Listening Education

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Editor

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Issue 7 (2017) Contents

Title: Found Sounds

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Grade Level: 3-8 (this can easily be adapted for older students)

Goals: The first goal for this multi-day project is for the students to gain awareness of the noises and sounds surrounding them in the school environment. The students will next learn about and practice listening appreciatively to the people, animals and objects around them. Using technology, the students will record these various sounds and experience how the use of these found sounds can be organized into a beautiful musical creation.

Another important goal, especially if this activity is used early in the school year, is to differentiate hearing and listening. Opitz and Zbaracki (2004) quote from Doug Resh that: "Hearing is a sound; listening is a thought." This amazingly succinct distinction helps students quickly understand that listening is an active process that involves attention and thinking. This *Found Sounds* activity helps students first gain a greater awareness of the sounds around them, and then helps them think about how those sounds could be used in musical compositions.

Content: As teachers in an elementary and middle school setting, we're always looking for ways to get young students interested and excited about listening. To this point, part of our challenge lies with the notion that many parents and educators believe and practice the idea that "listening means following directions." We aim to move well beyond this notion so that children don't shut down when we first start teaching and practicing better listening.

We've developed an activity that we call "Found Sounds." It incorporates a variety of listening skills infused with technology, movement, peer interaction and involvement. We'd like to share this lesson and an example of a student work.

Project Length: Four or five 45-minute periods

It's good to begin with the end in mind and here is a brief outline of the day-to-day schedule. Please modify it based upon your needs.

- Day 1: Introduce the concept and share a piece of music using found sounds. We used John Cage but you could also use The Beatles "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite," foley art, or a piece of your own choosing. Ask pairs or groups of students to explore the school grounds using a scavenger hunt and have them record various sounds. Leave it very open-ended so they can build awareness of the soundscapes around them.
- Day 2: Have the students import the sounds into a computer. They can then listen to the sounds to see how they could be mixed, manipulated or rearranged into an idea or theme in their musical composition. We recommend they label each sound to build a small library and database for your class. It's good to collect sounds for potential future projects.
- Day 3: Let the students work within their pairings or groups and edit the music. Give them a structure and assist them with editing, advice and goals as they work. About midway through the project, use a connection to the real world to reinvigorate the process.
- Day 4: Have them submit and present their pieces. They should share their ideas, goals and experiences. You can have them ask the class to listen for certain sounds or just listen appreciatively to their composition. Based on feedback from the class, provide an opportunity for students to make final edits.
- Day 5: Use this day for final edits and presentations.

Materials Needed:
- A portable recording device (iPhone, iPad, smartphone, etc.) with any free voice memo or other recording app.
- A computer with sound editing software (We recommend GarageBand or Audacity).

Introduction / Generating Interest: We kick off the project by sharing John Cage's famous classical musical piece 4'33'' and ask the students to listen appreciatively. This piece instructs the performers to NOT play their instrument for the entire duration of the piece. During this "instructive silence," the students will likely be confused, look around nervously, and probably even start to laugh. By the way, the students will likely be shocked to find out that this silence can be downloaded on iTunes for 99 cents. There is also a 4'33" App that allows users to

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record their own version of "silence" and upload the piece to share with people around the world.

The goal for this is for the students to be more aware of the noises and sounds around them. We also want them to become more comfortable with not having to fill every moment with something like their iPads or cell phones. Many people are nervous or afraid of silence, so it's good to have students experience at least a bit and possibly then to have them debrief afterward. Was that really silence? What were you thinking about? Is this music?

The introduction is purposely brief, with just enough to get them interested, but not enough for them to mimic. We want students to be creative and use their imaginations rather than copy what someone else has done before them. It is kept free and open to help them differentiate between the different groups and their various levels of proficiency.

If the John Cage piece doesn't work for you, perhaps one of the TED Talks at the end of this article could work to generate interest in this project for your students.

The Project Overview: Present the project to the students. Set up what you want the students to accomplish in regards to how many sounds they need to record, where they may go around the school, if they may work in groups, can the sounds be made by them, etc. Allow the students sufficient time to explore recording various sounds from the school grounds. Then they should transfer the sounds to a computer either by email, bluetooth or connecting through a USB cord. We recommend you have the students do the transfer themselves. It's great for them to gain this technical knowledge and experience that will prove valuable in their other classes and lives.

Scavenger Hunt: After the project has been explained, set up an exploratory scavenger hunt for the students to help them build their awareness around sound and also for them to collect specific "found sounds" for their compositions. Many smartphones have voice recorders that will work just fine for recording sounds for this project. Included here is a partial list that include musical and nonmusical vocabulary words, sounds to build awareness while listening appreciatively, as well as more abstract, interpretive challenges.

