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To prepare a manuscript, please refer to the "Guide for authors" which is available online at listen.org.

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Listening Education aims to enhance the practice in listening education by providing a wide range of research and practical information through the publication of papers concerned with the description of methods for teaching listening in primary, secondary, and post secondary education and with the analysis of the pertaining research. This online journal will recognize that many disciplines – education, communication science, psychology, sociology, anthropology, - have important contributions to make to the achievement of its goals, and the Editors welcome contributions from them. The online-journal invites papers which offer descriptions of classroom practice, empirical research, and reviews of high quality.

The papers are searchable in three categories:

- a. Teaching listening: Methods for the classroom
- b. Teaching listening: Methods for training
- c. Reviews of material and textbooks suggested for teaching listening

Papers should be concerned primarily with listening education whatever grade, level, or purpose.

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Issue 6, 2015 (Vol. 1)

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Keywords: group listening, rhythm, pace, memory, meetings, conference calls, cognitive load

Content

Title: Listening in Groups

Goals: To learn techniques to overcome listening challenges inherent in group conversation, especially conference calls and business meetings.

Type / Aspect of listening in focus: pace, pause, memory, cognitive load of switching between being the listener and the speaker, inclusion, engagement.

Description:

This exercise is designed to illustrate some of the challenges faced by listeners in group settings. These challenges are exacerbated by conference calls and webinars where there are no visual cues. Many people find it difficult to keep track of what gets said, who said it, while adding their own ideas to the discussion. Others find it difficult to know how and when to step “into the fray”. This exercise can be a fun way to tease out best group based listening practices.

Preparation and Procedures:

1. If participants are new to the subject of listening, facilitate a discussion about what listening is and is not.
2. On an index card or paper ask participants to complete the prompt “Listening is” with a few words or sentences.
3. When they have completed writing their response to the “listening is ... “ prompt, determine if you are going to use option A or B described next.

Option A is to form one group of 8-15 people and have the instructor facilitate the exercise. The advantage of this approach is the instructor can monitor the exercise and reference these observations during briefing where they are relevant. The disadvantage is the number of people that can experience the exercise at the same time.

Option B is to form multiple groups of 8-16 people with one of those people designated to facilitate the remainder of the activity. The advantage of this option is more people can participate. The disadvantage is being dependent on the maturity and skill of the participants to complete the task as expected and an inability to monitor and thus reference the listening behavior in all groups.

4. Now have your group(s) form an outward facing circle so that people cannot see each other. Ideally there should be large spaces between people as well to simulate the isolation of a phone or conference call.

5. The instructor or facilitator should share the following with the group(s). Your objective is for everyone to share their response to the listening is ... prompt while avoiding talking over each other. If two people start at the same time, one or both need to "step back". There can be no discernible pattern to the turn taking. If a pattern is detected, the exercise starts over.

6. The facilitator or instructor should try to keep track of who has spoken and listen to make sure a pattern has not emerged. If a pattern is detected, describe it (no blame as it might be subconscious) and ask that the group to start over. When the speaking seems to be over, the facilitator or instructor should slowly and silently count to ten.

7. At this point the group(s) can turn and face each other (or be seated together) for the debriefing questions. The first question might be "Did everyone truly have a turn to talk? If someone did not get a chance or chose not to speak start, explore the reasons and impacts on content and effects of similar behavior in actual business settings. See below for additional debriefing questions which can be done in small groups or as one larger group.

Tips and Debriefing: Use the following clusters of questions to tease out additional insights and learning from this exercise.

What was this like?

What surprised you?

Where have you experienced a communication challenge like this before?

Were you able to follow the comments of others?

Were you asked, could you recap what was said for others?

What were some of the things that struck you as important?

How did knowing you would have to make a comment impact your ability to attend to and listen to others?

What are the implications for being better listeners in group settings?

What was the effect of having prepared, written comments?

What does this suggest about listening during meetings?

Did everyone participate?

How do you know?

How did you keep track?

Why might this be important beyond this exercise?

