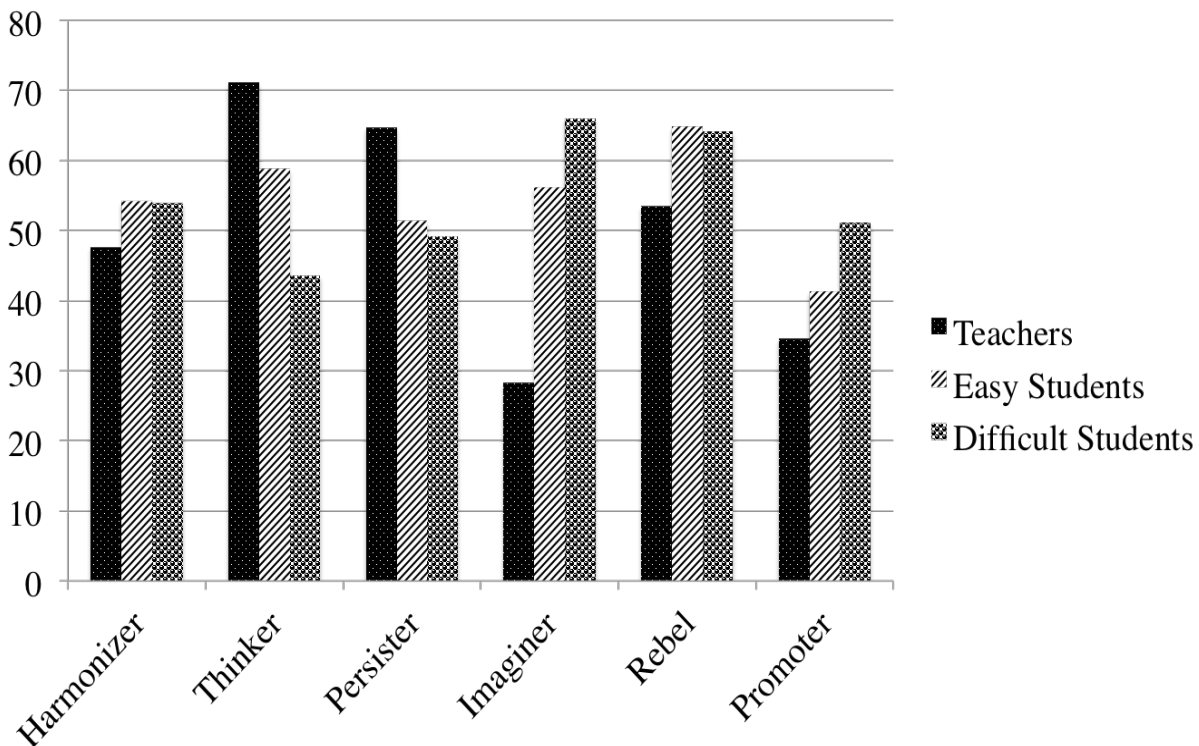


Figure 2
Comparative Personality Strengths

Figure 2 shows the comparative personality strength differences between teachers and students from one study (Gilbert, 2018). Note the differences in Thinker and Persister energy and Rebel and Promoter energy between teachers and *difficult* students. Teachers were significantly stronger in Thinker and Persister attributes, while difficult students had substantially more energy in their Rebel and Promoter.

The *difficult* students performed significantly less well than *easy* students. Those more closely aligned with their teachers' preferences, the *easy* students, did better.

Day-to-Day Communication

Students and teachers are quite capable, under positive conditions, of accessing more than one of their personality types. The teacher can offer a lesson with a preferred delivery method of one type and have most students succeed.

But what if the teacher offers instruction in *only* one mode? We can predict with certainty which students will lose energy and offer negative behaviors.

Instructional delivery is as important as curriculum content. Students whose needs are not met will not perform well (Bailey, 1998; Cicinelli, 2013; Gilbert, 2014). A formula to consider for academic success might be:

$$\text{Content} + \text{Process} = \text{Academic Success}$$

The key is for teachers to shift their instructional delivery whenever possible. To be able to shift requires teachers to get their own needs met first.

Listening Implications

Educators are significantly different from the general population. They are predominantly intrinsic in their orientation (Gilbert, 2018).

