

LISTENING FACTORS IN WORK ENVIRONMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Listening is important. Either a failure to listen or the perception that someone has failed to listen can precipitate problems in one's personal, social, educational, or professional life. Consequently, many persons are concerned about their own listening behavior and the listening behavior of their associates. "Everyone has learned to talk," one manager complained, "but no one has learned to listen" (Preston, 1979, p. 32).

Given the importance of listening and of perceptions of listening, one might expect to find many recent scholarly articles and papers which would help to explain the listening process or shed light on the factors which might cause someone to conclude that "no one has learned to listen." But examination of the literature reveals little recent research. Many articles which are available consist merely of prescriptive advice best classified as "'common sense' suggestions we tend to forget" (Barker, 1971, p. 72). /

Specifically, the prior research seems deficient in two ways. First, it is largely prescriptive rather than descriptive. Keller (1969) reviewed a listening bibliography of 529 studies; many were completed prior to 1950 and three-fourths were not empirical research. Descriptive or experimental research consists primarily of landmark

studies conducted during the 1950s or earlier with a population of college students (e.g., Nichols, 1948a; Bird, 1953). Contemporary students of listening sometimes generalize from these early studies of college students to many diverse contemporary groups without giving adequate attention to differing times, people, or settings.

The second deficiency in much of the previous writing about listening is the degree to which academic viewpoints and definitions have been imposed on nonacademic settings. A manager may observe the listening behavior of his or her subordinates, perceive the subordinates as not listening, and conclude that "no one has learned to listen." The literature does not reveal whether or not it is safe to assume that "listen" means the same thing to the manager as to a college professor.

These and other weaknesses in the listening literature indicate that more and better research is needed. Petrie (1964) called for better research in the Journal of Communication:

Instead of conducting rigorous basic research designed to discover what listening is and what aspects of listening are teachable, we have engaged in essentially superficial repetitions of earlier pioneer studies. . . . It is time we began to investigate our basic assumptions with rigorously designed experiments (p. 248).

This research effort is aimed at making a contribution to the understanding of perceptions of the definition and characteristics of listening. The ultimate goal is to understand perceptions of listening in the context of the adult business person or worker. The critical incident method will be used as the principal research tool and should help to avoid the potential error of imposing academic perspectives on nonacademic settings.

Importance of Listening

Listening effectively is important all through a person's life. Early in life people tell a child, "Now listen carefully; pay attention." When children start school, they are subjected to a barrage of words to which they are supposed to "listen" in order to learn. This process continues through their adult lives.

Wilt (1950) found that primary school children listened over two and one-half hours a school day, or 57.5% of the time. Morris and Huckelberry (1944) found that high school students were spending about 50% of their classroom time listening. Wolvin and Coakley (1979) found that listening was the most used form of verbal communication, followed by speaking, reading, and writing, in that order.

Educators have recognized the importance of listening but have been slow to give it adequate attention. In 1949, only one major university was teaching a course in listening. By 1958, more than 20 colleges and universities offered courses (Dover, 1966), and some had graduate level research in listening (Bird, 1953). When Bird developed his college course in listening, he found the material about listening for students to be woefully inadequate and widely scattered:

It is either pitifully superficial as in most speech communication texts or hopelessly buried in psychological gobbledegook. Bits of knowledge, items of fact, and statements of conjecture about the listening process appear here and there in how-to-study handbooks, studies of communication media, and books on semantics and group dynamics (p. 128).

Today, most teachers give lip service to the need for effective listening, but few have seen a test of listening ability. Fewer still include listening skills development in their curricula. Listening

has remained the "orphan" of language arts (Wolvin, 1979, p. 1). This may change as oral communication is included in the definition of basic skills given by federal legislation. State and local education associations in Massachusetts have been invited to make recommendations for assessing speaking and listening skills (Backlund, Brown, Gurry, and Jandt, 1982). Other state departments of education may mandate similar requirements in the near future ("Oregon's . . . Listening Requirement," 1982).

Listening is likewise important in the business world. Organizations have discovered good listening makes good business sense; it contributes to improved work performance, higher morale (Xerox, n.d.a.), less paper work, better upward and downward communication, better human relations, easier selling, and more efficient conferences. In the 1940s and 1950s, Fortune magazine writers asserted that a lack of listening was a major weakness in the business world (cited by Nichols and Stevens, 1957a). Savage (cited by Nichols and Stevens, 1957a) studied the communication efficiency of 100 representatives of business and industrial management and found a tremendous loss of information through levels of management. The workers, or fifth level, received only 20% of the communication sent down orally to them. Management thought and hoped workers would understand the messages perfectly (100%).

