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Listening Education aims to enhance the practice of 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 with the analysis of the relevant 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.

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b. Reviews of material and textbooks suggested for teaching listening
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Title: The benefit of a structural preview to fostering listening comprehension

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Grade level: Secondary School, G 7-10

Keywords: Listening, Listening Comprehension, ESL, EFL, Teacher Instruction, Student Motivation

Listening Practice:

Course title: Building Listening Comprehension Skills in L2 Learners

Course level: intermediate learners, possibly also advanced learners

Goals: The overall goal is to demonstrate the value of a structural preview for listening comprehension exercises; results from a small-scale study suggest that a structural preview is more effective than a topical instruction in respect of the actual gain in students' knowledge.

Type / Aspect of listening in focus: listening comprehension, active listening, listening strategies, listening preparation, teaching listening

Description

Listening comprehension practice is a staple element of L2 teaching and learning. The problem with listening comprehension exercises in L2 classrooms is that listeners are exposed to fluent speech in a language which they, by definition, have not yet fully mastered. Still, they are expected to comprehend the "what" (content) while they are still struggling with the details, such as vocabulary, the prosodic features, and structure of the spoken text. This creates the

essential task for teachers to think about ways to reduce cognitive load in their students' working memory.

For the instruction of listening comprehension, L2 teachers are typically advised to support student listening by providing a topical preview, e.g., name the title and the larger context, give a brief introduction about the topic of the listening piece, and supply the "hard" vocabulary. Studying listening comprehension, Pourhosein and Sabouri (2016) came to the conclusion: "Teachers should provide background knowledge [...] to their students while [or before] listening to different listening materials" (Pourhosein & Sabouri, 2016, p. 128; see also Taglieber, Johnson, & Yarbrough, 1988). This recommendation can be found in many instructor handbooks for teaching listening in L2.

I challenge this view for a couple of reasons. First of all, the whole content of the listening text is mentioned word for word while playing it, anyway; so the preview and the actual exercise are repetitive. Second, a topical preview might be overwhelming for the listener and misguide the listening process as listeners try to activate prior knowledge and keep the new vocabulary salient, which occupies considerable capacity of working memory. Third, with a topical preview, listeners are primed to pay special attention to individual words and bits of the content, while they miss the overall structure and the flow of the arguments or the plot of a story.

In contrast, a structural preview provides specific information about the listening text, e.g., text characteristics such as length, number of speakers and category of conversation (e.g., monologue, group discussion or an interview as in Ferrara, 2017). Listeners would need to do a lot of guessing, if they do not know the genre of text that they are going to listen to. Take, for example, an interview: Listeners must guess from the frequent change of speakers what kind of speaking situation they are listening to and while they are doing the guesswork, they might be

missing some of the content information. Going back and forth between what is said in terms of content and trying to figure out the communication situation simultaneously requires continual switching of attention, which makes the listening exercise unnecessarily difficult. It is not far-fetched to assume that this affects in particular weaker students.

Theoretically, it could be expected that listeners process content information more deeply when they receive a structural preview of a listening text as a structural preview could be expected to reduce cognitive load and to prepare the listener for systematic intake of information. That is why I came to the conclusion to test the effect of a structural preview for listening comprehension in general and especially with regard to the variety of students and their different proficiency levels.

The following activity is designed for preparing and teaching listening comprehension in the EFL or any L2 classroom. In my own small-scale study (Ferrara, 2017) I tested the method of topical against a structural preview for a listening comprehension exercise. I will first describe the method of the structural preview, and then give a summary of the results of my experimental study.

Preparation

First, select a suitable text for the listening comprehension activity. It is advisable to choose an authentic and clearly spoken version of an oral text, which fits the proficiency level of the learner group. It should not be too difficult or too easy. Moreover, I recommend choosing a distinct genre of speech e.g., a radio documentary or an interview. I found interesting audio texts featuring a variety of current topics and catering to a broad scope of interests on the website of listenwise.com.

Secondly, inspect the text for structural features, which you want to point out to the

students before starting the listening exercise. Inform your students about the characteristics of the listening comprehension exercise, e.g., what type of text they will listen to, characteristics of the speaker, such as language, accent, sections in the text, types of acoustic input, such as noise, music, humans. Depending on the level of language skills and on the nature of the audio-text, you will need to attract the listeners' attention to a variety of features. In most cases, it could be duration of the audio, overall genre, number of speakers and role of speakers (e.g., narrator, actors), characteristics of the language variety, the accent, or individual speech characteristics, e.g., speed, voice quality. You might also mention to the listeners what kind of acoustic input they can expect (music, technical noise, animal sounds, human speech).

In order to avoid overloading the working memory capacity of the listeners, it is advisable to limit the preview information to a necessary and meaningful minimum. Providing a structural outline in terms of sections of a text should be provided in writing to guide the listeners through the listening comprehension exercise (Bui & McDaniel, 2015).

Didactic Procedure

Step 1: Give the students the instructions for the listening comprehension exercise prepared in line with the level of language skills and adjusted to genre and complexity of the audio text. Present the information in a structured manner and make sure that everybody knows what to expect.

To build listening skills for **beginners** in a language or in listening, one way of doing the exercise is to provide structured language identification options. The example which is presented in Figure 1 is adopted from https://listenwise.com/teach/lessons/365-black-women-math-heroes-at-nasa. The language identification options support a beginning listener to take in the relevant information. (The sample is taken from a National Public Radio program on Black Women Math Heroes at NASA.) The benefit of this exercise is that beginners are

exposed to authentic language and interesting and complex content. Since working memory load is relieved through the structural preview, they have a chance to comprehend the information and to make first steps in feeling competent in the language. This is important for building and sustaining learner motivation for the long way to master L2 (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008).

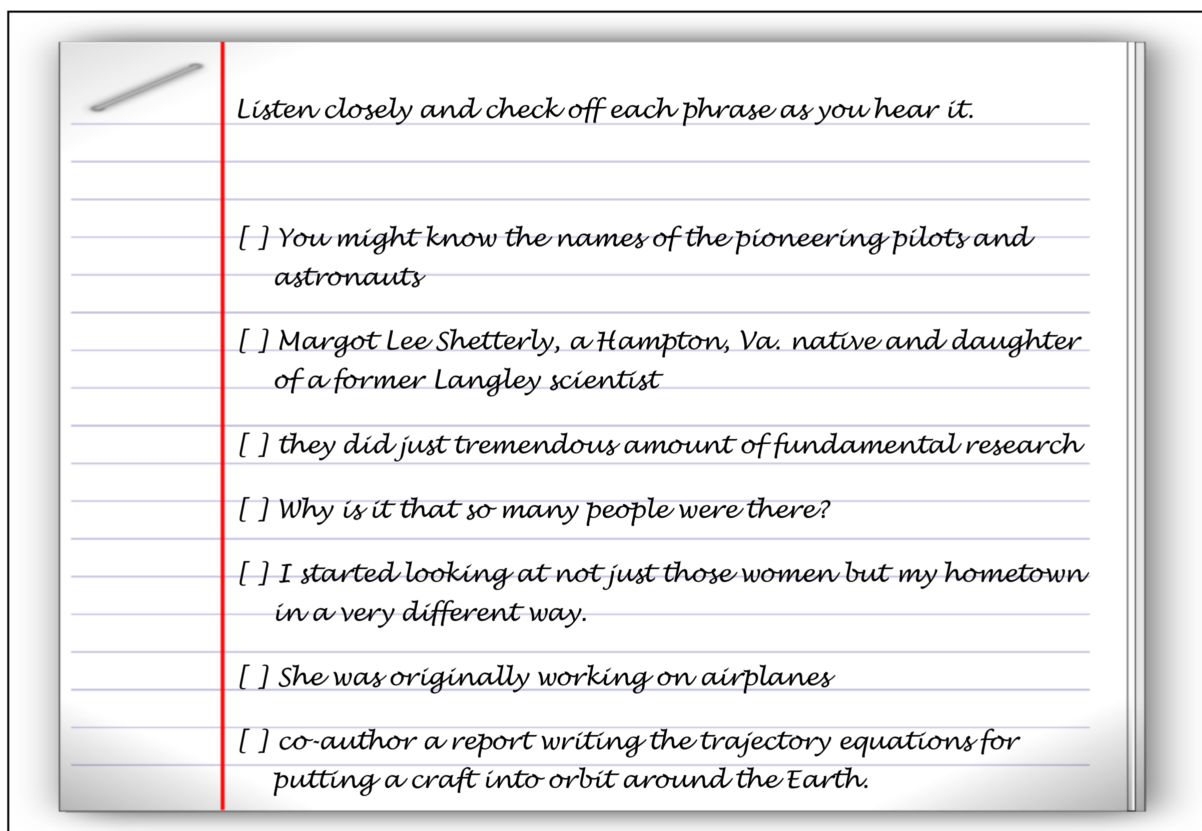

Figure 1: *Using language identification primes to guide beginning L2 learners through a listening comprehension exercise.*

For **intermediate** L2 listeners, it might be preferable to encourage listeners to use closed questions or multiple-choice questions together with the structural preview. This way, listeners monitor their comprehension along the text structure and are still not distracted by free note-taking activities during listening. Figure 2 illustrates how a sequence of closed questions in the single choice format can guide a listener through a listening comprehension

exercise. The examples illustrated in Figure 2 were taken from another National Public Radio production on Working Women in Japan provided by listenwise.com. The listeners can follow the audio text and they can put all their mental capacity to text comprehension.