Thinker types tend to be better listeners than others; they excel with processing data, thoughts and ideas delivered auditorily. Imaginer types listen most poorly overall; they may need to be directed regarding instructions beforehand (Gilbert, 2005, 2014).

Checking to see those needs are met necessitates positive relationships with students. Potentially, effective checks for understanding would have 20-30 times the positive impact upon learning than most other strategies and would increase learning growth by 6-9 months per year (William, 2007).

Most teachers offer instruction in visual and auditory modes. This means students who prefer a more extrinsic environment and interaction (Rebel, Promoter and Imaginer types) can be disadvantaged in classrooms that are less active, preferring more tactile/kinesthetic learning activities.

Teachers with knowledge of the PCM can facilitate success by shifting learning activities to accommodate different learning styles. Bear in mind that in order for teachers

to use these techniques and instructional strategies successfully, they must ensure their own psychological needs are met first, that they are motivated positively. This will give them the energy to connect with students who need different types of motivation.

Whatever educational techniques a school or school district employs to improve instruction and learning outcomes, the PCM allow educators to align with, and even augment, the research-based, best practices, exemplified by Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001), Marzano (2010), and Danielson (2011), and as a catalyst for school improvement (Donlan, 2013).

Conclusion

Connecting with and motivating students is the most critical aspect of the learning process. The content is typically prescribed, either by governmental requirements, school organization mandates, or textbook publishers. What we have learned is disconnected students do not learn well and can cause problems in the classroom. Most often, these students have learning preferences different from predominant teaching styles. The Process Communication Model offers a unique perspective and suggestions for engaging students effectively and reducing counter-productive classroom behaviors.

Changing instructional delivery is challenging and takes longer than changing our knowledge base. Understanding ourselves and others, knowing what negative behaviors mean and what to do about them in the school setting, while focusing more and more on *how* we communicate, can have profound positive outcomes in education. Then we will have closed the loop – offered messages that have been accepted, especially by those who have different preferences.

References

- Bailey, R. C. (1998). *An investigation of personality types of adolescents who have been rated by classroom teachers to exhibit inattentive and/or hyperactive impulsive behaviors*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Arkansas at Little Rock.
- Cicinelli, A. (2013). *Communication styles: An examination of ability to communicate with students and student achievement in Michigan public schools*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Central Michigan University.
- Danielson, C. (2011). *The framework for teaching evaluation instrument*. The Danielson Group.
- Donlan, R. (2013). The Process Education Model (PCM): A catalyst for school improvement. *Journal of Process Communication*, 1(1), 45-67.
- Gilbert, M. B. (2005). Who listens better? *The Listening Professional*, 4(1), 8-9, 16

- Gilbert, M. B. (2014). Different strokes for different folks: Connecting with students for academic success. *International Journal of Education*, 6(4), Available at <http://www.macrothink.org/journal/index.php/ije/article/view/6269/5313>.
- Gilbert, M. B. (2018). Student performance is linked to connecting effectively with teachers. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning*, Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIT-05-2018-0010>.
- Gilbert, M. B., & Donlan, R. A. (with Parr, J.). (2016). Personality Pattern Inventory. In V. Zeigler-Hill, & T. K. Shackelford (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of personality and individual differences*. Online: Springer International Publishing, pp. P1-5.
- Goodman, G. S. (2013). Student stories: Bear & Antoine. In Brock, R., & Goodman, G. S., (Eds.), *School sucks: Arguments for alternative education* (pp. 44-61). Peter Lang.
- Kahler, T. (1982). *Process Communication Model: A contemporary model for organizational development*. Kahler Communications.
- Kahler, T. (1992). *The Kahler Process Teaching Model*. Kahler Communications.
- Kahler, T. (2008). *The mastery of management: Or how to solve the mystery of mismanagement*. Kahler Communications.
- Knaus, C. (2013). Developing urban youth voice. In Brock, R., & Goodman, G. S. (Eds.), *School sucks! Arguments for alternative education* (pp. 9-42). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Marzano, R. (2010). *An observational protocol based on "the art and science of teaching."* Marzano Research Laboratory.
- Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement*. ASCD.
- Regier, N. (2020). *Seeing people through: Unleash your leadership potential with the Process Communication Model*. Berrett-Kohler Publishers.
- William, D. (2007). Content then process: Teacher learning communities in the service of formative assessment. In D. Reeves (Ed.), *Ahead of the curve: The power of assessment to transform teaching and learning* (pp. 182-204). Solution Tree.