1. A sound that makes you calm.
2. A sound that is "wet" (or dry).
3. Two sounds from nature.
4. A sound that represents the number 5.
5. A sound that represents the soul.
6. A sound that is "thin" (or thick).
7. Three different metallic sounds and two wooden sounds.
8. The loudest sound in your environment (don't make this one).
9.. The sound of ancient history.
10. A sound recorded during a science lab (stay safe!).
11. The sound of yellow.
12. Two sounds that are "brittle."
13. The sound of the theme "Man versus nature."
14. A sound that is warm.

15.   A sound that is "full."
16.   A "muddy" sound.
17.   A "dynamic" sound (one that changes in volume, but not because of you).
18.*   3-5 of your own "found sounds."

*We do suggest that for older students, or those who are more technologically savvy, you adapt the lesson to include sounds based on their sonic qualities, such as dB or frequency. They could also process their found sounds in editing software to meet specific sonic goals.

Composition: Have the students upload the sounds they recorded to a computer, and then explain that the goal is to create a piece of music using those sounds. Import those sounds into a software program, such as GarageBand. Provide a structure (AABA, ABCBA), suggested duration and due date for the students. In addition, you should create a rubric for grading if this is not taking place in a participation-only grading situation.

There are three different types of sound involved in this project:
1. Found Sounds - those already produced in the school environment, such as the wind blowing outside or a heater humming.
2. Created Sounds - those manufactured by the students, such as banging spoons, stomping feet, whistling, etc.
3. Pre-recorded Sounds - those already in the composition software, such as the loops or sounds available in GarageBand.

We recommend the following as a starting point for middle school students:

- The composition must be one to two minutes long.
- It must include five Found Sounds, three Created Sounds and at least two Pre-recorded Sounds.
- The piece should have a title, specific mood, and structure, such as:
  - Introduction
  - Verse
  - Chorus
  - Bridge
  - Outtro
- The piece must be converted to MP3 format before being turned in.

Connection to the Real World: About midway through the project, in order to reinvigorate the learning process, explain to students that professional musicians also use sounds in their compositions. (In our experience, if this use of "exemplars" is done too early, students will often copy them instead of thinking about their own compositions). Many students can probably name a few famous songs with sound effects, such as Pink Floyd's classics "Time" or "Money," The Beatles' "Revolution

Number 9," Billy Joel's "Allentown," or the more recent "Heartbeat Song" by Kelly Clarkson, which apparently used a recording of her baby's heartbeat.

Play some songs for the students to demonstrate that professional musicians also collect sounds to incorporate into their compositions. Have them "listen for" the specific sounds in each song and then discuss with the students what the sounds contribute to the songs. With sufficient time, students could discuss a variety of questions: What were the sound effects that were used? Where do you think those sounds were found? How do the sounds add to the listening experience? What would the song lose without those sounds?

A fantastic list of songs, complete with explanations and stories, can be found at: http://www.songfacts.com/category-songs_containing_sound_effects.php

Mid-Project Revisions: After the connection, allow the students to again venture out into the school environment in order to supplement their compositions. Many students have reported that they have certain sounds in mind that they'd like to include, or they may at least recognize that their pieces seem to be lacking something.

Project Tips: Make sure to tell the students that they should record each sound separately and not, for example, as a long, continuous track. This will ease the amount of work in the editing phase of the project. The location(s) for the scavenger hunt dictates what is possible, so consider allowing students to explore several very different environments in the school, and/or allow them to record sounds at home. Many students may drift toward silly sounds, such as farting or burping, but remind them that these sounds are meant to enhance their compositions and that these silly sounds may create the wrong mood.

Editing: During the project, the students will have to listen numerous times to their compositions. They work as a producer and recording engineer by mixing the placement of the sounds, the dynamics and balance. Common edits include compressing, fading and adjusting the equalizer.

Sharing: Once the projects are completed, and the students have turned in their finished compositions, have them gather together as a group to listen to each others' creations. We recommend doing this after you've had a chance to listen to the pieces yourself and can setup some "listening for," or discriminative listening targets. In addition, you can check for anything potentially inappropriate.

It always helps to talk about specific elements of the compositions, so if possible, listen to the compositions where students can also see the elapsed time. This will allow them to take notes on exact time locations within the songs. During the share, the students can do two types of listening, appreciative and focused listening, which we refer to simply as "listening for." Each group can share at least one sound target for others to "listen for" during the share phase, and additional guiding questions will help students to also move toward practicing appreciative listening.

***Listening For* Sample Targets:**

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- "One sound to listen for is the spoons clanging."
- "In ours, listen for a sound that we repeated three separate times."
- "What do you think that sound is in our chorus?"
- "We're really proud of our 'yellow' sound. Where do you think it is?"
- "Try listening for the laughter in the background, it's really faint, but it's there."
- "Write down the time you think you hear our group's 'wet' sound."
- "What sounds do you hear within the texture of the verse?"