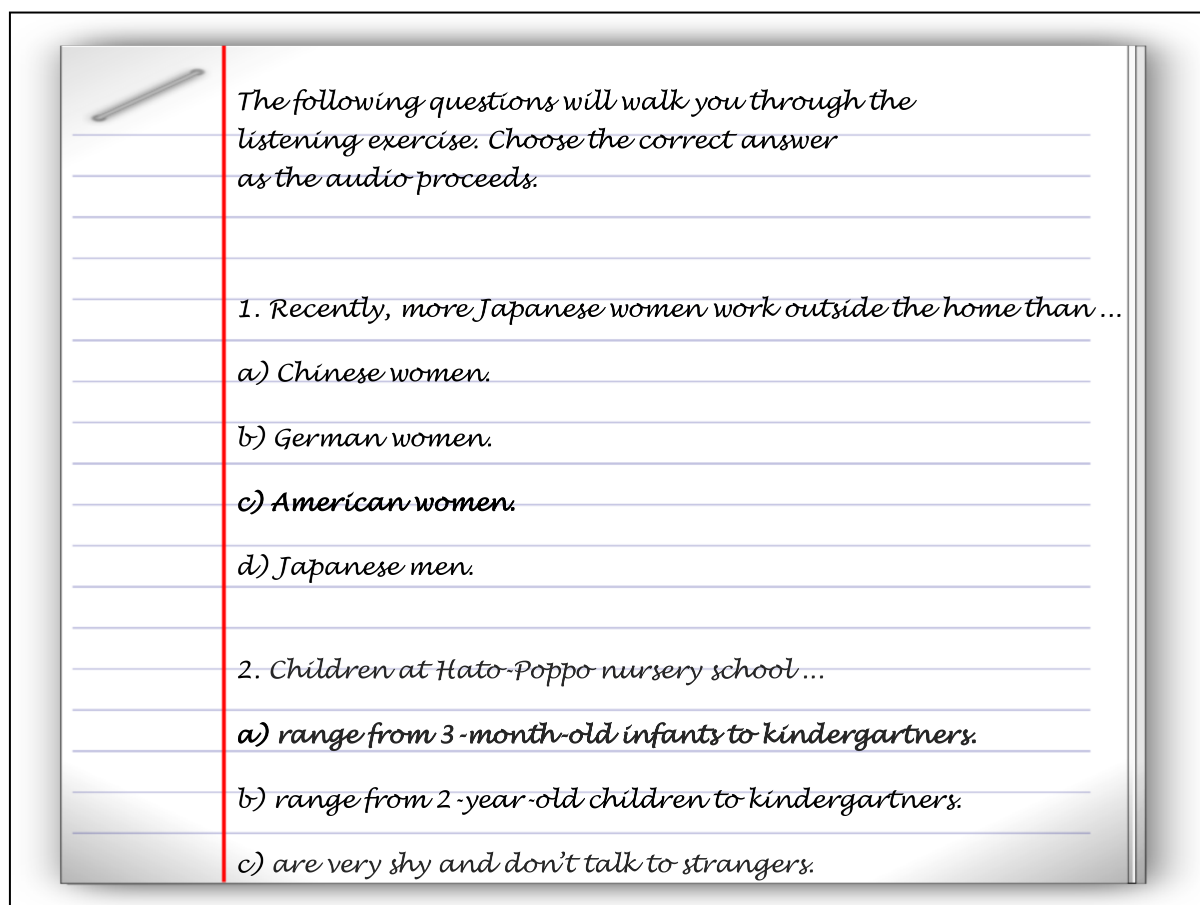

Figure 2: *Using single choice questions to walk intermediate L2 learners through a listening comprehension exercise*

For more **advanced** L2 listeners, you may prepare a written outline of some sort, depending on the type of text and the level of language competence. You could provide a T-chart to help listeners organize the information (as suggested in some of the exercises on listenwise.com). A T-chart stimulates listeners to organize the information they hear in a specific way, e.g., in pros and cons, in different perspectives, in advantages and drawbacks, in

benefits and costs. Listeners have to identify the information and to categorize the information throughout the process of listening. Figure 3 provides an example for a T-chart for the same audio production that was used for Figure 1 on Black Women Math Heroes at NASA.

Helped or Hindered T-chart

As you listen to the story, take notes on the different factors that helped and hindered women and African American women who found employment at Langley Research Center. Consider all elements including the time period, social attitudes and beliefs, and the current events at the time.

What helped	What hindered

Figure 3: *Using a T-chart to walk intermediate L2 learners through a listening comprehension exercise.*

An alternative form of a structural preview for **advanced** listeners might be to mark the sections of the text in line with the specific characteristics of the text. Figure 4 illustrates what kinds of prompts could be used to guide an advanced listener through the audio text on working women in Japan.

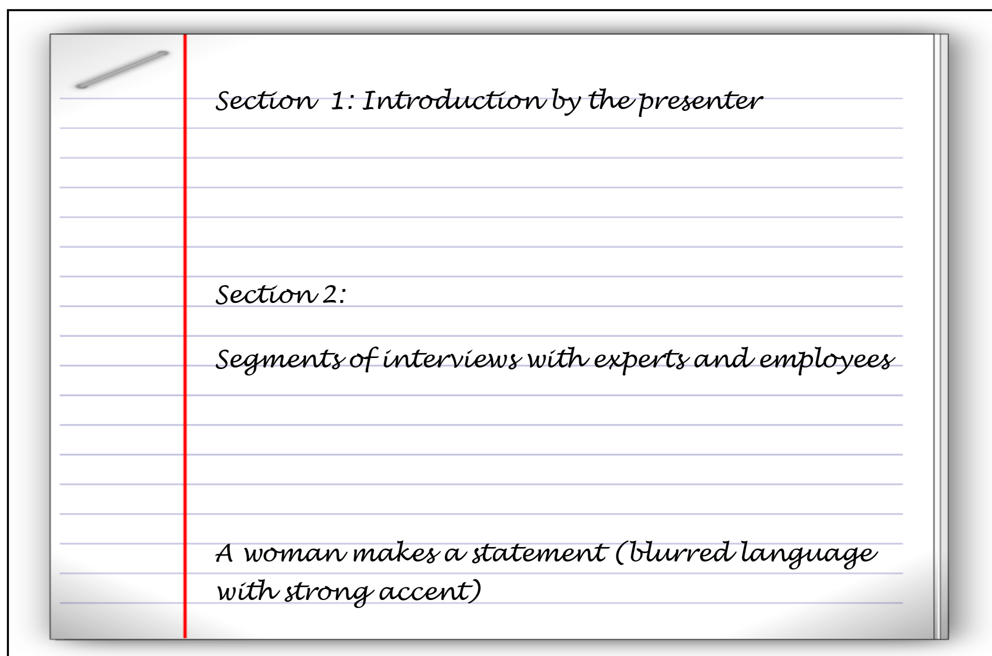

Figure 4: *Structural preview with open prompts to guide advance L2 learners through a listening comprehension exercise.*

In any case, make sure that the worksheet contains appropriate space which the listeners can take their own notes. Do not forget to tell the students how to use the preview and the outline material and what they are expected to do with it.

Step 2: Play the audio and have the students listen to the text for the first time. During this period, they are supposed to either take notes or to answer the questions as the text progresses. Let the students finish off their notes or go through their answers again after that and give them a short break of about 30 seconds to 1 minute before the tape is played for the second time. Then give the students one additional minute to revise their notes and responses.