Economist Sylvia Porter (1979) reported that a simple \$10 listening mistake by the 100 million workers in the United States would cost business \$1 billion. It is no wonder that Clark (1968), in a national sample of executives in business and government, found listening was

one of the five communication areas the executives felt should be taught in college to contribute to oral competency.

Meister and Reinsch (1978) surveyed communication training programs in Illinois manufacturing firms. They asked respondents to identify skill deficiencies in new employees. The most frequently mentioned deficiency was listening. Meister and Reinsch suggested that most new managers may simply not be prepared for the critical role of talking and listening in their new jobs.

Dover (1966) and Nichols (1962) both cite an 18-month study of employee attitudes at Swift and Company where hourly employees equated good foremanship with good listening. In summarizing the results of this research, Father Theodore Purcell of Loyola University said that, "Of all the sources of information a foreman has . . . [to] come to know . . . the people in his department, listening to the individual employee is the most important" (cited by Dover, p. 370).

Because listening is a large part of our lives as students, workers, friends, and family members, it is important that we understand the listening process and the factors which influence perceptions of that process. As Haberland (1956) summarized:

The ability to communicate effectively is a commonly accepted objective of general education. Making oneself understood through speaking and writing and understanding others through listening and reading are basic to personal development, vocational effectiveness, to effectiveness in human relations, and to intelligent citizenship (p. 4).

Review of Relevant Literature

Listening research seems to have developed slowly since the first published scientific study of listening in 1917. There had been 14

studies published by 1939 (Nichols, 1948b). By 1952, there were about 50 studies that could be loosely classified as research (Sigband, 1976). The best known are those by Rankin (1966) on time spent in listening and by Nichols (1948a) on listening comprehension. Nichols (1957) stated that research had identified several effective and ineffective listening skills. To some degree, this research depicted the universality of listening habits (Nichols, 1957). Major findings in the 1950s correlated listening ability to intelligence, scholastic aptitude, and reading ability. Most of the research was teacher-centered, yielding tools to measure listening comprehension and new teaching methodologies (Keller, 1969). Devine (1967) suggested that research in listening had been extensive, though generally atomistic, uncoordinated, and repetitive. Pflaumer (1970) pointed out that one could see few common factors across studies on the phenomena of listening, and Devine (1967) said that significant questions still remained to be asked. In 1982, reviewers found the literature centered around definitions of listening, testing validity, and problems compounded by measuring a covert act (Backlund, Brown, Gurry, and Jandt, 1982). Several important issues have emerged in the literature. The specific issues of definitions, measurements, correlates, and subjects are briefly reviewed below.

Definitions

One important issue is the definition of listening. Listening has no universally accepted definition. Researchers' definitions include apprehending acoustically (Barbara, 1958), being stimulated to active attention (Bogard, 1979), comprehending "aural symbols"

(Nichols, 1947, p. 32), understanding and recalling the spoken word (Nichols, 1957), and acknowledging audition (Pflaumer, 1970). Kelly (1962) noted these various definitions excited much confusion and disagreement concerning what behavior is reported by the term "listening."

Measurement

A second important issue is the measurement of listening. Most researchers have used standardized listening comprehension tests to identify good and poor listeners (Kelly, 1962). The results have been interpreted as empirical evidence of overall "good" or "poor" listening performance. These tests may be criticized on two grounds.

First, most of the tests were developed with student populations and focus on the retention of information by an audience exposed to a read, memorized, or taped message. For example, the Brown-Carlson test was designed to measure students for both "receptive" (i.e., getting the message) and "reflective" (i.e., doing something with the message) listening (Kelly, 1962). The STEP test was designed to measure skill in understanding, interpreting, applying, and evaluating that to which one listens (Kelly, 1962). Yet, adults who are not students probably do more of their listening in a nonaudience situation. They talk on the telephone or face-to-face to a superior or subordinate, a spouse, relative, or peer. Or the nonstudent adult may participate in a small group where there is time for exchange of ideas, concerns, and questions.