You'll want to encourage the students to listen to them appreciatively too, as students may be nervous about having their works shared. Although appreciative listening is a complex idea and process, for the purposes of this project, it can be defined by the Wolven-Coakley definition as: "the highly individualized process of listening to obtain sensory stimulation or enjoyment through the works and experiences of others" (p. 363). In other words, for this sharing stage, listening to find something stimulation or enjoyable in other students' compositions.

Appreciative Listening Questions:
- When were you first aware of that background sound?
- What is something you appreciated about that composition?
- What was the most inviting part of that composition?
- What sound do you think was the hardest to capture? Why?
- What is something this group did that you could try next time?
- What was your favorite or most enjoyable sound?
- As you were composing and editing, what sound(s) did you grow to appreciate more?

Debrief: Here are some questions for a verbal or written reflection process: What was your favorite part of the project? Least favorite? What did the accidental or incidental sounds contribute to your composition? What did they distract or take away from your piece? Did you or would you take them out in the final version? What was your favorite sound from any of the compositions? What would you do differently? If you could slightly modify one of your sounds, what would you change?

Assessment: Assessment takes place at a couple different stages in the project. The formative assessment piece can be measured by how engaged the students are in the project as they're gathering the sounds, editing the tracks and creating the overall compositions. This is mainly done as the teacher helps the students in their process by continuously listening to the projects and offering suggestions. Although we use the project in a participation-only setting, a rubric could be used for a summative assessment.

Extensions: With older students and/or additional time, students could learn supplemental terms and ideas related to this project. These include: soundscape, acoustic ecology, or ecoacoustics, soundwalking, and Bernie Krause's concepts of geophony, biophony and anthrophony.

We highly encourage you to collaborate with your colleagues to create some exciting STEM or STEAM projects and extension opportunities for the students. The possibilities for cross-curricular lessons are exhaustive, but some we have used or considered include:

- Students could create dances based on their compositions.
- Have the students write about the entire journey of creating their compositions using an "I-search paper" format.
- The collected sounds could be used to create complete stories using only sound effects.
- Students could create a soundtrack for a poem or story.
- Create and play a "Name that Sound" gameshow.
- Have students practice Foley art for a play or performance.
- Students could create an alphabet book of all the sounds to share with younger students.
- The compositions could be used to inspire art projects.
- Create a picture book for the sounds to teach vocabulary in foreign language classes.
- Students could create Rube Goldberg machines that create or duplicate sounds.
- The students could explore and practice onomatopoeia. This could as simple as: "How would you spell your sound or represent it in writing?"

Reflections: Students really enjoy this project and many expressed that they loved going around the building collecting sounds. Importantly, many also express that they now have a greater awareness and appreciation of the sounds around them. Recently, one fifth grade student said, "I thought it was neat to hear all of the sounds that I hadn't noticed before." Another sixth grade student mentioned that her favorite part was "Going outside and listening to all the sounds I never realized were around. It made me think about all the sounds around me that I didn't realize were there before this project." And yet another sixth grader said that his favorite part was "Recording the sounds. I liked getting to go around the school. And also it seemed like there were a lot more sounds as I was going around."

Further Suggestions:

Adelmann, K. (2012). The art of listening in an educational perspective: listening reception in the mother tongue. *Education Inquiry, 3,* 513-534.

Calix, M. (March 2013). Mira Calix: Sound and sentiment [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/watch/ted-institute/ted-intel/mira-calix-sound-and-sentiment

Hadero, M. (August 2015). Meklit Hadero: The unexpected beauty of everyday sounds [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/meklit_hadero_the_unexpected_beauty_of_everyday_sounds

Johnson, E. (2011). Developing listening skills through peer interaction. *Music Educators Journal, 98*. Retrieved June 23, 2015 from EBSCO online database, Academic Search Complete.

Krause, B. (June 2013). Bernie Krause: The voice of the natural world [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/bernie_krause_the_voice_of_the_natural_world#t-292610

Opitz, M., & Zbaracki, M. D. (2004). *Listen hear! 25 effective listening comprehension strategies.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Ronson, M. (March 2914). Mark Ronson: How sampling transformed music [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/mark_ronson_how_sampling_transformed_music

Song Facts

http://www.songfacts.com/category-songs_containing_sound_effects.php

Treasure, J. (July 2010). Julian Treasure: Shh! Sound health in 8 steps [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_shh_sound_health_in_8_steps

Treasure, J. (July 2011). Julian Treasure: 5 ways to listen better [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_5_ways_to_listen_better?language=en#t-252934

Wolvin, A. D., & Coakley, C. G. (1996). *Listening.* Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Title: Listenability: A Missing Link in the Basic Communication Course

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The concept of listenability, oral messages designed for ease of comprehension and engagement, is an important consideration for 21st century communicators. Cartier (1952) argued that, given the public's lack of comprehension of information, communication researchers should explore the listenability of information discourse for "clarity and comprehensibility in speech" (p. 44).   Reading researchers (Duffy, 1985) look at the readability of a written text, measured by the number of words in a sentence. Speakers should be concerned for the listenability of their (1) spoken text, whether that text is a speech, a statement in a meeting, or a response to a question in an interview, and to their (2) visual text as well.