Step 3: Provide a master solution for the notes and questions and use the students' responses to encourage them to share among each other how they went about the task and what strategies they used as they were listening. Contrast and compare the versions from several listeners in groups and start a discussion about the value, the benefits and pitfalls of using the

preview.

Tips and Debriefing

You may want to practice listening comprehension with a broad variety of text structures, e.g., monologues, readings, interviews, discussions among several persons, to practice adjustability in listening. As a rule of thumb, listening comprehension is harder for the listener the more individual speakers are present. To ~~scaffold~~ the acquisition of listening comprehension, you need to sequence audio texts in terms of listening challenge. In addition, you can vary the complexity and character of the preview. In some cases, it might be even worth it if you use a sequence of previews.

The structural features of a listening exercise may also guide the reflection on the language and rhetoric or persuasive character of the audio text. You might want to re-direct the listeners' attention to the specific structural features that you had pointed out in the preview. This may be the first step to build metacognitive and reflective competencies in addition to language comprehension skills. To give an example or two: "There was this person with a Scottish accent. Do you remember the sound of some of the words she used?" or: "There was this person who spoke in favor of the proposal. What in this person's voice and way of speaking indicated his or her attitude? How did this person sound different from his or her opponent?"

Assessment

A structural preview allows teachers to build and assess listening comprehension in a broader sense. First of all, I would expect that listeners do better on the content-related part of a listening comprehension test. Second, it makes sense to include questions on the meta-features of the listening comprehension piece, and thus, help L2 lsteners to take the first steps towards

reflecting on textual elements, rhetorical composition, and the expressive features of an oral text in the second language.

Conclusion

Providing structural preview for listening comprehension exercises adds to the methods repertoire of L2 instructors. By giving information about structural features of an audio text, teachers reduce the mental load of a listener's working memory and control distractions, which might occur as the listener has to figure out content and structure of an audio in parallel. Using varying degrees of structural preview could be a feasible scaffolding sequence to support the development of listening comprehension skills for L2 learners. If the teacher makes an informed and intentional decision we can see "the instructional manipulations provided by the teacher and the changes in knowledge created in the learner" (Mayer, 2008, p. 7).

Support from an experimental field study

The idea of this structural preview activity is based on my bachelor thesis in 2017. I conducted this study in two EFL classes of grade level 10 at a secondary school in Southern Germany. A sample of $N = 39$ students participated in the field experiment. All students were at least intermediate to advanced learners of English, about in their 6th year of EFL. For the study, $n = 18$ learners were instructed to do the listening comprehension exercise with a topical preview and $n = 21$ other students did the exercise with a structural preview. I chose a radio report in the format of an interview from the platform 'Listenwise', which supplies a range of recorded listening texts.

The procedure included that both groups were prepared carefully but differently before the listening exercise. The audio text was taken from a NPR documentary by Elise Hu (2016) on "Will More Day Care Help Boost Japan's Sluggish Economy?" (see examples in Fig. 1 and

2) and highlighted the role of women in the Japanese economy. The documentary was 3:32 minutes long and featured six different speakers. I tested for differences in motivation and listening performance. The hypothesis that a structural instruction for listening comprehensions is more effective in terms of actual gain in knowledge than a topical instruction could be confirmed with an effect size of about one full standard deviation (Cohen's $d = .97$; *CI* 95%: .30 – 1.63). I found evidence for my assumption when I compared performance measures of both groups. Interestingly, motivation measures did not differ between groups. There are inconclusive data on how extrinsic and intrinsic motivation might be affected differentially. In sum, the superior learning effect for a structural preview to a listening text is encouraging. Future studies should investigate how this principle works for different skill levels and how effective scaffolding sequences could be designed to cater to L2 beginners as well as to advanced L2 learners.

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Teaching Listening in the Classroom

Title: From Talking Stick to Listening Stick: A Variation on an Ancient Practice.

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Grade level: The listening stick activity is focused on undergraduates enrolled in an introductory listening course, but the activity may be adapted to other courses that have a listening component, and to any age in the lifespan from pre-kindergarten through elderhood.

Keywords: Listening stick, Talking Stick, Council, Circle, Tallis

Content

Course title: The Listening Stick Activity has been Field Tested in:

(1) the *Listening to the SONG of Life* undergraduate course by the author, and

(2) in *Sacred Listening* retreats with adults by Kay Lindahl (2003).

Course level: Undergraduate, but may also be applied in graduate courses.

Goals:

The primary goal is to introduce students to the concept, experience, and application of the listening stick activity within the context of an undergraduate listening course. Students participate in a group listening stick activity that cultivates experiences of first person attention, focus, and awareness of self and others' feelings and needs for the purpose of self-discovery and building small group cohesiveness. As a secondary goal, students learn how to apply the listening stick activity to interpersonal and small group situations in school, work,

social, and spiritual settings for a variety of purposes including relationship building, problem-solving and decision-making.

Type / Aspect of listening in focus:

Using the listening stick in small groups in the classroom combines *self- and other-focused listening.* While holding the listening stick, students learn to listen more deeply to their own thoughts and intuitions before speaking, and when others are holding the listening stick, students learn to gift the speaker with their personal presence and attention.

Description:

In the first part of this description, background about the talking stick is provided as a conceptual framework for understanding the listening stick activity.

The *talking* stick (or talking piece) is historically rooted in the practices of Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island (Zimmerman & Coyle, 2009). The use of the talking stick as part the practice of sitting in council is described succinctly by Beyer (2016, p. 7) where:

> …people sit in a circle and pass around what is called a talking stick. Whoever holds the talking stick gets to speak, and everybody listens. There are no interruptions, no questions, no challenges, no comments. People speak one at a time, in turn, honestly from their hearts, and they listen devoutly with their hearts to each person who speaks.

Sitting in council probably derives from the more ancient practice of *calling the circle,* or simply sitting in circle, as our ancestors did when finding a place around the circle of the first fires, each person receiving warmth and food while listening to each other's stories (Baldwin,

1998). Evidence of circle symbols are prevalent in the Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods (Baldwin), but it is not known when or why contemporary Indigenous peoples began using talking pieces as a way to structure the communication within the circle. Perhaps, as the number of individuals around the circle grew, a few dominant voices emerged, creating an imbalance in the circle of ideas. To restore balance, a wise person may have suggested passing around a sacred symbol (e.g., a stone, stick, or shell) to indicate the person's right to use the power of speech, and the concurrent responsibility of others to listen.

Each talking stick is uniquely symbolic of the person who crafted it. For instance, a talking stick made from the wood of a pine tree might represent peace, rabbit fur wrapped around part of the talking stick might represent a good listener because rabbits have large ears, and blue beads that dangle from the end of the talking stick could represent understanding (Avant, 2017). Even though talking sticks may be adorned with different symbols, all talking sticks used in council are the bearer of the speaker's sacred words. The talking stick is "…for free speech and assures the speaker that he [she] has the freedom and power to say what is in his [her] heart without fear of reprisal or humiliation" (Locust, 1997). According to Cherokee-Navajo Cronbaugh (2010), and based on descriptions of training sessions for sitting in council (Ojai, 2017), the talking stick can serve a variety of communicative functions such as: establishing relational agreements, settling disputes, completing unfinished business, brainstorming creative ideas, achieving group consensus, and building cohesiveness.

In this second part of the description section, the relationship between the talking and listening sticks is explained, and the specific learning goals of the listening stick activity is detailed.

Lindahl (2003) originally coined the phrase *listening stick* and describes the listening stick activity as a variation of the ancient practice of the using the talking stick. A review of the Communication literature for the topic "listening stick" revealed a single article describing the use of a talking stick as part of a group *listening activity* (Hyde, 1993). No citations were found for title searches using the phrase "listening stick" for the database *Communication and Mass Media Complete* and the search engine *Google Scholar*.

Repurposing the talking stick as a listening stick does not change the basic *function* of the stick as an indicator of who is talking in the context of a small group seated in a circle. However, the change in nomenclature from *talking* stick to *listening* stick dramatically shifts the symbolic intention in using the stick. The intent of the talking stick is the creation of speech for the benefit of listeners while the intent of the listening stick is two-fold. First, as holder of the listening stick, the focus of attention is on listening to the stream of ideas emerging in the speaker's consciousness, and on discerning which ideas to share for the benefit of the group. Second, when others in the group are holding the listening stick, the focus of attention is on listening to them with heart-felt empathy.