What did you do when there was “over talk”?

How is that similar or different from what happens at work?

How did the rhythm of the experience effect you?

How does rhythm impact meeting discussions? Conference calls?

Having had this experience, what three tips would you give to promote better speaking and listening during meetings?

Tips might include:

Know how many people are in the meeting.

Listen for comments from all parties.

Invite input from people who may not have spoken.

Listen for pause after the speaker is done before entering the conversation.

Prepare some notes with your ideas ahead of time.

Jot notes of what you want to say while conversation unfolds so you can return your attention to the listening.

Etc.

Assessment: None

Title: Meditation in the Classroom: Cultivating Attention and Insight

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Grade level: The meditation activity is focused on the Undergraduate level, but may be adapted for ages pre-Kindergarten (see Kaiser-Greenland, 2010, for teaching mindfulness meditation to pre-K and grade school age children) through Graduate school levels.

Keywords: Meditation, Listening, Learning, Contemplative Practices

Content

Course title: The Meditation Activity has been Field Tested in the following courses:

- (1) Listening to Self, Others, Nature, and the Divine
- (2) Communication Theory
- (3) Introduction to Research Methods
- (4) Nonviolent Communication and Peace
- (5) Seminar in Research Methods in Lifespan Communication

Course level: Primarily Undergraduate

Goals:

Care must be taken by the instructor not to overemphasize achieving the goal(s) of meditation. Often, when there is too much emphasis on *trying* to reach the goal, the benefits of meditating can be hindered. On the other hand, when the goal of meditation is held loosely, then the goal is more easily approached. For this class meditation activity, the instructor might loosely hold several interrelated goals for their students: cultivate experiences of first person attention, concentration, and awareness while simultaneously developing capacities for insight, imagination, exploration, and discernment of ideas related to class content and applications to everyday life. Another goal of the class meditation is to provide an opportunity for students to share and dialogue about their personal insights discovered during meditation.

Type / Aspect of listening in focus:

The proposed meditation activity is a kind of self-listening. However, the content of the meditation may involve additional listening contexts in the life world like listening to others, nature, and the divine (Baesler, 2015). In the class meditation activity, the period of meditation is followed by inviting students to share part of their meditation experience with the class where the focus is on listening to others.

Description:

There are many types of contemplative practices that cultivate deeper listening in the life world contexts of self, others, nature, and the divine including meditation, prayer, art, poetry, dance, and so forth (Baesler, 2015). See Barbezat and Bush (2014) for an extended discussion of the purpose and types of contemplative practices in higher education. Thus, meditation is situated as one of many types of contemplative practices.

Virtually every known religion/spirituality has some type of meditative practice (Beverluis, 2000). Of the many types of meditation (see Goleman, 1972 for typology), the particular type of class meditation described herein combines two traditional meditation practices: concentration and insight. The class meditation utilizes focused attention on a symbolic center while simultaneously holding an attitude of openness and acceptance of insights related to that center. The meditative skills of concentration and openness are also generalizable to broader listening processes. For example, in human communication, listening may involve an intentional focus on another person (their thoughts, feelings, needs, and behavior), and being open and accepting of the ideas that emerge from dialogue with that person (Rosenberg, 2005).

The intention of introducing meditation at the beginning of a class period in the undergraduate classroom is three-fold. First, meditation can assist students in transitioning from the stressors of the day (e.g., class, work, and relationships) to a more relaxed and open learning environment. The simple preliminary meditation behaviors of sitting erect with eyes closed and breathing deep can stimulate feelings of relaxation and renewal. Second, the meditative skill of concentration, focusing on a symbolic center, and attending to ideas that percolate from that center, hold the possibility of arousing wonder and curiosity for students, preparing them for listening and discussing the upcoming class content. Third, students that share their meditation experiences with each other provide intellectual fuel for the often unexpected and rewarding dialogues that follow meditation.