It is clear that listeners bring significant limitations to the communication transaction. As we have seen, listeners are constrained by time in today's society. Consequently, a major challenge is to shape a message that can cut through all of the stimuli competing for a listener' attention and even reach that listener's senses. This requires that the speaker make the message "instantly intelligible" to the listener, as the listener, in face-to-face communication encounters, cannot "re-listen" as a reader can go back and re-read a passage. DeVito (1965) argues, then, that speakers must use concrete rather than abstract words to achieve instant intelligibility.

Further, listeners listen faster than the normal conversation rate of 180-200 words per minute. That major gap between speech speed and listening enables (and even encourages) mental clutter and attention wandering. And listeners have limits to their retention capabilities as well.

In response to these limitations, we have created the "soundbite society." Communicators have to frame their messages in quick soundbites--short phrases, metaphors that capture the essence of entire platforms, programs, processes. The challenges of listenability are very real in today's information society (Wolvin, Berko, & Wolvin, 1999).

Rubin (1993), researching listenability, observes that listenable discourse "is characterized by linguistic and rhetorical structures that ease the particular cognitive burdens listeners face" (p. 178). A listener-friendly message, he stresses, requires an oral-based language, a structure that identifies sign posts (i.e. phrases that tell a listener what is coming next). In addition, the text must be easy to listen to because the information flows with cohesiveness and consistency. "Redundancy, explicit transitions and organizational cues, and predictable flow from 'given' to 'new'

information" are all features of a listenable message (p. 273). Expanding on his concept of oral-based discourse, Rubin (Rubin, Hafer, & Harata, 2000) found that listenable prose contains "less dense syntax, greater frequency of personal pronouns, more verb-based rather than nominal constructions, and less lexical diversity than literate-based style" (p. 130).

In an early book on listening, Weaver (1972) reviewed the research on listening behavior. He provided a chapter on what the listener can do to improve his/her listening behavior. And he also included a chapter on "What the talker can do to help." Some of his recommendations resonate with creating a listenable presentation: prepare the listener for the message; time the message well; be clear and specific, telling the listener what it is not as well as what it is; keep the message moving forward; reduce the inferences listeners must make; work to prevent premature evaluation of the message; and re-attract the listener's attention when it diminishes. "When you are presenting a message of some length," Weaver advises, "you should remember that if your listeners are to pay attention it is you who are responsible for it" (p. 124).

Key elements of a listenable presentation include speaker confidence and appropriateness, consistent nonverbal behavior, logical structure, clarity and conciseness of style, and encouraging listener involvement (Glenn, Emmert, & Emmert, 1995). Most importantly, a listenable presentation is listener-centered: "listenability, the degree to which a speech is easy to access, understand, and interact with . . . encourages you to keep your public listeners in mind during every step of preparing and presenting any public presentation" (O'Brien, 2009, p. 100).

Indeed, the listenable presentation is one that is readily received and understood by listeners. Listeners come to any speaking event with significant limitations of time, attention, and retention. Further, listeners have different listening styles. Consequently, a speaker must develop a presentation that, from start to finish, is clear and engaging for the listeners. As Rubin (1993) notes, an effective presentation requires an oral-based language style, a structure that lays out clear sign posts for listeners, phrases that tell a listener what is coming next ("First, I would like to discuss..."), and provides information that flows with cohesiveness and consistency.

Additionally, a listenable presentation is prepared. A good speaker will work to develop and present a highly polished, professional presentation that keeps the listener involved throughout the time the speaker is on. Key elements of a listenable presentation are speaker confidence and appropriateness, consistent nonverbal behavior, logical structure, clarity and conciseness of style, and encouraging listener involvement (Wolvin, Berko, & Wolvin, 1999).