Both the talking stick and the listening stick have value in the small group communication process; but, in a listening course, the focus of learning is on the listening stick as a physical object representing the symbolic intention to listen more deeply to self and others. Perhaps the two sticks could be integrated into a third stick, a blending of energies/forces like that of the Taoist *taijitu* or the yin-yang symbol. This dual awareness might be represented by a new symbol which I name *tallis* ("tal" for talk, and "lis" for listening). However, the dynamics and implications of such an integration are beyond the scope of the present paper.

The preparation, procedures, and process of teaching/learning the listening stick activity, as described in the next section, is part of an undergraduate listening course taught in the department of Communication and Theatre Arts at a mid-Atlantic university in the U.S. by the author. The listening course is entitled, *Listening to the SONG of Life* (Baesler, 2017) where SONG is an acronym representing listening to self, others, nature, and God or the divine. The listening stick activity is one of several activities introduced in the section of the course on *listening to others* which sequentially follows the section on *listening to self*.

The intention of introducing the listening stick activity in the listening course is to facilitate a deeper, more heart-focused experience of listening to self (when one is holding the listening stick) and listening to others' (when others hold the listening stick) feelings and needs. The heart-focused emphasis is based on Rosenberg's (2005) philosophy to make life more wonderful through a process of *nonviolent communication* that includes: making behavioral and non-judgmental observations, identifying feelings and needs, making a positive request to meet those needs, and empathy.

Preparation and Procedures:

Instructor Experience. Before instructors introduce the listening stick activity to students in their listening class, I recommend that they craft and use their own listening stick (see: https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/history/events/talking-stick-and-feather-indigenous-tools-hold-sacred-power-of-free-speech/). Alternatively, instructors can use any meaningful physical object to serve as a listening stick such as a: feather, stone, shell, candle, or in a pinch, even a pen or dry erase marker will do. Resources for practicing the listening/talking stick activity in small groups include: the instructions that follow in this article, Lindahl's

(2003) *Practicing the sacred art of listening*, Baldwin's (1998) *Calling the circle,* and Berg's (2013) *The power of listening*.

When to Introduce the Listening Stick Activity. While the listening stick can be introduced at the beginning of the listening class as an ice breaker, I recommend introducing the activity sometime later in the course after student introductions. The listening stick activity can deepen existing relationships, and develop a greater sense of group and class cohesiveness. Before providing instructions on the practice of the listening stick activity in class, I narrate two short stories about my relationship with trees, and how I crafted my first listening sticks.

The Gift of Trees. I love trees. When tall enough to pull myself onto the trunk of an almond tree, I climbed up betwixt three limbs that came together in a kind of seat and looked in awe over the landscape of walnut, grapefruit, pomegranate, and peach trees in the family backyard in Sunnyvale, California. Now, dwelling on a half-acre in Chesapeake, Virginia with my family, I listen to the trees tell me about the cycle of life: smelling the nectar of apricot blossoms in spring, sitting beneath the shaded branches of the magnolia in the heat of summer, enjoying the sweet taste of succulent brown figs in late August, sitting against the trunk of a maple while watching leaves cascade in the cool of fall, and contemplating the naked branches of a young pecan in the stillness of winter. Trees bring me happiness and peace. Trees also teach many other lessons about life if we listen: rooted in the earth, we are rooted in our ancestors, branches reaching for the sun, we reach for our goals, standing together in a grove, we stand together as family. Among the many gifts trees provide, they also gift us with their very substance in the form of wood that, with some imagination and artistry, can become a listening stick for cultivating and fortifying our personal relationships.

Crafting and Introducing the Listening Stick Activity. In surveying our property after a northeastern storm, I spied some fallen branches. After gathering branches of cedar, birch, maple, and pine, I trimmed them to one foot lengths, lightly sanded them, and rubbed them with oil to accent the grain. These crafted sticks [here I hold them up for the class to see] are the centerpiece of a listening stick activity that enhances our ability to listen to ourselves and each other. It is important not to become too fixated on finding and crafting the "perfect listening stick" and thus lose sight of the purpose of the listening stick.

The indigenous peoples of *Turtle Island* use these *talking sticks* in tribal council, but we will call them *listening sticks* and use them in small group sharing in the classroom. The person holding the stick is the one that talks; others listen. In the listening stick (Lindahl, 2003) version of the traditional talking stick activity, the one with the stick still talks, but with a special listening focus before speaking: listening as an intuitive response to a question, and listening to create a question. Next, I chronologically outline the steps of the listening stick activity.

Instructions for the Listening Stick Activity. These instructions are adapted from Lindahl (2003, see pp. 32-37 for complete instructions; 2017), and revised based on correspondence with Lindahl (personal communication March 22, 2017) and re-testing the procedure with the fall of 2017 listening class. The class is divided into small groups of three to five students (depending on class size) arranged in a close closed circle. I let each group choose one listening stick from the collection of listening sticks I crafted. Instructors can substitute any meaningful object for the listening sticks such as a feathers, candles, shells, or stones (even a dry erase marker will do in a pinch).

(1) The first person to hold the listening stick voices the question that I voice at the end of my modeling activity (see number 6 below). Alternatively, students can make up their own question. Or, if they feel the need to choose some other question, one could provide examples of starter questions such as: (a) when was the last time you had a good belly laugh? (b) when you think about the future, what are you most afraid of? and (c) who do you turn to for support in times of need? I encourage students to use my modeled question instead of choosing from a list of questions because the act of choosing engages their logical/linear left-brain, and one purpose of the activity is to encourage a deeper, more intuitive right-brain response (Lindahl, personal communication, March 22, 2017).

(2) I direct students to closes their eyes, and silently listen to whatever content bubbles up inside of them during the next thirty seconds. I do not encourage anyone to keep time, but recommend "about thirty seconds." I've found that time-keeping, by the speaker or other group members, distracts from the listening focus of the activity. Additionally, students are encouraged to listen the entire thirty seconds and simply watch their thoughts emerge.

(3) Next, the holder of the listening stick speaks from the heart, trusting their intuition, that whatever they say will be beneficial for the group to hear. As they speak, others in the group listen with heart-felt attention without interruption.

(4) Next, the stick holder closes their eyes a second time, returns to their inner world, and listens for a *new question* to emerge for another thirty seconds. I instruct students to give voice to the *last* question that emerges during their thirty second reflection rather

than attempt to choose the "best" of many questions that may emerge during the thirty seconds. Committing oneself to give voice to the last question encourages students to trust their intuition, their deep knowing, by believing that the last question will provide whatever the group needs to hear rather than attempting to logically analyze which is the best question (Kay Lindahl, personal communication, March 22, 2017).

(5) Lastly, the person holding the listening stick passes it to the next person along the rim of the circle who repeats the new question out loud, closes their eyes in search of a response for thirty seconds, speaks their response to the group, closes their eyes in search of a new question for another thirty seconds, speaks the new question to the group, and passes the listening stick to the next person…and so on until the last person has taken their turn with the listening stick.

(6) I model steps 1-4 for students by holding the listening stick and asking students to provide a question for me. I close my eyes and *verbalize for the class what I am thinking* in my attempt to intuitively respond to the question, including my struggle to create a meaningful response. I open my eyes and speak my response. Returning to the inner world, I verbalize my ruminations and formulate a new question. With opened eyes, I give voice to the last question that I reflected on. *My last question becomes the group's first question to respond to.* This modeling process, especially when students hear me struggle with formulating a response to the question, reduces some of the anxiety associated with *how* to practice the listening stick activity.

(7) Depending on the size of the groups, 40-60 minutes may be allotted for the activity, including a post listening period to discuss their experience, feelings, and learnings as

a group, and then as a class. If some groups complete one revolution around the circle, I encourage them to continue until time is called. For example, in three-person groups, an instructor might plan on 15-20 minutes for the listening stick activity, 10-15 minutes to process in groups, and 10-15 minutes for class discussion.

Tips and Debriefing:

After completing the listening activity, I encourage students to respond to a series of questions based on Lindahl's (2003) suggestions: What was it like for you? What did you notice about your listening when listening to others…when listening to yourself? What did you observe about the process? Any patterns or new questions emerge? Next, I invite students to reflect what they have written, record something they learned in their listening journal, share one of their learnings in their small group, and then discuss as a class.

Some students have much to share with each other after several periods of quiet attentive listening. They appear eager to comment, question, and share their experiences. Other students appear more influenced by the listening activity and are more receptive/reflective in their communication with group members. After the *in-group* sharing, I ask each group to choose one learning from their group to share with the class. As a class, we listen to the most important learning from each group, pausing between groups for reflection, questions, and discussion. Unless a question is directed to me, I maintain the role of facilitator for these *inter-group* discussions. Lastly, we bring together the threads of the class discussion by summarizing what we learned. I record key words/symbols on the white board as students summarize their learnings about the listening stick activity. Together we create an acronym for the written symbols on the board to represent our collective learnings. This concludes the

debriefing part of the listening activity. In the next section, I describe some of the learning themes from past class discussions; and, where appropriate, I provide further guidance for using the listening activity.