Preparation and Procedures:

Ideally, instructors introducing meditation into the classroom have a daily meditation practice that they can draw from to model the meditation posture and attitudes for their students. When instructors have lived a long term daily meditation practice, they can respond to student questions about meditation from the ground of their own personal experience. There is no substitute for an authentic teacher that has traveled the path of meditation for many years (or at least many months!). I recommend instructors engage in a daily meditative practice that they are comfortable with for at least several months before attempting to introduce students to meditation in the classroom context. For those not familiar with meditation, or those just beginning to meditate, see Nelson (2001) for an introduction to different types of meditation in a variety of spiritual traditions that cultivate concentrative and insight types of meditation that are central to the proposed meditation activity described herein.

To begin I suggest introducing the idea of meditation the first day of class, as the first item on the agenda. Provide a context for the meditation. For example, “I invite you to meditate with me on a word, or phrase, for a few minutes. This is not an esoteric practice that requires you to believe in a particular type of religious dogma, but rather a method of reflection designed to assist you in relaxing the body and cultivating the skills of attention and awareness.”

Instruct students to “turn off” all electronic devices and “turn on” to their inner world through meditation. Provide instructions on how to meditate. Choose a word or phrase for the class to meditate on that represents a theme for the course content for that particular class period. Write this word/phrase on the white/chalk board next to the word “meditate.”

Introduce the basics of meditation, steps seven through ten below, the first day. All of the posture related instructions (steps one through five below) are helpful in creating a sense of stillness and self-respect, but they are optional for those that prefer a different posture. Add additional steps to the basic ones each time the class meditates in the future until all the steps are covered. After several additional steps have been introduced, review all of the steps with the class by asking them to hypothetically describe “how to meditate” to a friend who is unfamiliar with meditation, that is, draw the steps of meditation out of the students rather than tell them the steps.

1. Sit with the spine erect, like a violin string attached to the base of the spine and extending up through the crown of the head; taut but not too tight. This assists in

comfortable deep breathing. Further, the head is erect and centered, not too far back or forward, nor too far right or left, with the chin tucked slightly in.

2. Legs are uncrossed with feet flat on the floor. This promotes blood circulation in the lower body and prevents numbness in the legs.

3. Hands rest comfortably on the thighs, palms open and positioned up or down. For most individuals, this position is comfortable and promotes a sense of stability.

4. The mouth is closed or slightly open with the tip of the tongue touching the roof of the mouth, or resting gently against the back of the lower teeth. This position decreases salivation and the need to swallow frequently, promoting a sense of stillness in the body.

5. Eyes are gently closed, or eyes can remain open if one is not comfortable with closed eyes. If eyes remain open, the gaze should be soft and focus on an area about three feet in front of the body at a forty-five degree angle downward. The proximal goal is to cultivate an interior focus related to the symbolic center by decreasing possible distractions from the external environment.

6. Exhale completely, then breathe in slowly and deeply through the nose, hold briefly, and breathe out slowly and fully—do this two or three times. Next, let go of the conscious instructions about breathing and breathe naturally. The steady, slow, rhythmic breathing facilitates a sense of calmness, relaxation, and focus.

7. Bring conscious attention to the symbol of the day (the word or phrase written on the white/chalk board) by silently repeating the word/phrase a few times. Then, hold the word/phrase symbol as your “center” or touchstone for the remainder of the meditation. This step provides a mental focal point for the meditation.

8. Cultivate an attitude of openness and acceptance of any thoughts, feelings, or images that emerge and are related to the symbolic center. Witness these without judgment. Allow ideas space to emerge and grow.

9. If you find your thoughts moving too far away from the symbolic center (e.g. thinking about your next class, or planning a menu for dinner), then acknowledge where you are (e.g., “I have moved from my center”), and gently return to the center by silently

repeating the symbolic word/phrase. This step requires some discernment and discipline, and is only invoked when one is aware that one feels disconnected from the symbolic center.

10. Continue nurturing the presence of the symbolic center, being opening and accepting of ideas related to the center, and returning to the center as needed, until the meditation time is brought to a close.