**The SONG of Life:
Listening to Self, Others, Nature, and God (the Divine)¹**

E. James Baesler
Old Dominion University
jbaesler@odu.edu

Abstract

“Listening to the SONG of Life” is a pedagogical framework that conceptualizes listening as a multi-sensory experience in four contexts: **Self**, **Others**, **Nature**, and **God/Goddess** (the Divine). L-SONG (Listening-SONG) is an instrument developed to measure student learning in four contexts during a listening course.

Keywords: listening, learning, assessment, measurement, SONG

Listening to the SONG of Life with L-SONG

Listening to the SONG of Life represents four interrelated contexts in the lifeworld. SONG stands for the first letter in each of the following words: **Self**, **Others**, **Nature**, and **God/Goddess** (the Divine).² The four listening contexts of SONG are interpreted as interrelated ways of being in the world similar to holarchical networks of communication (Wilber, 2006).

Most of the academic research related to listening competency focuses primarily on listening to *others*, and not on the three additional listening contexts posited by the SONG of Life (self, nature, and God/Goddess – the Divine). A comprehensive review of 31 scales for measuring listening competency shows that, of the 17 most commonly reported listening traits, *all of them are about listening to others* (Fontana, Cohen, & Wolvin, 2015), and *none explicitly includes listening to self, nature, or God/Goddess (the Divine)*. Hence, the L-SONG broadens the conceptual scope of phenomena associated with listening to include the listening contexts of self, nature, and the Divine, in addition to the traditional idea of listening to others.

Listening to *self* (SONG) involves being centered, open and aware of one’s thoughts, emotions, and needs. This describes the mindfulness of paying attention to what one is sensing in the present moment with a curious, open, and non-judgmental attitude (Kabat-Zinn, 2013).

Listening to *others* (SONG) includes listening to verbal and nonverbal messages, and listening to emotions and needs with compassionate empathy. Listening to others includes listening to self.

Our awareness of the lifeworld can expand to include non-humans in the natural world or listening to *nature* in the SONG. Listening to nature includes listening to self and “others” in the sense of others in the natural world (e.g., animals, plants, and elementals).

Our awareness of the natural world can further expand to include an awareness of the supernatural and/or supraempirical³, which I call listening to the *Divine* (G for God/Goddess in the SONG). The Divine encompasses all the other listening contexts/circles (self, others, and nature).

Discussion

The L-SONG instrument assesses student learning in four interrelated listening contexts. The reliability, and predictive and expert validity of L-SONG (Baesler, 2015, 2017, 2018) indicate that the instrument is useful.

The novel conceptualization of listening as a multi-sensory experience in the four SONG contexts challenges the conventional academic teaching of listening as primarily listening to *others*. The listening to the SONG of Life course represents a broader view of listening to all of life rather than only human life.

The perspective of listening to the SONG of Life is an evolving system of ideas that parallels some developments in positive psychology (e.g., Neff, 2015; Seligman, 2012), consciousness studies (e.g., Gober, 2018, Sheldrake, 2019), quantum physics (e.g., Goswami, 2017), and the perennial wisdom traditions (Fox, 2004). One challenge, given a worldview large enough to accommodate the new listening contexts (self, nature, and/or the Divine), is to teach an understanding of listening to students, using L-SONG as an instrument to assess student learning, and then adapt student feedback to refine and improve the conceptualization and measurement of L-SONG.

Using L-SONG

There are many ways to utilize and interpret the L-SONG instrument (see Appendix) in a classroom or workshop setting. L-SONG can be completed at the beginning and end of a course or workshop, comparing cumulative scores across all of the items to assess any changes, presumably due to the impact of instruction. Subscores can also be used to determine areas of change. (S: items 1-4; O: items 5-7; N: items 8-11; G: items 12-15.)