First, many students cannot recall a time when another person listened to them without interruption, comment, or questioning. Students find a sense of comfort and freedom in knowing that they can speak as long as needed without interruption. Most daily interactions in our digital-techno oriented culture are brief (e.g., texting, Twitter tweets, and Facebook "likes"), and carving out extended face-to-face time with another person(s) is often a challenge.

In addition to the sense of comfort and freedom that extended interaction time can afford, the structure of the listening stick activity serves as an equalizer for group interaction. Normally dominant speakers in the group are now asked to reflect and listen, speaking only when holding the listening stick. At first, dominant speakers find this structure frustrating, but most of them begin to see the benefits of listening silently to others as the process unfolds. In contrast, normally reticent students now have a designated time to speak freely without fear of being interrupted. Reticent students enjoy a greater sense of power in knowing that they are guaranteed a time to speak, and that they do not need to compete or interrupt someone in order to obtain a speaking turn. In their journal writings, students report that implementing the listening stick activity in their daily life creates more equality between interaction partners (e.g., providing time/space for a shy friend to disclose more about their life) and small group members (e.g., curbing the talk time of dominant speakers in a study group).

Another issue that students frequently struggle with in their self-oriented listening is "choosing the right answer" to share with the group. The process of finding the "right answer" can inhibit intuitive and creative capacities by privileging the logical analytic process of comparing and contrasting the pros and cons of each option to find the "right answer" (Von Oech, 1990). While this kind of critical thinking may be appropriate at other times, it is not the focus of listening with the heart. In the listening stick activity, heart-centered mindful listening does not seek "answers," but listens for "responses" that emerge from the inner intuitive world. Thus, I encourage students to trust their intuition by giving voice to the last response (or question) that emerges from within at the end of their thirty seconds of self-listening. If students desire to further contemplate their responses, I suggest they set aside time for further reflection after the listening stick activity. During this time, students might, for example, ask the following questions and record their responses in a journal: Is what I wanted to share with the group true? necessary? kind? These three discernment questions are traditionally known as the *Sufi gates of speech*, and their counterparts are also found in the Buddhist practice called *right speech* (truth, kindly intent, and gentleness) (Diller, 1999). Students might consider these three questions as part of a modified listening stick activity when a serious issue confronts the group, allotting more time to discern if their responses or questions pass through the three Sufi gates.

Second, students notice a difference in the *quality of their other-oriented listening*. Typically, when a small group in class is assigned a question to answer, group members begin formulating answers to the question while feigning listening. Their attention is divided. They cannot formulate *and* listen wholeheartedly at the same time. To counteract this tendency to divide our attention, the listening stick activity attempts to unify attention by focusing solely on listening to the person holding the listening stick. This is possible since the question

changes with each speaker's turn; thus, individuals do not know what question they will be asked until they are passed the listening stick. Untethered from rehearsing their answer to a standard question for the entire group, members of the group are freed to give their undivided attention to the speaker.

Many students find it challenging to cultivate the practice of gifting others with their undivided listening attention *without* the aid of a listening/talking stick. Without the physical object of the listening stick as a reminder, it is easy to forget to listen with the heart. Instead, we may find ourselves busy formulating a brilliant response that will impress other people. I remind students that the listening stick is a *symbol of an inner attitude of the heart*, and that they can cultivate this inner heart-felt listening in virtually any communication context (personal or interpersonal, small or large group, face-to-face or digital) or function (decision-making or problem-solving, information gathering, discernment, relationship building, and conflict management). We talk about ways to remind ourselves to "listen with the heart" in the spirit of the Buddhist practice of using *gathas* (Aitken, 1992). For example, when we turn on a light switch, we might say to ourselves, "I will turn on my heart to listen with attention and devotion," when we see a tree, we could think of the branches from which the listening stick is crafted, and when we feel the urge to interrupt someone, we can acknowledge the urge and give more attention to the other person. Other creative ideas for remembering to listen from the heart includ the following that students from past classes suggested are: drawing a small red colored heart on the back on one's hand, wearing a heart shaped necklace or wristband, and carrying a heart shaped stone in one's pocket.

Third, students discover that the extended response time in the listening stick activity can add a creative dimension to their *self-listening*. For some students, their initial response to a

question morphs during the thirty second reflection period into something unanticipated, something that is often richer, deeper, and often more profound than their initial response to the question.

We could not determine how to apply the idea of extended time to public face-to-face interaction between strangers and acquaintances where long pauses like this would be considered a negative violation of social expectations. More than three seconds of silence is often considered an undesirable lapse of time in everyday face-to-face conversation (McLaughlin & Cody, 1982). However, we decided that the listening stick activity could be reproduced in the context of a close personal relationship. For example, in the context of close friendship, one can explain the intention of the listening stick activity, and use a listening stick during the interaction where partners frame the pregnant pauses as birth places for creative ideas.

Finally, the nonverbal passing of the listening stick from one person to the next in the group, each with a new question to respond to, and a new question to pose, provides many students with a feeling of group cohesiveness. This feeling of closeness is sometimes described as being part of something larger than themselves. Perhaps the listening stick activity allows students to experience a collective search for a communal truth (Palmer, 1998) that no one single individual could create on their own. A similar feeling of group cohesiveness is reported by Hyde (1993) after students completed a one hour talking stick activity in small group councils where the topic is a controversial social issue. Finally, a small number of students, in their journal writings, report successfully applying the listening stick activity in their close personal relationships, resulting in greater intimacy with their partners.

Assessment:

I do not formally assess students' experiences of the listening stick activity as part of the course grade. In my philosophy of teaching, the sense of being evaluated while one is learning a new skill is antithetical to the purpose of learning. That is, externally motivated learning for a *good grade* often decreases learning because the focus is on the shortest route to the highest grade and not on the process of learning; whereas, learning based on intrinsic motivation, like curiosity or self-improvement, can often enhance the learning process (Kohn, 1999). There are a number of options for assessing student learning other than traditional standardized tests including: portfolios, presentations, blogs and video blogs, stories, poems, artwork, comic strips, plays, music, journals, puppetry, and games (Bower & Thomas, 2013). For assessing the listening stick activity in the listening class, I encourage students write about what they learn in their listening journals, and to include something about the listening stick activity in their end of semester learning poem. Journals and poems count as part of the course grade and are assessed at mid and end of term along with student conferences during which we discuss what they have learned.

However, if one needs an immediate evaluation of the listening activity (e.g., to satisfy the administration that students are learning something during the listening activity), I recommend some form of self-assessment. For example, after the listening activity, and after students are provided time to apply the activity outside of class, students can write about what they learned and assign themselves a letter grade based on a rubric that the instructor creates such as "quantity and quality" of writing, or "effort and insight" of writing. Alternatively, students can create their own rubric for grading individually, or as a class, and the instructor can approve and/or recommend revisions to the rubric. I find these alternative means of

assessment more compatible with my ideal of teaching and learning from the heart in the context of listening to the SONG of Life.

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Title: Listening for someone's happiness

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Keywords: Empathic listening, supportive responses, happiness

Course Title: Effective Listening

Assignment Title: Listening for Someone's Happiness

Goals:

1) Students will practice empathic listening while a friend or family member talks about a happy event going on in his or her life.

2) Students will provide supportive listening responses during the conversation with the family member or friend about their good good news.

3) Students will describe the impact on the other person of the student's listening to support and advance the other's happiness.

4). Students will reflect on how the relationship has been or might be affected by sharing the happiness listening experience.

Type/Aspect of listening in focus: Empathic listening, supportive listening responses

Description: Listening for someone's happiness is an out-of-class assignment that can be done as either a formal paper or a journal assignment and is then followed up with an in-class discussion.