After providing preliminary instructions, and answering questions about the meditation activity, initiate the actual meditation in class by taking up the meditative posture, and reminding the students of the instructions out loud the first few times you meditate together as a class. For example, “Let us begin our meditation by sitting comfortably with our eyes closed...breathing easy...gently holding our meditation word as our center...allowing ideas to emerge from this center...and when distracted, gently returning to the center.”

Initially, the class might meditate for two to three minutes—keep track of time with a watch, or set a mobile phone device to quietly “chime” at the end of the meditation. Gradually increase the meditation time each class period until, at the end of a sixteen week semester, the class is meditating for ten to fifteen minutes.

The meditation period is concluded by further verbal instructions from the instructor such as: “As you feel ready...bring your meditation to a close...reconstruct the classroom in your imagination...gently open your eyes and re-orient to your external environment and your classmates...take a few deep breaths and stretch a bit if you wish.”

At this point after the meditation, there is the option to instruct students to write about their meditative experience for a few minutes. Writing about one’s experience after meditating can be valuable because most meditative insights tend to evaporate from working memory rather quickly. Writing can clarify, solidify, and assist with the elaboration of insights from meditation. For example, an image that appeared briefly during meditation, when unpacked by the writing process, may uncover hidden meanings of the image. Generally, students find it easier to share something from their meditation experience when given an opportunity to write about their experience. Perhaps there is something about the act of writing itself, engaging the kinesthetic modality, seeing one’s experience in concrete words, or simply having time to gather one’s thoughts, that helps students prepare to share part of their meditation experience with the class.

After the meditation and optional writing activity, invite students to share part of their meditation experience with the class. Students might share something about the actual experience of meditation and/or content related to the ideas that surfaced during the meditation. I try to lessen the impact of potential demand characteristics associated with asking students to share their meditation experience by reminding students that they are free to keep their experience private, that there are times we may not feel like sharing, and that is okay. I also remind students that sharing their experience is not a graded activity. In addition, as students begin to share, I do my best to validate their experience. Depending on the content of what they share, I may ask them to elaborate (e.g., if a student shares a one word response, I might ask, “Could you tell us more about that?”), or I might relate their insight to the course content that we will be covering that day, or I might use their response as an opportunity to provide further meditation instruction (for instance, if a student shared, “My mind just kept racing, I couldn’t focus on the center,” I might respond with, “That is a very common and normal experience...our minds can be like grasshoppers jumping all over the place...gently keep coming back to the center, knowing that each time you do, you are strengthening your ability to concentrate). The sharing of meditation experiences in class is often surprisingly fruitful in facilitating class discussion about the topic of the day.

Tips and Debriefing:

Adding a period of meditation to the beginning of class may initially feel awkward for instructors, and for students, that do not have a regular personal meditation practice outside the classroom. For the instructor, I recommend devoting 20-30 minutes of daily meditation in the early morning and/or evening—there is no substitute for this disciplined practice for a period of several months (at a minimum) before attempting to teach meditation to students in the classroom.

In the beginning, there may be a few students that respond critically to the meditation practice with comments like “I don’t like meditating,” or “I don’t see the point of meditating.” I have found it best to affirm these feelings and provide more information for them to consider. For these kinds of critical comments, I might respond, “Yes, meditation can feel awkward at first...consider meditation as a form of self-exploration...by paying close attention, you may discover surprising things about yourself...hang in there a few more times before you decide to give up.” I find that in almost all cases, by the third or fourth meditation session, students have adapted to the meditation practice, and some of them may even express how they look forward to the meditation time.

Sometimes students come with previous negative cultural conditioning associated with the word meditation. In such cases, I explain that our class meditation does not require any religious/spiritual belief system, and that they may want to reframe our meditation time as a process of reflection, contemplation, or introspection.

A few students every semester enjoy the meditations so much that they want to learn more. For students already grounded in a particular religious/spiritual faith, I recommend they explore resources about meditation and/or prayer in their particular faith (see Beversluis, 2000 for resources). For other students less inclined toward religiosity or spirituality, I recommend exploring “mindfulness meditation” beginning with either Hanh (1991) or Kabat-Zinn (1994). These two resources are based on the Buddhist tradition, but they can be learned in a secular form.