In- and out-of-class activities can be designed to address each of the L-SONG areas for knowledge and skill enhancement (e.g. Baesler, 2018). Additionally, students can journal their learning experiences and areas of change throughout the course.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of L-SONG is to assess student learning about listening to the SONG of Life. Pedagogically, the purpose of L-SONG is to provide feedback to students about their listening perceptions using the SONG of Life. Finally, L-SONG provides instructors and students with a unique view of listening.

Endnotes

¹ A comprehensive description and explanation of the conceptualization, development, and testing of the L-SONG instrument will be available summer 2024 as a chapter in the book, *Listening to the SONG of Life* (email the author at jbaesler@odu.edu for a free digital copy of the book).

² In the SONG contexts, I use the term “Divine” rather than “God” or “Goddess” for the last letter in the SONG because some students have negative conditioning associated with the word “God” (or “Goddess”), while the term “Divine” opens possibilities for discussing a broader range of spiritual ideas. In addition, the SONG acronym would sound odd if I used a “D” for Divine (the “SOND” of Life) instead of a “G” for God or Goddess (the “SONG” of Life). Thus, I also retain the “G” in the acronym SONG for rhetorical purposes.

³ Those unfamiliar with the term supraempirical and/or those skeptical about communicating with the Divine are encouraged to explore Gober (2018), and to also consider Goodall (1996, p. 94): “Communication is the primary experiential source of all lived and imagined connections to all life forms and forces as well as to how, why, and what we know about them.” Part of establishing a lived/imagined connection with nature and the Divine as life forms and forces involves listening deeply to them to discover the how, why, and what we know about them.

References

- Baesler, E. J. (2015, March). *Assessing listening to the SONG of life: Issues, challenges, and ideas for future research*. Presentation presented at the International Listening Association, Virginia Beach, VA.
- Baesler, E. J. (2015). Meditation in the classroom: Cultivating attention and insight. *Listening Education* 6 (1), 8-15.
- Baesler, E. J. (2017). Listening to the Divine song within the greater song of life. *Listening: Journal of Communication Ethics, Religion, and Culture*, 52(2), 86-103.
- Baesler, E. J. (2018). Listening to the SONG of Life: An autoethnographic account of teaching an undergraduate listening course. *Listening Education*, 8, 71-108.

- Fontana, P, Cohen, S., & Wolvin, A. (2015). Understanding listening competency: A systematic review of research scales. *The International Journal of Listening*, 29, 148-176.
- Fox, M. (2004). *One river, many wells: Wisdom springing from global faiths*. Tarcher Perigee.
- Gober, M. (2018). *An end to upside down thinking: Dispelling the myth that the brain produces consciousness, and the implications for everyday life*. Waterside Press.
- Goodall, H. L., Jr. (1996). *Divine signs: Connecting spirit to community*. Southern Illinois University Press.
- Goswami, A. (2017). *The everything answer book: How quantum science explains love, death, and the meaning of life*. Hampton Roads Publishing.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Bantam.
- Neff, K. (2015). *Self-compassion: The proven power of being kind to yourself*. William Morrow.
- Seligman, M. (2012). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well being*. Atria.
- Underwood, L. (2011). The daily spiritual experiences scale: Overview and results. *Religion*, 2(1), 29-50.
- Wilber, K. (2006). *Integral spirituality: A startling new role for religion in the modern and postmodern world*. Integral Books.

Appendix

L-SONG: Measuring Listening in the SONG of Life

Rate your level of agreement/disagreement with the following 15 statements by circling a number between 1 and 6 for each of the statements below that reflect your current (within the last month) beliefs/behavior about listening where: 1 = Very Strongly Disagree, 2 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree, and 6 = Very Strongly Agree.

1. When I think about “listening to myself” during the past month, I have found it difficult to get clarity about my personal needs in life. 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6
2. I often go for most of the day without “checking in” on my emotional state, that is, taking at least a minute of silence to find out how I’m feeling. 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6
3. I take “retreat time” to be in silence and solitude without media for at least an hour once a week. 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6