Procedure: Students are to find an opportunity to listen for someone's happiness and to support and advance that happiness. The event might be a trip the friend has taken, a wedding a family member is planning, a success at their job, a relationship they are excited about beginning, the child that was recently born or the internship they recently learned about. For fifteen to twenty minutes (or longer if the topic can support it), the student is to turn the conversation over to the other person and provide supportive listening responses that let the

other person talk about his or her accomplishment, plans or good times. The student then writes a paper or journal entry that addresses the following topics: 1) How did you know the other person had a joyful experience or plan to share with you? 2) Describe the listening situation. Where were you? What was the topic of conversation? Were there others present? How did you broach the topic or did they? 3) Describe the supportive responses you gave while listening to their happiness. Be specific. For example, "And then I said….."   4) How do you think this conversation impacted the other person? Be specific. What did you notice? What did they say, if anything?   5) How did the conversation impact you? How did you feel during and after the conversation? 6)   How, if at all, has or will, in your opinion, the relationship been affected by the conversation?   7) Will you seek out listening situations like this again? Why or why not?

Preparation: Nearly every listening text has well developed discussions of empathic listening and supportive listening responses to which this assignment can be tied and which should be read prior to this assignment. When faculty or textbooks discuss empathic listening and supportive responses, we often tend to draw on examples of listening to understand another person's pain or suffering or confusion. Seldom do we consider listening to understand and support someone's joy.   The idea is often a startling one to students. A brief discussion about the overlooked nature of this kind of empathic listening would be appropriate prior to assigning the paper.

Tips and Debriefing: Once students have completed the out of class listening assignment and written their papers, typically 30-45 minutes is devoted to discussion. The discussion should begin by addressing the questions the students covered in their essays.   Generally the

students mention that because they were listening to friends and family members, they were aware that the person had something positive going on in their lives, i.e. adopting a child or seeking a new job. They often report that they simply ask about the event or the other person made a mention of it and the student picked up on it. When talking about providing supportive responses, students frequently admit how difficult it was not to turn the conversation back to them selves and yet how differently they felt the conversation went because they kept the focus on the other person. Students often mention how excited and happy the other person seemed and how the person visibly "lit up" as they told of their success and how full of energy the other person was during the conversation and after. Students often mention what a positive experience it was for them. One student, in regard to listening to her mother talk about a positive job review, noted how proud her mother seemed to be able to share with her daughter and how she gained an insight into her mother's life she knew little about. A conversation often ensues about how listening can serve as a kind of validation or acknowledgement of the other person and their life or even a reliving of the experience. It allows the listener to serve as a kind of witness to the other's life. As one student put it, his sister communicated "a sense of relief to know that someone else recognized how hard she's working." Some students have reported that their friend or family member actually thanked them for listening or for being interested. Students generally note that these are conversations they will be more intentional about having in the future. Topics that are not a part of the written assignment but that often emerge in discussion that can add new dimensions to the discussion are that a listener may feel jealous of the other's good fortune and that there can be a fine line between bragging and affirming one's own happiness or accomplishment. Additional topics that can be brought up include if these "happiness conversations" are appropriate to have with everyone or if they should be reserved for select individuals in our lives. The faculty member may want to ask if there are individuals in the

students' lives who they seek out when they want to share their happiness and if so, what listening characteristics these individuals have in common and what relationship they share.

Assessment: The assignment should be assessed according to criteria established in the course syllabus for all similar written assignments. Such a rubric could include how well the questions laid out in the assignment description are addressed, the quality and development of insights, incorporation of course concepts, vocabulary and readings, as well as the attention to writing conventions, such as paragraphing, grammar and punctuation.

Title: A Pretest-Posttest Control Group Study on the Effects of a Therapeutic Listening Training on Student's Emotional Intelligence

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Keywords:, health education, compassionate listening, emotional intelligence

A Pretest-Posttest Control Group Study on the Effects of a Therapeutic Listening Training on Students' Emotional Intelligence

OBJECTIVE. This study examined the effects of a therapeutic listening training and compassionate listening activity on the emotional intelligence of healthcare students.

METHOD. Thirty-one students in a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy program participated in a three-week training on therapeutic listening designed to teach students how to listen in therapeutic settings. Additionally, all participants took part in a Compassionate Listening activity approximately three weeks after the therapeutic listening training with persons who were homeless and recently discharged from a hospital. A pretest-posttest design was used to evaluate the effects of the intervention on emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence was measured using the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue-SF). Additionally, qualitative data from student reflections papers were evaluated using the constant comparison method (Patton, 2002).

RESULTS. A paired samples t-test revealed a statistically significant improvement in emotional intelligence scores on the TEIQue-SF following participation in the therapeutic listening training and compassionate listening activity, ($t=-2.483$, $p=.019$). The median score on the TEIQue-SF test increased from pre-training (Md=117.5) to post-training (Md=120). Of the four subscales, Well-Being, Self-Control, Emotionality, Sociability, Well-Being demonstrated the most significant increase. Qualitative data from student reflection papers revealed themes of transformation, application of listening techniques, therapeutic use of self, and challenges to compassionate listening. Student reflection papers indicated an increase factors associated with the Sociability and Emotionality subscales and an overall increase in

emotional intelligence.

CONCLUSION. A therapeutic listening training and Compassionate Listening Activity revealed an increase in healthcare students' emotional intelligence.

Introduction

Client-centered care is an internationally recognized concept for enhancing healthcare, emphasizing increased patient satisfaction and improved health outcomes by viewing the client holistically (Birks & Watt, 2007). The United States government acknowledges the need for improved patient-centered care and mandates that strategies be implemented in the healthcare domain to ensure success. The United States Department of Health and Human Services'(DHHS) Healthy People 2020 calls for an increased number of patients who feel that their health care providers always listen carefully to them and show respect for their thoughts and opinions (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). Additionally, the Comprehensive Primary Care Initiatives of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services mandate team-building and encourage patients and their families to participate in all aspects of care (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). These mandates call for changes in the way that healthcare is provided, including increased patient-provider collaboration and the use of effective listening skills by all healthcare providers.

Ineffective communication and client-centered care on the part of healthcare practitioners has consistently shown to cause an increase in patient dissatisfaction and litigation (Huntington & Kuhn, 2013). When healthcare providers are poor listeners, they neglect to obtain important information regarding patient needs and desires, causing treatment errors to increase (Beckman & Frankel, 1984). Current studies indicate that the motives for the majority of healthcare lawsuits are attributed to a lack of listening to the patient, poorly

delivered information, the patient's perception of feeling abandoned by the healthcare provider, and the underestimation of patient and family perspectives (Huntington & Kuhn, 2013). When a healthcare provider listens attentively to the patient and builds a trusting relationship, there is a significant reduction in the amount of litigations (Huntington & Kuhn, 2013). Listening skills must not be underestimated as evidence shows that patients determine the quality of care they receive based on the rapport they build with their provider (Huntington & Kuhn, 2013).

Therapeutic listening has been defined as "the necessary and first step towards patient-centered healthcare," which "helps to understand patient's experience of illness through recognizing and exploring patients' cues" (Fassaert, Dulmen, Shellevis, & Bensing, 2007, p. 258). The goal of therapeutic listening is to clearly understand the patient's experience with the intention of developing a mutual understanding founded on respect and open communication. Therapeutic listening establishes the foundation for building collaborative relationships between patient, the family, and healthcare provider.

Although therapeutic listening in healthcare has been researched extensively and has many proven benefits, certain potential benefits have yet to be fully examined. One such potential benefit is increased emotional intelligence (EI) of the healthcare provider. Emotional intelligence is defined as a "set of abilities (verbal and nonverbal) that enable a person to generate, recognize, express, understand and evaluate their own and others' emotions in order to guide thinking and action and successfully cope with environmental demands and pressures" (Birks & Watt, 2007, p. 368). Evidence shows that increased EI in healthcare providers is valuable for both the patient and the provider (Taylor et al., 2009; Birks & Watt, 2007, Schutte & Loi, 2014; Karimi, Leggat, Donohue, Farrell, & Couper, 2013; Taylor, Lee, Kielhofner, & Ketkar, 2009; Uchino et al., 2015). Karimi et al. (2013) found that EI improves well-being and lowers job-related stress in emotionally laborious jobs. Schutte and Loi,

(2014) found that increased EI facilitates more satisfaction with social support and a greater perception of influence within the workplace, which positively correlates with better mental health and more work engagement. This evidence demonstrates a significant capacity for EI to strengthen interpersonal relationships within the workplace, promoting professional team-building and overall professional success. In the healthcare setting, a strong team facilitates patient goal-continuity and a therapeutic environment, increasing patient satisfaction and outcomes (Sharp, 2006).