Assessment:

I do not recommend formally assessing students’ meditative experiences as part of the course grade as it sets up the expectation that there is a “right” or “best” meditation experience. The continuous sense that one’s meditation experience is being evaluated is antithetical to the purpose of meditation. Ideally, one meditates for the sake of meditating, and the insights and skills that develop are secondary benefits of the practice for oneself and for others.

However, if one needs to create an evaluative component to the meditation (e.g., to satisfy the administration that students are learning something during their meditation experiences), I recommend some form of self-assessment. For example, students could journal about what they have learned from their meditation experience each week, and then evaluate themselves with a letter grade at mid and end of term based on some rubric that the instructor creates such as “quantity and quality” or “effort and insight.” Alternatively, students could create their own rubric for grading individually, or as a class, and then the instructor could approve and/or recommend revisions to the rubric. In addition, students might create a poem of their meditation journal learnings that they recite to the class. I also have students develop a one page explanation of the purpose and meaning of the poem. Students can self-assess the poem and explanation, or the instructor can create a rubric for this evaluation. The spoken word of poetry has more meaning and power to convey the affective dimension of human experience than the written word because of the nonverbal characteristics (e.g., facial expression, body movement, loudness, pitch, rate, pauses, and so forth) of the medium.

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Review of teaching material

Title reviewed: Bohlken, B. (2014). Learning to listen with significant others. A conversational approach. Maryville, MO: Images Unlimited.

Author(s) of the review: Margarete Imhof

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Grade level: Undergraduate; Adult Education; General

Type of material: Book

Keywords: Interpersonal listening, building personal relationships

Emeritus Bob Bohlken has published a very special book for readers with the goal to improve on their interpersonal listening skills and attitudes and who consider to do this specifically in interaction with a close relative or friend. The approach which Bohlken takes is explicitly non-academic, but nonetheless based on a profound personal knowledge of the intricacies and challenges involved in listening.

The presentation of listening skills and attitudes is framed by a theoretical model which identifies discriminative, comprehensive, critical, and emphatic listening as mutually interdependent but still distinct forms of listening which ask for specific skills. Though guided by theory, Bohlken uses his talent to present abstract concepts in a conversational manner using everyday language with clear relevance to everyday experience. The style of the book does justice both to the underlying research and to the needs of the reader who might be a novice in listening theory and practice. Each concept is presented with a language rich in metaphors and, wherever feasible, with a story to anchor the information in an accessible and often humorous image. In addition, and this is the strong point of the book, Bohlken offers a wealth of practical, reflexive and observational exercises. These exercises strongly encourage the reader to exchange the ideas presented in the text with a significant other and to actively explore different perspectives. Going through these practice ideas will support the reader to fathom the

concepts in more depth and to better grasp how listening in its various facets work and what listening skills can do for you and your relationships. However, Bohlken's book does not give the reader "easy", clear-cut normative advice. Bohlken extends an invitation to the reader to consider and to reconsider habits and communication patterns, to reflect upon strengths and weaknesses and to think of consequences, effects, and alternatives. It is interesting that the core of the instruction model of the book contains the idea of mutual feedback: Listening skills will most likely develop when communicators ask for feedback of a significant other from step one onwards.

Evaluation: The book is very probably not a stand-alone textbook for an academically oriented course on listening. However, the practice ideas and the challenges for reflection may be useful and insightful additions for any learners. The book is recommended for all those who seek to improve their listening skills in their everyday relationships and who are looking for a point of departure to seriously explore their own habits and attitudes in interpersonal communication and, in particular, listening. The ideas and exercises presented in the book have the potential to spark fruitful discussions. In the hands of an instructor, the concepts and practice exercises can certainly be adjusted to the needs and comprehension level of a group of learners.