4. I cultivate a sense of mindfulness at least three times a day by some method of conscious breathing. 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6
5. When interacting with strangers during the past month, I generally have found it difficult to “focus” on their needs. 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6
6. I make an effort to connect with what my friends/family are feeling, by asking them about their feelings. 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6
7. I have given “deep empathy” to someone in the past month. 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6
8. I feel at home in the natural landscapes that I’ve visited this past month (where, list here):_____ . 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6
9. I make it a habit to spend at least a half hour in nature every day. 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6
10. I surround myself in my “home” with reminders of nature such as— circle all that apply: flowers, potted plants, shells, open windows, natural light, plants, and images of nature (pictures, photos, posters), other (fill in): _____ . 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6
11. I feel interconnected with nature (circle all that apply): the land, plants, trees, insects, and animals, and Other (fill in):_____ . 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6
12. I can easily tap into listening to the “Divine” no matter what the circumstance/situation. 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6
13. I have a daily practice of prayer and/or meditation for 15 or more minutes. 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6
14. I have a close connection with the “Divine” where I define the Divine as (fill in):_____ . 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6
15. I have a strong sense of the presence of the Divine in other people. 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6

Listening Circle – A Path to Better Listening Skills

Ingrid C. Nordli

Department of Education, University of Tromsø (Norway)

Ingrid.c.nordli@uit.no

Abstract

“What do you mean, *listen*?” Listening is an essential part of language and communication skills. It is crucial for teachers, as it is for students. However, students have demonstrated low listening comprehension and reported that learning how to listen was not part of their school curriculum.

Keywords: inexperienced listeners, better listening skills, listening circle, attentive listening

Introduction

With the students’ low listening comprehension and limited listening skills as a backdrop, using a listening circle helps learning. The goal is to help *inexperienced* listeners increase their listening knowledge and comprehension. Specific training objectives are:

1. *Increase listening knowledge and listening comprehension.* Acquire knowledge about the listening process, types of listeners, types of listening, and listening markers.
2. *Practice active and attentive listening.* Learn to listen actively while focusing intently on the message being communicated.
3. *Practice taking responsibility as both listener and speaker* during dialogue with multiple voices. Knowing when to listen silently and when to contribute verbally.
4. *Practice being patient, concentrated and focused during communication with others.* Learn to listen to others and not just think about a response or the next message. Take in what others convey, implement it in your own thoughts and possibly use it in your response.
5. *Experience performance as a listener.* Learn to be aware of listening practically and socially, and find answers to questions like: Who am I as a listener? How do I act when listening to others? Do I respect others’ opinions?
6. *Develop a listening vocabulary.* Given no curriculum or teaching sessions of listening during school years, concepts of listening have not developed thoroughly.

Defining Listening

Listening is something we decide to do consciously (Bodie et al., 2015; Floyd, 2014). It is mastering the *activity* of listening (Wolvin, 2010, p. 9). That means we are cognitively active when receiving and sending messages, and possibly also physically active when sending messages (Adelmann, 2002). Definitions of listening varies across contexts (Bodie et al., 2015, p. 152), but most have roots in the conceptualization of empathetic listening (Rogers & Sanford, 1985). This concept was further developed by Thomas Gordon (Weger, et al., 2014), who labeled it *active listening*, also referred to as active-empathetic listening (Jonsdottir & Fridriksdottir, 2020, p. 178).

Most definitions “stress the importance of both nonverbal and verbal behaviors that function to demonstrate attention, understanding, responsiveness, and empathy; to encourage continued expression of thoughts and feelings” (Bodie et al., 2015, p. 153). The International Listening Association defined listening as “the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages” (Purdy, 1997, p. 6; Wolvin, 2010, p. 9). The definition implies listening is a distinct behavior (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996) and a process containing *steps*.

The steps occur in a natural order at the same time as they happen more or less simultaneously, given their interrelatedness (Brownell, 2018). One example includes six steps – receiving, identifying, understanding, remembering, evaluating and responding (Nordli & Skog, 2022).

Learning Active and Attentive Listening Skills

Attentive listening is *paying attention* to what you are listening to while you are listening to it (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996). This skill is a “perceptual, cognitive and social act” (Boudreau, et al., 2009, p. 23) that “necessitates the formation of new habits” (p. 24). In order to form a new habit, the listener needs to be receptive, take to heart the speaker’s personhood and concerns, and be able to shift between being open minded and aware of interference (p. 24). Depending on the situation and who enters into a conversation, markers of active and attentive listening vary in character. Examples of listening markers are silence, verbal language, and/or nonverbal activity like eye contact, head nodding, arm gesturing, smiling and/or other facial expressions (Otnes, 2007).