Occupational therapists exercise EI when developing therapeutic use of self, a vital part of the OT process that is used to build rapport and practice patient-centered care (Taylor et al., 2009; American Occupational Therapy Association, 2010). Therapeutic use of self, defined as a "planned use of his or her personality, insights, perceptions, and judgments" (Punwar & Peloquin, 2000, p. 285) requires EI to gain intuition and facilitate problem-solving and decision-making (Chaffey, Unsworth, & Fossey, 2012). Several studies confirm that EI is necessary for developing therapeutic use of self, as it directs the actions that OTs use to foster therapeutic relationships, and results in improved patient outcomes (Chaffey, Unsworth, & Fossey, 2012; Taylor et al., 2009).

Occupational therapy educators have considerable interest in increasing EI in their students as it may significantly impact how future healthcare practitioners interact with their patients (Gordon-Handler, 2009; Birks & Watt, 2007). Increasing EI may allow OT students to move beyond learning therapeutic listening techniques and develop the interpersonal characteristics that help create meaningful therapeutic relationships with patients (Shapiro, 2001). However, there is no universal method established to teach and develop EI prior to job placement (Birks & Watt, 2007). Although several studies suggest that brief therapeutic listening and emotional competence sessions can increase levels of EI and produce long-term improvements, this area has been largely underdeveloped (Nelis et al., 2011; Uchino et al.,

2015). This study aims to investigate whether or not therapeutic listening training can increase levels of EI in healthcare students. If this relationship exists, it holds the potential to deepen the connection between therapeutic use of self and optimal healthcare outcomes.

Method

Research Design

This research followed the guidelines of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), and as such, is a scholarly inquiry into student learning. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning analyzes teaching methods to determine how students learn with the purpose of deepening practitioner knowledge and improving the quality of education (Poole & Simmons, 2016). An instructor who teaches the psychosocial portion of an occupational therapy curriculum wanted to determine if a therapeutic listening training would increase students' EI, a characteristic that is viewed as advantageous in a healthcare practitioner. Most of the active and therapeutic listening techniques taught in the course have been in the public domain for decades and are taught in many psychology, counseling, social work, and social sciences curriculums. For resources on listening see Brownell (2006), Cole (2005), Kline (1999), Nichols (1995), Rosenberg (1999) and Taylor, (2008). Compassionate listening is a listening practice that includes reframing, reflection, avoidance of advice-giving, and mindfulness (Hwoschinsky, 2013). The Compassionate Listening Project is a non-profit organization which facilitates compassionate listening trainings to help eliminate suffering through implementing listening techniques to help individuals and communities reconcile (2017, March 08). Retrieved from http://www.compassionatelistening.org/. An outline of the listening training is shown in Table 1.

A pretest posttest design and a constant comparative method were used to evaluate the effectiveness of a therapeutic listening training and compassionate listening activity in

increasing EI in healthcare students. This study included three phases: pretest, intervention, and posttest. This study received approval from the university internal review board and student participants provided consent.

Table 1.

Therapeutic and Compassionate Listening Training Schedule

Week	Content	Teaching Strategy
Week 1	Framework for active and therapeutic listening	Video, discussion, role-play
	Open-ended questions, roadblocks to listening	Video, discussion, role-play
	Active listening strategies	Video, discussion, role-play
Week 2	Primary accurate empathy and immediacy	Discussion, dyads role-play
	Therapeutic interviewing, providing feedback	Discussion, dyads role-play
Week 3	Conflict resolution, compassionate listening	Dyads, groups, role-play
	Non-violent communication	Dyads, groups, role-play
Weeks 5-14	Compassionate listening at Recuperative Care	In vivo listening experience

Measures

The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-short form (TEIQue-SF) was used to measure EI before and after the therapeutic listening training and compassionate listening activity. The TEIQue-SF is adapted from the TEIQue-full form to provide rapid measurement of EI. The TEIQue-SF is a 30 item self-report questionnaire using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). The TEIQue-SF contains two items from each of the 15 personality components and assesses the four higher-level factors of the full form (Well-Being, Self-Control, Emotionality, and Sociability). The TEIQue-SF was chosen for this study because it demonstrates excellent incremental validity and inter-rater reliability when compared to other trait EI scales (Cooper & Petrides, 2010). A paper-based version of the TEIQue-SF was administered pre and post therapeutic listening training and the compassionate listening activity.

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling was employed to gather rich knowledge about the topic of therapeutic listening and emotional intelligence in occupational therapy students. Students in an occupational therapy psychosocial course were informed about the instructor's intentions of collecting information about a student characteristic before and after a teaching strategy. Participants had spent approximately 15 weeks in the program prior to starting the psychosocial course and training. Participants had no previous training in therapeutic listening in the curriculum. All student participants gave informed consent to participate in the study and were notified that participation would have no effect on their grade in the course. All student participants volunteered for the study and only one was excluded due to an inability to participate in the posttest. This student's pretest scores were excluded from the study to avoid data bias and errors.

Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to the listening training, data was collected using the TEIQue-SF. The therapeutic listening training was then delivered in a two and a half-hour course once a week for three weeks. In the fifth week of the course, student participants were assigned to participate in the compassionate listening activity during a two-hour supervised listening dyad with homeless individuals at a center for recuperation after hospital discharge. The compassionate listening activity was implemented to provide student participants an opportunity to apply the listening skills learned in the training and to provide persons who are homeless to express their concerns after hospital discharge.

Once the compassionate listening activity had been completed by all student participants, data was collected again using the TEIQue-SF and qualitative data was collected from an assigned reflection paper student participants were to write about the compassionate listening activity. For the quantitative data analysis, prior to both pretesting and post testing, the instructor created a coding sheet that separated the student participants' names from the TEIQue-SF. All pretest and posttest TEIQue-SF scores were recorded and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 23.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp. A paired samples t- test was used to measure any differences between the pretest and posttest measures of EI. For the qualitative data analysis, a constant comparative method was used to look for themes and sub-themes in the reflection papers (Patton & Patton, 2002).

Results

Quantitative Results

A total of 30 occupational therapy graduate student participants took part in this study. The student participants were both male and female and came from a variety of academic backgrounds. See Table 2 for the characteristics of the participants in this study. Multiple tests

for normality all returned normal distribution results. Skewness and kurtosis for pre-and-post scores were within an accepted +/- 1.96 to be considered normal. In this sample, internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was high at .73 for total EI, which is consistent with internal reliabilities reported by Cooper and Petrides (2010). A paired samples test revealed a statistically significant improvement in emotional intelligence scores on the TEIQue-SF following participation in the therapeutic listening training program, (t=-2.483, p=.019). The median score on the TEIQue-SF test increased from pre-program (Md=117.5) to post-program (Md=120). The standard deviation decreased slightly (5.542 to 5.512). The range also decreased from pre-program (23) to post-program (19). When looking at change between pretest and posttests by gender there was no statistically significant differences, however, male scores (pretest mean = 118.4, SD = 2.07 and posttest mean = 125, SD = 3.1) increased much more than female scores (pretest mean = 117.7, SD = 5.6 and posttest mean = 119, SD = 5.44). A large effect size was calculated by all occupational therapy students (Cohen's d= 2.61), where 0.20 = small, .50 = medium, and 0.80 = large) (Cohen, 1988).

Table 2.

Demographics and undergraduate degrees of participants

Characteristic	Number (%)
Gender	
Male	5 (16%)
Female	26 (84%)
Age	
19-25 years of age	18 (58%)
26-31 years of age	13 (42%)
Undergraduate Degree	
Kinesiology	5 (16%)
Psychology	9 (29%)
Sociology/Anthropology	10 (32%)
Business	1 (3%)
Arts and Humanities	4 (13%)

N = 31

Qualitative Results

In the context of the SoTL, student participants were asked to write their reflections of their experience of listening to persons who were homeless after discharge from a hospital. Two overarching themes emerged from the qualitative data; "before training" and "after training". A property of the theme "before training" was "listened but did not pay attention." Properties of "after training" included "transformative experience", "challenges to compassionate listening", "applied therapeutic listening techniques", and "therapeutic use of self." Student comments were also analyzed to detect changes in EI. Of the four TEIQue-SF subscales, comments about personal change and growth appear to center on Sociability (I can deal effectively with people) and Emotionality (I'm normally able to get into someone's shoes and experience their emotions). Additionally, students reported an increase in awareness of their actions and emotional responses, which supports an increase in EI.

Before training experiences. Subthemes that emerged from "before training" centered around students' misunderstanding of the role of the helper in healthcare. For example, one student stated:

I thought the best way to help someone was to offer them a solution to their problem.

This student focused on developing relationships with clients:

Before starting the compassionate listening activity, I was concerned with whether or not I had the ability to engage adults and be able to form a meaningful connection with them.