THE PORTRAYAL OF LISTENING IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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Grade Level: Pre-K-2

Type of Material: Books

Keywords: listening; competency; cultural values

Content:

As grandfather of three little girls, I've returned to children's books after a hiatus during which my two children moved from such books to school texts. I'm impressed that listening is a "hot topic" for children's authors, and it seems useful to consider how listening is portrayed in these books. This is especially pertinent as we listening scholars continue to grapple with operational definitions of the process of listening and, indeed, with how we constitute listening in our research, pedagogy, and practice.

Listening scholars have approached the process conceptually from various perspectives. Early definitions centered on stages and constructs of the process (Glenn, 1989; Witkin & Trochim, 1997). In an effort to operationalize the process for listening researchers, a group of listening scholars in 1994 established a commonly-accepted definition: "Listening is the active process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages" (An ILA definition of listening, 1995, p. 1).

Extending our understanding of this complex human communication function, Bodie (2007) has suggested that the body of research on listening can be conceptualized in one of two ways: listening as a process (i.e., information processing, cognition) and listening as a product (i.e., a communicative function). Empirical research on listening has focused on the measurement of listening comprehension and on perceived listening effectiveness. This work by listening scholars demonstrates the complex, multidimensional nature of listening (Wolvin, 2009).

A useful paradigm for understanding the listening process/product is the construct of listening competency. Competent listening accounts for cognitive knowledge about listening, the utilization of appropriate listening behaviors, and an affective willingness to listen (Wolvin &

Coakley, 1994; Halone, Cunconan, Coakley, & Wolvin, 1998). Expanding on competency, Cooper (1997) includes the effect of listening on the relationship between the communicators. Burnside-Lawry (2012) extends the competency model even further to account for the listener's accuracy of comprehension and effectiveness of response. And Bodie, St. Cyr, Pence, Rold, and Honeycutt (2012) elaborate a model of listening competence that associates listener behaviors (e.g., asking questions, eye contact) with attributes characteristic of competent listening (e.g., attentive, responsive).

Developing listening competency, then, has occupied the attention of listening educators for decades. The National Communication Association, for example, included *Listening Education* (Wolvin & Coakley, 1979) as part of its Theory Into Practice (TRIP) booklet series for communication educators in the 1970s.

In addition to school-based curriculum and educational assessment, however, it is interesting to consider how young children are exposed to the concept of listening and provided with some informal educational guidance as to good listening practices through children's books. Children's books are an important source for transmitting cultural values and attitudes. Kortenhaus and Demarest (1993) conclude that illustrated children's books "continue to have a major influence on the socialization process despite the dominant role of television in the day to day activities of most American children" (p. 220).

Jalongo (2010) stresses that studies of early childhood listening are of significance to listening scholars. This line of research enables us to understand the impact of early listening experiences and guide adults in influencing the listening habits of the very young. One important vehicle for reaching young children is through children's books about listening. To look at how authors of children's books approach listening competency, I retrieved ten such books that were available from Amazon (a convenience sample). A summary of these books (see Table 1) can provide an overview of some of the principles of listening competency conveyed by these authors.

One of the books that was popular in our house with my own children was Elizabeth Guilfoile's *Nobody Listens to Andrew* (1957). Andrew, a young boy, tries to tell his mother, his father, his sister, his brother, and his neighbor that "I saw something upstairs." He is met with "Wait, Andrew" as each individual tells him they're too busy as the moment to listen to him. Finally, Andrew announces in a very loud voice that "There is a bear upstairs in my bed." All the people stop what they're doing and listen to Andrew. They call the police, the fire department, and the dog catcher. The bear is taken away to the zoo and Andrew's father recognizes that they should have listened: "Next time we will listen to Andrew."

Claire Llewellyn's *Why Should I Listen?* (2001) takes us through little Joe's experiences as a listener. "I can hear wonderful things when I really listen," he says. "But sometimes I find it hard to listen. It's often when I am really busy—watching TV, playing with friends..." And, indeed, "NOT listening can get you in trouble." Because he didn't listen, Joe ended up alone in the museum and at a party without a bathing suit. Further, because people don't listen to Joe, he ends up feeling lonely and invisible. As a result, Joe resolves to try very hard to listen.