One book designed for the "hybrid" oral communication course introduces students to the concept of a listenable speech (Berko, Wolvin, Wolvin & Aitken,

2013). The authors stress that it is important for speakers to be listenable by using appropriate language, structuring the presentation clearly, including clear transitions that highlight for listeners what is coming next, using supporting materials to enhance understanding and acceptance, and presenting in a conversational style (pp. 294-295). Likewise, two books designed for students in public speaking classes offer a listenable perspective. One, Wolvin, Berko, & Wolvin's *The Public Speaker/The Public Listener* (1999), includes a chapter on listenability, establishing four aspects of a listenability presentation: strategy, structure, support, and style (Wolvin et al., 1999). Building on this listenability paradigm, O'Brien has published *Listener-Centered Public Speaking* (2009), detailing these four dimensions of being listenable.

Strategically, then, a listenable speaker needs to know himself/herself as a communicator. What is the speaker's style? What is the speaker's comfort level? And the speaker needs to know about the intended listeners. Who are they? What do they know about the speaker, and about the topic? What do they care about the speaker and the topic? O'Brien (2009) characterizes the strategy component of listenability as ensuring "listener-centered choices in advance of your presentation about the topic, audience, and occasion" (p. xxx).

A listenable presentation also requires a clear structure. Since the listener's attention span is always fluctuating, it is essential to provide the necessary structural sign posts to help the listener get on track and stay on track as the speaker lays out the information. Effective structural sign posts offer cues as to where one is in the presentation: a partitioning step which provides an initial summary of the points the speaker is going to cover in the body of the presentation; good transitions ("Clearly, careful selection is one characteristic of horticultural management; so, too, is careful cultivation.") between the main points; and a summary re-cap of the points in the conclusion of the speech. As O'Brien recommends, "Organize your ideas and communicate them in a way that your listeners can follow and understand" (p. xxx.)

Further, a listenable presentation provides engaging, relevant supporting materials. Speakers use stories, statistics, quotes, analogies, and all sorts of data to clarify and to provide evidence for their points. This supporting material should be interesting and meaningful to listeners so that they will be engaged and stay engaged as the speaker develops the points throughout the presentation. O'Brien stresses the preparation of the support dimension of a listenable presentation to "substantiate, enhance, and reinforce your message to engage your listeners and help them understand, believe, or act" (p. xxx).

Likewise, a listenable presentation should have effective style. Speakers need to attend to their verbal style so that the words are carefully chosen to be clear and to be memorable. Speakers also must deal with their nonverbal style. An effective speaker uses vocal dynamics in a conversational style that conveys energy and engagement in what they are talking about so that listeners will be energized and engaged. And the speaker should make use of the visual channel with effective

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presentation graphics and by presenting a professional image through dress, posture, animation, and eye contact. In many ways, the visual channel is the most dominant, so the speaker must be certain that the visual style is consistent with and reinforcing of the verbal message. O'Brien advises the attention to style enables a speaker to "present your speech in a listener-friendly manner" (p. xxx).

While listenability is an important characteristic of an effective presentation, other authors of textbooks designed for college and university public speaking or "hybrid" basic courses do not include the concept of listenability in their recommendations for effective speechmaking. Morreale, Worley, and Hugenberg (2010), in their survey of the status of the basic communication course, identify seven books as frequently used by respondents. As these texts are representative of what is available (and used) for basic courses, it is revealing to look at the books (in descending order of frequency of mention in Morreale et al.'s survey) to see what advice authors do provide for speakers to reach their listeners.

Stephen Lucas' *The Art of Public Speaking* (2015) continues to be the most-used public speaking text. Like all of the authors, Lucas includes a chapter on principles of effective listening. He also provides a chapter on analyzing the audience, stressing that "good public speakers are *audience centered* . . . to gain *a desired response* from listeners" (p. 98). Lucas' chapter on the audience includes details on both demographic and situational characteristics of audiences that can influence a speaker's choices. Lucas also notes that the speaker must adapt to the listeners both in the preparation stage, to tailor the remarks to them, and in the presentation stage, adjusting to feedback responses while delivering the speech. He stresses that the speaker must determine what the listeners' response will be and to adapt to the intended audience so that the speech will be "as clear, appropriate, and convincing as possible" (p. 113). Lucas' emphasis on audience-centered speaking characterizes efforts to be listenable, though he does not use the term to describe this audience focus, ". . . one of the most important keys to successful public speaking" (p. 115).

Another frequently-mentioned book in the basic course study is O'Hair, Stewart and Rubenstein's *A Speaker's Guidebook* (2015). In this text, the authors provide a chapter on listening, connecting purposeful, focused listening with critical thinking. They also offer a chapter on audience analysis. Taking an audience-centered perspective, they stress that it is important to gather and analyze information about the attributes and motivations of the listeners ". . . with the *explicit aim of preparing your speech in ways that will be meaningful to them*" (p. 83). They offer details on how to analyze and adapt to the demographic characteristics of listeners and to the rhetorical situation itself. Given today's multicultural world of diverse listeners, O'Hair and his colleagues also emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity. Engaging public speakers, they note, ". . . keep their focus on offering something of value for the audience" (p. 14).