Acquiring active and attentive listening skills require practice (Itzchakov & Kluger, 2017), and like any other skill, listening skills can be learned (Brown, 2011). In cases where listening has not been taught or actively learned in school, a *listening circle* stands out as an appropriate tool for acquiring listening skills. A listening circle is a structured group dialogue and learning strategy for experiencing listening and improving listening skills (Bommelje,

2012). It is a method for listening, talking, reflection and evaluation in communication with others (Itzchakov & Kluger, 2017).

In a listening circle, participants take part on equal grounds, can express themselves, and be heard. Every participant gets time to speak, from the heart, without being interrupted, judged or fixed (ILA, 2023; Itzchakov & Kluger, 2017). Equality in dialogue prevails.

When one listens actively and attentively, a listening circle is an appropriate arena for reflection and learning, for new thoughts, new understanding, and new connections. It has three main foundations: All participants must (1) *speak with intention*, (2) *listen with attention*, and (3) *pay attention* (Itzchakov & Kluger, 2017). This entails speaking about something that is relevant to the circle conversation, to be respectful of the learning process and the circle members, and to be attentive to the focus of the circle discussion and all contributions. These foundations create the framework listening circle guidelines.

Listening Circle in Practice

A listening circle has a framework with the following guidelines:

- *Speak from the heart* about what is true to you. Use singular “I”, not plural “we”.
 - *Listen from the heart* in silence and pay attention to the speaker. Do not interrupt, comment or try to fix anything.
 - *Rehearsal not needed*. Be open minded, stay in the moment, and do not plan what to say. Listen to others’ voices and take in the meaning of what’s being said. When your turn comes, say what’s on your mind at that moment.
 - *Beware of the time*. Make room for all speakers to share, by choice. Its ok to “pass”.
 - *Respect the circle members*. What is spoken in the circle remains confidential.
1. *Teaching session*. Although listening can be taught, there exists no consensus regarding *what* should be taught (Janusik, 2010). The teaching session is an arena for establishing trust and for showing that participating in listening circles is safe (ILA, 2023). The teaching session content:
 - *The ILA definition of listening* (above) constituted the foundation of the teaching session and the listening circle event.
 - *The listening process and its steps*. A listening model is presented with the following steps: receive, identify, understand, remember, evaluate and respond.
 - *Listening markers* confirm communication from the listener to the speaker, including a combination of verbal, non-verbal, vocal and/or non-vocal signals. Examples include combining use of voice, intonation variation, sigh, and scream (Otnes, 2007).

- *Active and attentive listening* (see above) (Bodie et al., 2015; Boudreau et al., 2009; Floyd, 2014; Wolvin & Coakley, 1996).
 - *Types of listening and types of listeners* is introduced. The first category is about *why* we listen (Purdy, 1997; Wolvin, 2010; Wolvin & Coakley, 1996); and the second is about *how* we listen (Carnegie et al., 2017; Gingerich & Kaden, 2023).
2. *Process description of the listening circle.* After introducing the guidelines and implementing the teaching session, participants are presented with the following process for taking part in a listening circle:
- *Form a group* of 4-5 members.
 - *Prepare to listen.* Remove all distractions: cell phones and non-academic activities.
 - *Choose a group leader*, whose task is to ensure everyone stays on the subject in question. Respect the leader.
 - *A question or theme for the dialogue* is chosen by the facilitator or the group.
 - *The speaking order* is agreed upon or set by the leader. The first speaker talks, says “I am done” or nod towards the next speaker when finished. The next speaker might pause to prepare to speak, or “pass”. This procedure is followed until all have had the chance to speak, once or several times. Mutual agreement on number of circle rounds.
 - *Keep in mind:* listening takes place in silence by directing your attention towards the speaker. No crosstalk or interruptions.
 - *Sum up:* At the end of the circle, all get to offer their final thoughts on the dialogue.
3. *Listening circle feedback.* After each circle, participants give feedback on their experiences regarding *being silent while listening, listening with an open mind, being in the moment, not planning what to respond, and the silence itself.*
4. *Follow-up* (if necessary). Around two months after the listening circle, a follow-up may occur. The purpose is to get an impression of the participants’ experience of the activity, hear their views on listening and being a listener.