Cheri Meiner's *Listen and Learn* (2003) reminds children that "Listening helps me learn." A young student describes how to listen: "When I listen, I use my body, my eyes, and my ears. I stay quiet. When my mouth and body are quiet, everyone can hear. I look at the person who is speaking. I watch what the speaker does. Watching helps me understand the speaker's ideas. I think about what I hear. Thinking helps me learn and remember. Sometimes I listen carefully, but I don't understand. I can ask questions." The suggestions are illustrated in a school setting with positive reinforcement for good listening: "Each time I listen, I get better at it."

Elizabeth Verdick tells children how to listen in her *Listening Time* (2008). Her book provides realistic illustrations of children in a listening circle as they're advised to: "Put away the wiggles. Put away the giggles" with "Two eyes for looking. Two ears for hearing. One mouth for closing." "Good listening looks like this" is depicted, then, as children sitting quietly and attentively so that "I'm quiet as a mouse. I'm still as can be." The book also offers several strategies for parents and caregivers to help children become better listeners. Verdick notes the importance of being a listening role model, reminding children that their eyes help them listen, and to reinforce good listening.

The sensory pleasures of listening are reinforced in Paul Showers' *The Listening Walk* (1961). In this fascinating book focused on the joys of appreciative listening, a little girl takes a "listening walk" with her father and her dog. "On a Listening Walk I do not talk. I listen to all the different sounds. I hear all sorts of sounds on a Listening Walk. I listen to sounds I never listened to before." She listens to her dog's toenails and her father's shoes. She hears a baby crying, children playing, and a noisy jet overhead. She listens to street sounds and to sounds of birds in the park. "There are sounds everywhere all the time. All you have to do is keep still and listen to them."

While this little girl valued her listening experience, a little boy had to be reminded to listen in *Petey's Listening Ears* by L.R. Knost (2011). Poor little Petey was having a bad day. His dad told him not to pull the cat's tail, but he didn't listen and the cat scratched him. His mom

told him not to dump out his toy box, but he didn't listen and he had to pick them up. His sister told him not to play with her make-up, but he didn't listen so he had to take a bath to get it off his skin. At lunch, his daddy asked him "Did you forget to turn on your listening ears today?" So he listened when his dad told him to turn down the television and when his mom asked him to come to the kitchen for a cookie. He listened when his sister said he should put on his coat so he could go to the park to play with her. When his dad tucked him into bed, he said "Turning your listening ears on was a good idea wasn't it?" "Yes," said Petey as he gave his daddy a good night hug. Through it all, Petey carries his toy bunny, Beans.

Bunny ears are the center of Helen Lester's *Listen Buddy* (1995). "Buddy had beautiful big ears. It didn't matter." Poor Buddy didn't listen, so he came home with a basket of wash instead of the squash his parents sent him to buy. And he bought fifty potatoes instead of fifteen tomatoes. His parents tried yelling and then they tried whispering "Listen, Buddy," but they had no success in getting Buddy to listen to them. One day he set off on a long hop. His parents told him to be sure to turn left at the end of the road so he could go around the pond and get back home. Of course, Buddy didn't listen, so he turned right and ended up at Scruffy Varmint's cave. Scruffy Varmint was going to make soup, so he told Buddy what he needed—squash and tomatoes. Buddy dumped the basket of wash instead of the squash and the fifty potatoes instead of the fifteen tomatoes into the big soup pot. When Scruffy Varmint told Buddy to put the soup on the fire, he dumped it in the fire instead. Scruffy lost his temper told Buddy he wanted Bunnyrabbit soup: "And I know just the bunny to use, the Bunnyrabbit who never listens!" Buddy listened and ran back home as fast as he could. "And a little later, when Buddy's parents once again asked him to bring a pen and a slice of bread, Buddy listened."