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Beebe, Beebe, and Ivy (2013) creatively carry five communication principles throughout their *Communication Principles for a Lifetime* text. One of the principles is "Listen and respond thoughtfully to others," and another is "Appropriately adapt messages to others" (p. xxiii). They include a chapter on listening and responding which details barriers to self, information-processing, and context barriers to effective listening and strategies to be a better listener. The authors stress the need to focus on the audience as important to reducing speech anxiety and to adapt to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and age differences of listeners. And they offer students an audience-centered model of the presentational speaking process centered on "Consider the audience" (p. 281).

Verderber, Verderber, and Sellnow (2016) have published the 14th edition of *Communicate!*, a text for the "hybrid" basic course, including chapters on interpersonal communication, group communication, and public speaking. Their chapter on listening includes principles and strategies for active listening: attending, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding to what listeners hear. While centering listening on hearing messages, the authors do note the need to observe nonverbal cues while attending to what is being said. In their chapter on topic selection and development, Verderber et al. include some suggestions for analyzing the audience, particularly demographic data and subject-related data (knowledge and interest in the topic). They also discuss the importance of using these data, then, in an ethical way so as to not marginalize and/or stereotype. Related to this analysis is a section on analyzing the occasion for further guidance on preparing the presentation.

In a further chapter on language, Verderber et al. stress that speakers need to present speeches in an effective oral style: "Although your oral style is slightly more formal than in everyday conversations, it should still reflect a personal tone that encourages listeners to perceive you to be *having a conversation with them*" (p. 332). The speaker's language, they emphasize, should be appropriate to the needs, interests, knowledge, and attitudes of the listeners—all characteristics of a listenable speaker. The authors note that appropriate language can create verbal immediacy between the speaker and the audience.

Clella Jaffe's *Public Speaking Concepts and Skills for a Diverse Society* also makes the list of texts used in the basic communication course. Like the other texts, Jaffe's book provides a chapter on listening skills. She stresses that the listener must have motivation, effort, and concentration to listen effectively. And Jaffe includes a chapter on audience analysis which covers strategies for analyzing audience motivations, demographic characteristics, and psychological and situational considerations. She stresses the importance of aligning the topic and substance of a presentation with the listeners' need to know and to prepare/present the material in a novel way. An effective speaker, she advises, must become a "**listening speaker** who considers his audience before, during, and after his presentation" (p. 67).

Adler, Rodman and duPre (2014) also provide a chapter on listening in their text *Understanding Human Communication*. They use the Listening Styles Profile (Bodie, Worthington & Gearhart, 2013) to describe the four types of listening in which students may engage. In their section on audience analysis in a chapter on preparing and presenting the speech, the authors focus on the importance of knowing the audience purpose, their demographic characteristics, and their attitudes, beliefs and values. They carry audience adaptation into their chapters on informative and persuasive speaking, reinforcing that ". . . the level of commitment and attention that listeners devote to a speech" requires the speaker to generate audience involvement (p. 389).

Another text, Dunn and Goodnight's *Communication Embracing Difference* (2014), includes a chapter on listening which provides advice for responsive listening through questioning, paraphrasing, and interpreting, all of which, they stress, "require listeners to interact with the sender" (p. 55). In a chapter on selecting a topic and adapting to audiences, they offer a review of familiar audience demographics as well as characteristics such as knowledge, attitudes, needs, societal roles, occupation, and economic status. Dunn and Goodnight note that analyzing and adapting to the audience enables the speaker to "create a relationship between you, the topic, and the audience" (p. 212)—an important goal for a listenable speaker. And specifically, they recommend that the speaker adapt to the listeners by: (1) making a personal connection to the audience; (2) defining terms; (3) addressing listeners' needs, concerns, and interests; and (4) using vivid examples and stories (p. 212).

A short text published after the Morreale et al. (2010) survey of the basic course, offers a very strong focus on the listener. Lahman, Calka, and Case (2014) have published *Communication Across Contexts A Listening-Center Approach*. The cover depicts the Chinese symbol of listening, and, as the title suggests, the text provides a focus on listening implications in each chapter (public speaking, interpersonal communication, and group communication). The authors stress the need for speakers to structure and support their speeches with a "few main ideas" and "a variety of supporting material" (p. 16) and to use stories which "resonate with listeners" and vivid images to "enhance their understanding" (p. 27). Communicators, the authors argue, benefit from a listening-centered approach to communication "where we seek first to understand the perspective of the other person" (p. 3).