Efficacy

A listening circle is a learning method for improving listening skills with the following outcomes:

- Increased listening knowledge and comprehension
- Increased understanding of the listener role

In summary, the listening circle is an appropriate learning method for improving listening skills. Outcomes have a positive impact on listening comprehension and practical attentive listening skills.

References

- Adelmann, K. (2002). *Att lyssna till röster. Ett vidgat lyssnande begrepp i ett didaktiskt perspektiv* [Listening to voices: An extended listening concept in a didactic perspective] PhD Thesis, Malmö Universit t. <https://muep.mau.se/handle/2043/6400>
- Bodie, G., Vicery, A., Cannava, K. & Jones, S. (2015). The role of “active listening” in informal helping conversations: Impact on perceptions of listener helpfulness, sensitivity, and supportiveness and discloser emotional improvement. *Western Journal of Communication*, 79, 151-173.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2014.943429>
- Bommelje, R. (2012). The listening circle: Using the SBI Model to enhance peer feedback. *International Journal of Listening*, 26(2), 67-70.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10904018.2012.677667>
- Boudreau, D., Cassell, E., & Fuks, A. (2009). Preparing medical students to become attentive listeners. *Medical Teacher*, 31(1), 22-29.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01421590802350776>
- Brown, S. (2011). *Listening myths: Applying second language research to classroom teaching*. University of Michigan.
- Brownell, J. (2018). *Listening. Attitudes, principles, and skills* (6th ed.). Routledge Taylor & Francis Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315441764>
- Carnegie, D. & Associates (2017). *Listen: The art of effective communication*. Gildan Press.
- Floyd, K. (2014). Empathic listening as an expression of interpersonal affection. *International Journal of Listening*, 28(1), 1-12.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10904018.2014.861293>
- Gingerich, M. & Kaden, T. (2023, 20. June). *Someone to tell it to*.
<https://someonetotellitto.org/about-us/>
- International Listening Association (ILA). (2023). *Listening circles*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Itzchakov, G. & Kluger, A. N. (2017). The listening circle: A simple tool to enhance listening and reduce extremism among employees. *Organizational Dynamics*, 46(4), 220-226.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2017.05.005>
- Janusik, L. (2010). Listening pedagogy: Where do we go from here? In A. D. Wolvin (Ed.), *Listening and human communication in the 21st century* (pp. 193-224). Wiley-Blackwell.

- Jonsdottir, I. J., & Fridriksdottir, K. (2020). Active listening: Is it the forgotten dimension in managerial communication? *International Journal of Listening*, 34(3), 178-188.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10904018.2019.1613156>
- Nordli I. C., & Skog, K. (2022). Lytte fram forundringsøyeblikk [Listening forward: Moments of wonder]. *Nordisk barnehageforskning*, 19(4), 163-182.
<https://doi.org/10.23865/nbf.v19.238>
- Otnes, H. (2007). *Følge med og følge opp. Verbalspråklig lyttemarkering i synkrone nettsamtaler* [Pay attention and follow up: Verbal language listening marking in synchronous online conversations]. Doctoral thesis, NTNU Trondheim, Norway.
<https://ntnuopen.ntnu.no/ntnu-xmlui/handle/11250/243964>
- Purdy, M. (1997). What is listening? In M. Purdy & D. J. Borisoff (Eds.), *Listening in everyday life: A personal and professional approach* (2nd ed., pp. 1-20). University Press of America.
- Rogers, C. R. & Sanford, R. C. (1985). Client-centered psychotherapy. In I. Kaplan, J. Harold, & B. Sadock (Eds.), *Comprehensive textbook of psychotherapy*, 2, 1374-1388. Williams & Wilkins.
- Weger, H., Bell, G. C., Minei, E. M., & Robinson, M. C. (2014). The relative effectiveness of active listening in initial interactions. *International Journal of Listening*, 28(1), 3-31.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10904018.2013.813234>
- Wolvin, A. D. (2010). Listening engagement: Intersecting theoretical perspectives. In A. D. Wolvin (Ed.), *Listening and human communication in the 21st century* (pp. 7-30). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Wolvin, A. & Coakley, C. G. (1996). *Listening* (6th ed.). William C. Brown Publishers.