Like bunnies, elephants have big ears. Susan Hood's *Little Elephant's Listening Ears* (2007) is an interactive board book with pull-tabs and flaps. Children experience the story of Elliot, the little elephant who didn't listen to his mommy tell him to dress warmly. Because he didn't listen, he put on his surfing clothes. At the store, he filled the basket with a mountain of stuff even though his mother told him they just needed to get some milk and "Don't play with the cart." Elliot didn't listen when his mother asked him to help clean up the leaves in the yard and to "try not to splash" in the bathtub. And at the bottom of every page, Hood reminds her readers "uh-oh! If you don't listen, you simply can't hear. Elliot put on your listening ears!" Finally, when his mother read him a bedtime story, "something magic occurred. Elliot sat down and listened and heard every word!"

Michael Dahl also features a little elephant who uses his big ears to listen in *Little Elephant Listens* (2014), a board book. Richly illustrated, the story shows the little elephant listening

to his papa tell him it's time to eat, to his brother tell him it's time to play, and to his mama tell him it's time for a bath. His papa and mama tell him it's time for bed. Then everyone else listens to little elephant snoring in his sleep! It's delightful to have a reinforcing story in which the main character doesn't have to be taught to listen; he listens!

Evaluation and Recommendation:

It is significant to note that many of the authors of these children's books focus listening on the auditory experience. Indeed, the bunny's and the elephant's big ears stand out as metaphors for this emphasis on processing and responding to what the child (who usually is in trouble) is hearing. Meiner's *Listen and Learn* is noteworthy for extending listening to "my body, my eyes, and my ears," while Verdick in *Listening Time* provides some strategies for children to focus attention and listen with their eyes and their ears. She also recommends strategies for adults to help children develop their listening competencies.

As we expand our understanding of the multi-dimensionality of listening competency, it is important to remember that developing good listening understandings, practices, and attitudes starts at an early age. Parents and early childhood caregivers and teachers can play a key role in providing opportunities to read books about listening, discuss effective listening, model listening practices, and reward good listening with young children, reinforcing, as Cooper (1997) notes, the effects of listening in relationships with parents, with friends, and with others.

Often overlooked, children's books offer a valuable source for introducing young children to principles and strategies that can build and reinforce their listening competencies. It would be helpful to provide pre-school parents and teachers with a guide and training for how to introduce and to process these books with their children. Such efforts can expand our reach for building an international community of dedicated listeners.

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TABLE 1

TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	PUBLISHER	FOCUS
<i>Little Elephant Listens</i>	Michael Dahl	2014	Picture Window Books	Listening in various contexts
<i>Nobody Listens to Andrew</i>	Elizabeth Guilfoile	1957	Scholastic Book Services	The consequences of not listening
<i>Little Elephant's Big Ears</i>	Susan Hood	2007	Reader's Digest Children's Books	Examples of not listening to mommy
<i>Petey's Listening Ears</i>	L.R. Knost	2014	Crossbooks	The benefits of listening
<i>Why Should I Listen?</i>	Claire Llewellyn	2013	Barron's	A child's perspective on the challenges of listening with suggestions for parents and teachers to help children develop good listening attitudes and skills
<i>Listen and Learn</i>	Cheri J. Meiners	2003	Free Spirit Publishing	The positive results of listening with examples of good listening behaviors, attitudes, and understanding
<i>Listen Buddy</i>	Helen Lester	1995	Houghton Mifflin	The dire consequences of not listening
<i>Look, Listen, Taste, Touch, and Smell</i>	Pamela Hill Nettleton	2004	Picture Window Books	How a child processes stimuli through all five senses while listening
<i>Larry Learns to Listen</i>	Karen Poth	2003	Big Idea	The importance of listening to what friends have to say
<i>The Listening Walk</i>	Paul Showers	1991	HarperCollins	The wonders of appreciative listening to sights and sounds in nature
<i>Listening Time</i>	Elizabeth Verdick	2008	Free Spirit	The need to listen fully with your eyes, ears, and whole body