Verderber et al. offers the most thorough focus on the need for a speaker to utilize strategies of oral language to most effectively connect with an audience. It would seem that characterizing such principles as being listenable would provide a meaningful model for speakers to center on their audience not as an abstract demographic entity but as a cohort of listening participants to be engaged in a communication dialogue. As Jaffe (2016) reminds her readers, ". . . communication involves active participation from listeners and speakers alike . . ." (p. 50).

It is interesting to observe that the concept of listenability has escaped the attention of communication scholars who are at what Beebe (2013) describes as the "front porch" (the basic course) of the discipline. Indeed, in an update to the periodic national survey of trends in the basic course, Morreale, Myers, Backlund and Simonds (2016) identified public speaking, critical thinking, and listening as the major topics covered in two-year and four-year basic course offerings. They note that these are "precisely the skills college graduates need in order to speak publicly and competently on behalf of important issues in society..." (p. 353).

While these are certainly important skills that all college graduates should possess, being engaged listeners and listenable speakers ought to be integrated together in the basic course curriculum. But listenability appears to be the missing link. Now more than ever, how an individual presents himself/herself as a speaker in any communication context (interview, meeting, briefing, speech) must be anchored in listener-friendly communication strategies in order to reach listeners in the "complex global and technologically mediated 21st century" (Morreale, et al., 2016, p. 354).

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Title: A Listening-Centered Basic Course Design

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Foundations of Human Communication is a skills-based course that all students must take at our university. We cover a wide range of topics during the course, including persuasion and public speaking, and interpersonal and small group communication skills. The goal of the course is to prepare students with communication skills they can use throughout their time at the university and in the workplace. Because students need the tools to develop their own communication skills, we designed a course that is focused on demonstrating critical thinking and listening skills, not just recalling communication concepts.

By exploring what it means to be both effective and appropriate communicators, students learn that communication competence is not just about getting what you want, but is also about acting in ways that build positive relationships and respect the wants and needs of others. Students demonstrate the ability to act in personally effective and socially appropriate ways across communication contexts. For example, they create and present listenable persuasive presentations, transform interpersonal conflict by paraphrasing in a role play, and reflect on small group experiences to create successful memorable small group experiences and presentations.

In the text we wrote to accompany our unique course structure, we frame each chapter with provocative questions that encourage students to explore how listening, in addition to language and nonverbal skills, work together across communication contexts. We introduce 5 listening dimensions—cognitive, ethical, contextual, behavioral, and affective, sequentially throughout the semester to provide students with the scaffolding needed to develop a listening-centered approach to communication across contexts. We assess communication skill development in three communication contexts, identified with bold and italics font in the following assignments: 1) a persuasive ***public*** presentation, 2) an ***interpersonal*** role play, and 3) a ***small group*** presentation. Finally, we collect student reflections about their "experience and growth" across these three communication contexts at the end of the semester. We include student reflections in this article to provide evidence of student listening skill development that is noted in these essays.

Communication Competence

First, we introduce the ***cognitive*** dimension of listening as it aligns with communicator competence. We define communication competence as the ability to choose behaviors that are both appropriate and effective for a given context (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984); and, we explain that a listening-centered approach is one in which we seek first to understand the perspective of the other person (Covey, 2004).

We define listening as the "the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages" (International Listening Association, 1996). Because Wolvin and Cohen (2012) proposed that listening includes contextual and ethical assessments, as well as cognitive, affective, and behavioral evaluations, we also include ethical and contextual dimensions in our discussions of communication competence:

- *Cognitive:* "I understand how complex the listening process is and that there are multiple ways of listening and processing information" (i.e., the listening process includes receiving, constructing meaning, and responding).
- *Ethical:* "I work harder to not make immediate judgments about a message but rather listen to the arguments and then evaluate them" (i.e., the choices to create an ethics of listening)
- *Contextual:* "I am aware of what settings I'm in and use different skills to better listen in them" (i.e., appreciative, comprehensive, critical, and empathetic) (p. 66)

When introducing the *ethical* dimension of listening, we note that human beings need each other to find meaning (Shotter, 2009) and that we need to delay our own speaking to truly hear another person (Rawlins, 2003). Students work through three choices to develop an ethics of listening: the choice to listen, to listen selectively, and to listen together (Beard, 2009). As they reflect on their choices, they also learn how answers may change based on goals and purposes for listening, or the *contextual* dimension. Many students have never thought about different goals and purposes for listening, let alone developing an ethics of listening, so they soon recognize that there is a lot more to listening than they thought. For example, students discuss how the choice to listen selectively in the classroom when the goal is comprehension, may have a different impact than the choice to listen selectively when listening to the radio when the purpose is appreciation.