Another student experienced the realization that there is more to listening to clients than hearing their words:

I came into compassionate listening training with confidence because I had always been told that I was an exceptional listener. This ease of mind quickly turned into discomfort during the first class because I leaned there were more layers to listening than I had originally thought.

This student gained insight into the impact that active and compassionate listening can have on individuals:

Before the training, I never thought that just sitting and listening could be so powerful.

After Training. Student reflections reveal that a compassionate listening experience was "transformative" in that it gave them a first-hand look at the importance of soft skills in therapeutic settings and changed them at a very deep level. The theme of "transformative experience" emerged as particularly strong and poignant in many students' comments following learning how to actively and compassionately listen:

"I've grown up."

"A paradigm shift for me."

"This assignment helped me to learn about myself".

"My view on how to communicate with people has changed tenfold."

"It is now apparent how having someone to listen to you is valued within human nature."

"Taking a class in listening and practicing compassionate listening at the foundation was one of the most eye opening experiences that I have ever had."

"I was humbled to be a witness to his cathartic experience."

"My biggest realization after this experience was understanding the power of silence."

"Silence allows the person to have a more profound thought process."

The subtheme of "what I learned" revealed that a compassionate listening activity reinforced the knowledge that students had learned in the therapeutic listening training. One major theme that emerged was that students identified how therapeutic listening increases trust, rapport, and quality of life. For example, these students recognized the importance of therapeutic listening for their clients:

"Building rapport is key."

"Engaging in compassionate listening can be the answer to help someone improve their quality of life."

This student noticed that by engaging in therapeutic listening, his client was eventually able to confide in him and establish a deeper connection.

"This conversation made me realize that people always have something to say, though they might not be willing to share it right away. This reminded me of the importance of building a relationship with people. Just by opening my ears…I was able to earn the trust of this stranger who eventually opened up and shared his feelings with me."

Another student recognized that listening can be much more powerful than giving advice:

"…that being a witness to someone's story is far more impactful than any piece of advice that I could offer them."

These students recognized specific techniques that were effective:

"I found it very helpful to restate what the client had said in order for them to process it."

"The single most important thing I learned during this experience was that in every moment where I wanted to speak, silence was the better choice."

A subtheme of "challenges" became apparent as student reflections revealed that beginning to use therapeutic listening techniques can be difficult. Students indicated that practicing these techniques can be time-consuming and awkward until mastered:

"I can come up with open-ended questions but it takes me some time… that makes the conversation flow less naturally."

"I had difficulty forming open-ended questions… I wanted to be careful that I was not asking for information they already revealed."

"I use the same listening techniques throughout a conversation… I have found that this limits the discussion."

Other students felt a sense of anxiety, unpreparedness, and fear:

"Slight fear"

"I felt nervous…and I think they could tell."

"I felt unprepared"

"The number of tools that are available (for listening) is truly overwhelming"

The subtheme of "applied therapeutic listening techniques" revealed that students were able to identify the therapeutic listening techniques they used with the homeless individuals and reflect on their experiences:

“I let him lead the conversation, practicing silence and nonverbal communication such as nodding”

“Without using techniques such as emotional labeling and reflecting, I neglect the other person’s true feelings and fail to help them to realize what’s at the heart of the issue.”

This student acknowledged that having actively participated in a compassionate listening activity will make performing these skills less challenging in the future:

“I would have more experience the second time, since I now know what to expect from the experience.”

The subtheme of “therapeutic use of self” became evident as students recognized their ability to provide a more powerful experience while exercising therapeutic use of self through increased listening. One student stated:

“They openly shared information about themselves with ease, and they seemed as if they were free from a heavy burden after speaking with me.”

Another student found that being authentic enabled better communication:

“I found that being genuine…helped the client to open up.”

Other students recognized the value of listening and stated a desire to use their acquired skills more frequently:

“I would like to use active listening skills…to dig deeper in conversations with family and friends.”

“My goal is to improve my active listening skills in every conversation I engage in.”

Discussion

This study sought to answer the question: would a therapeutic listening training and compassionate listening activity increase EI in students in an occupational therapy master’s

program? Both qualitative and quantitative results demonstrate that after the training, EI improved overall and in each subcategory (Well-Being, Self-Control, Emotionality, Sociability). These findings support Nelis et al.'s (2011) study which demonstrated that EI is something that can improve with training and change personality traits associated with EI. Interestingly, of the four subscales, Well-Being was the only scale that showed a marked increase in scores. Optimism, happiness and self-esteem are associated with the Well-Being subscale. It could be that student participants, having had a transformative experience with listening and some success when listening to homeless persons who were recuperating from hospitalization, may have increased their confidence. This confidence could lead to improvement in mood, self-esteem and optimism about their future role as healthcare practitioners.

Studies show that providing students with an opportunity to actively participate in learning allows for better understanding and retention of skills (Prince, 2004). The compassionate listening activity allowed students to practice the skills learned in the therapeutic listening training. The student reflection papers revealed that it was a powerful learning experience, transformative in nature, encouraging and reinforcing of their knowledge of listening skills. These findings support that a therapeutic listening training and compassionate listening activity have the potential to increase in EI in students. Emotional intelligence requires the ability to recognize emotional responses in oneself and change one's behaviors in order to provide a therapeutic experience (Birks & Watt, 2007). Student reflections showed that the students were able to observe their emotional reactions as well as the reactions of the homeless individuals, and change the listening techniques used in order to provide a therapeutic experience. Emotional intelligence also requires the ability to identify and evaluate areas in which to improve (Birks & Watt, 2007). Students discovered that, although challenging, the compassionate listening activity helped them to identify what skills

were needed to improve their therapeutic use of self. Students also examined ways to build on these skills, showing an integration of knowledge and a desire to enhance their abilities. These responses to the compassionate listening activity show an increase in EI, which will help students to develop trust and rapport with their patients and patient centered-care.

Limitations

Although personality is often thought to be unchanging, studies show that personality is explained by genetic factors which are influenced by an individual's environment (McGue, Bacon, & Lykken, 1993). The ability to alter personality traits, such as EI, provides a basis for this study. However, the ability to alter personality traits can also negatively affect the study's outcome. Although OT students indicated an increase in EI in the context of learning therapeutic listening, the personality traits altered may very well return to their prior state in post-training environments. A longitudinal study must be completed to demonstrate the long-term effects of increasing EI in OT students.

Additionally, the participants in this study were selected through purposeful sampling which may not generalize to the entire population of OT students or students in other healthcare professions. Moreover, the participants selected are motivated to change in order to become well-trained occupational therapists. This may present sample bias and other influences outside of the control of the researchers.

A further limitation of this study is a common-method variance occurring from the use of self-reported measures. Future research using methods based on alternative sources such as instructor assessments of EI may be desirable. However, it is noted that common-method variance has more validity when there appear to be illegitimate increases in the results (James, Gent, Hater, & Corey, 1979; Karimi et al., 2013). Looking closer at gender differences in the development of EI may provide educators with insight into how to tailor teaching to both males and females. It is unclear what specific methods in the therapeutic listening training or

the compassionate listening activity contributed to the increased EI results and additional studies may need to be done for a full understanding. In addition, longitudinal studies will help to determine the long-term effects of therapeutic listening training on EI. It may also be useful to include multiple healthcare disciplines in the training to generalize the results to a wider population of healthcare practitioners.

Implications for Occupational Therapy Practice

Within the context of OT, therapeutic listening is vital to clinical practice, helps to satisfy mandates from the government to improve relationships in healthcare and should be part of OT curricula. The findings from this study have the following implications for OT practice:

- Emotional intelligence can be improved through therapeutic listening training.
- Developing EI through teaching therapeutic listening has the potential to help students develop the interpersonal characteristics that can improve patient-centered care and lead to patient satisfaction with services.
- Increased EI has shown to help develop the therapeutic use of self and create a foundation for collaborative relationships between practitioner and patient/client that lead to better treatment outcomes.
- Increased EI can prepare students for the multiple roles of an OT and promote better team work, workplace satisfaction and well-being.
- The findings provide a foundation for future research on the importance of therapeutic listening and emotional intelligence in medical and community-based care.

Conclusion

This article describes a SoTL in an occupational therapy curriculum. Results indicate that students can be taught skills that increase their EI and by creating experiential activities with consumers of healthcare, can gain confident in their abilities to be therapeutic. By doing so, OT educators can be confident that their students will be role-models for the mandates put forth by DHHS and CMS, that they will play a part in patient satisfaction of their healthcare services and will be better positioned to be discharged from treatment after client-centered care.

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