The following student reflections provide evidence of listening skill development for the *cognitive* and *ethical* dimension of listening:

- Student A: "Before Foundations of Communication I did not understand what ethical listening was. I just assumed that if a person was taking part in a conversation they were listening. This is not true, a person can be taking part in a conversation but not actually listening. Most times when people take part of an argument they do not want to be in, they start doing selective hearing. They only hear bits and pieces of the other person's argument and their response usually just causes more problems. Ethical listening is when a person actually clears their mind and listens to what the other person is saying. I had never done this when communicating and it led to many downfalls."

- Student B: "When listening, you have three choices; the choice to listen, the choice to listen selectively, and the choice to listen together. In any future course or on the job, I have the choice of listening, and I will choose to listen because without listening communication doesn't go anywhere."

- Student C: This book has taken a listening-centered approach on communication, and I have grown to appreciate this immensely. Since beginning the class, I have learned how to not only "hear" but how to actually "listen" to what a speaker is saying. This allows me to get a full grasp on the topic while also making the person known that they are truly being heard.

Public Communication

We add the ***behavioral*** dimension of listening in the public communication unit. Wolvin (2016) defined "listenability as oral messages designed for ease of comprehension and engagement" (p.1). We teach students to how to be more "listenable" by arranging "supporting material with the listeners' capabilities foremost in mind" (Adams & Cox, 2010, p. 25):
- Prepare a few main ideas with clear **preview**
- Use a variety of **supporting material** so as not to focus on covering material but rather upon getting the audience to understand the idea
- Use **repetition** because there are no paragraphs to which listeners can refer back
- Use **figurative language** because listeners learn by comparison
- Use **presentational aids** to provide a "visual map" of the presentation

We also identify specific behaviors to sustain an ethics of listening, revisiting the ***ethical*** dimension, when listening to classmates present persuasive presentations:
- **Find something of interest**: make connections between the speaker's message and your life experiences (Brommelje, 2013; Imhof, 2001)
- Aid short-term memory: use "space" time (difference between the number of words spoken—150 words per minute, and number words you can comprehend—600 words per minute) to **repeat main points** silently and **chunk material** (Brownell, 2013)
- Improve immediate memory: **focus attention** and **attend to main points** (Brownell, 2013)
- Develop habits to direct attention: **take notes** and **minimize distractions** by storing away cell phones (Brommelje, 2013)
- **Withhold judgment**: note emotional triggers so you can remember to seek first to understand (Brommelje, 2013; Imhof, 2001)

Interpersonal & Small Group Communication

We add the ***affective*** dimension of listening, and reiterate the ***ethical*** and ***behavioral*** dimensions, in the interpersonal and small group communication units. We teach students about the Gibb's (1961) supportive climates, encouraging them to be exhibit **empathy** and **spontaneity** with paraphrasing and clarifying questions, both in interpersonal role plays and in small group meetings.

For example, students label **descriptive** messages in an interpersonal role play, in addition to brainstorming a number of ways to **problem solve**, taking good care of themselves and those with whom they have the conflict (e.g., with roommates

about room cleanliness and quiet hours; with supervisors about work schedules or promotions). They use the specific listening behaviors learned earlier, such as finding something of interest and withholding judgment, in addition to **reframing**, which is finding a new angle from which to view a top again speaker (Imhof, 2001).

When working in small groups to create a group presentation, students learn to listen to **all perspectives** as conflict may affect each person's participation in the group. We discuss how to avoid **interrupting** and **prejudging** before a person has finished speaking. More important, students explore how technology factors into group conflict. They learn about shared identity and norms, how varying group roles may influence listening, in addition to phases of group development. The following reflections provide evidence of listening skill development for the ***behavioral*** and ***affective*** dimensions of listening in interpersonal and small group relationships:

- Student D: Studying interpersonal communication and performing an interpersonal role play taught me how to sustain my attention, how to show others I am listening to them, and the importance of verbal and nonverbal communication. One skill I learned to help sustain my attention and to help retain information is known as reframing, which is finding a new angle from which to view a topic and speaker.

- Student E: In future conversations, I can remember to show signs that I really am listening to what is being said by doing things like paraphrasing, nodding, leaning forward, and asking questions about what is being said. Overall, I have learned more than one valuable tool for conversations from this course, and I hope to keep learning about ways to improve my communication skills in the future.

- Student F: The skill of paraphrasing was identified as being particularly important, and in subsequent interactions I have found this to be the case. Paraphrasing allows the listener to assure that they are understanding the speaker's position and allows for the conversation to stay on track. This avoids some of the emotional turmoil that can, at times, derail an interpersonal interaction.

Ultimately, we have structured the Foundations of Human Communication course around the listening, nonverbal, and language skills needed to communicate across contexts. We organized the course so that students build listening skills in hopes that they use these skills throughout their time at the university and in the workplace. We trust that practicing effective listening skills encourages students to communicate appropriately across contexts, as such we believe our course serves in helping students lead principled, productive, and compassionate lives.

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