The listening tests have also been criticized for lack of validity, i.e., for their failure to represent each of the various types

of listening (Barker, 1971; Watson, 1982). All the published listening tests measure different skills; for example, Weaver (1972) lists 41 different possible skills which aid listening. Therefore, the standardized tests rarely agree with each other and one may score well on the Brown-Carlson test but less well on the Princeton STEP test (Weaver, 1972). For instance, Kelly (1962) used these two tests, plus his own Purdue Inventory Listening Test, in his research with industrial supervisors and found the three tests correlated with the OTIS mental ability test more than with each other, particularly when the group was told in advance they were to be tested. Because of this, Kelly asserted that:

Listening ability tests are not different enough from measurement of general mental ability to be considered reliable measures of listening . . . [so] much has to be re-evaluated in current listening theory. With only a few minor exceptions, all the published research for the past 14 years has used tests of listening ability as criterion measures for identifying 'good' and 'poor' listeners (p. 158).

Kelly (p. 58) conceded that none of the tests he used had "apparent practical applications as predictors . . . of perceived listening behavior."

Correlates

Several researchers also have investigated a third issue of listening--the traits which are related to an individual's listening ability. (The measurement of listening ability is, as noted above, problematic.) Studies are found correlating age, sex, management style, and personality with listening. Below is described what we know about these areas that may particularly affect adult listeners.

Age

From his research, Rossiter (1970b) concluded that adult students' listening seemed to decline with increased age. Weaver (1972) felt that although the capacity for listening rises linearly with age and experience, at some point it begins to decline significantly into a curvilinear relationship.

Sex

It is unlikely that either sex can listen better; but apparently the two sexes do listen differently. There are basic attention style differences between the sexes, so we should expect them to hear different data (Weaver, 1972). Weaver (1972) counted eight studies where males scored higher on listening tests, and suggested that the tests were probably constructed to favor the male listening style. Vigliano (1974) found no significant difference between the sex of the speaker or the sex of the listener on the comprehension of college speech students, as measured by the Brown-Carlson test.

Management and Communicator Style

Bradley and Bard (1977) found that laissez-faire managers were viewed by their subordinates as attentive listeners. Task-oriented (Theory X) managers were perceived as listening carefully. Superiors whose management style reflected a Theory Y (democratic) orientation were perceived to be both careful and attentive listeners.

Personality

Pflaumer (1970) dealt with personality traits of the effective

listener. She concluded personality may not have anything to do with being an effective listener as far as people in organizations are concerned, or even as far as listening comprehension and recall are concerned. Kelly (1962) tried to reach beyond personality correlates by asking a few general questions about listening activities and behaviors, but most problems the subjects mentioned were couched in terms of "general communication breakdowns with the boss" or "what bored them in conversations" (Kelly, 1962, p. xi). The answers to these questions were viewed as personality correlates.

Subjects

Another issue worthy of attention is the matter of subject populations. Much of the past research has focused on identifying good and poor listeners in the classroom. Experiments have investigated such topics as note-taking, the use of listening techniques, the causes of distractions, and the amount of time the listener pays attention to the speaker (Kelly, 1962).

Most investigations have been done using students as subjects, and the students were usually enrolled in lower division communication courses. In fact, much of what is taught now in educational and commercial programs seems to be based on what Nichols (1948a) learned about freshmen who attended a large midwestern university in 1948, and who were studied while trying to comprehend lectures over a variety of subjects given by six unknown teachers before a large classroom of listeners. This type of listening may be very different from working adults listening to a familiar supervisor or subordinate.

Subjects other than college students have been used only a few times. Kelly (1962) interviewed 31 industrial supervisors. But interview questions were predominantly about general communication behavior rather than listening. Clark (1968) identified communication needs in business but did not identify the actual behaviors upon which respondents based their perceptions of needs. Pflaumer (1970) used some adults in her study who were enrolled in communication courses and volunteered to help. But in general, the listening research has not been conducted among non-student populations in non-academic settings. As Kelly (1962) pointed out:

In the past, platitudes about the 'rules of good listening' and alleged principles of 'listening training' have been treated as 'constants' supposedly true of a unitary activity called 'listening.' That activity is constantly changing and is dependent upon different situational factors (p. 113).

After reviewing the research on listening it is apparent that there is very little research that explores the perception of listening among working adults. One can repeat today the conclusion of Hackett (1955, p. 350): "The present need is for more basic, pure research."

Most Relevant Studies

While most of the prior research on listening is not directly relevant to the current investigation, there are three studies which do have some relevance. Those studies, reviewed below, were conducted by Nichols (1948a), Kelly (1962), and Pflaumer (1970).

Nichols (1948a) studied various factors in listening comprehension with college freshmen. He subjected 200 students, or about

one-third of the freshman class at the University of Minnesota, to six, 10-minute informative speeches, two each day upon three separate days. The materials presented were excerpts from lectures normally given to university freshmen. Six different speech instructors presented the excerpts, which were drawn from different subject matter areas. At the end of each speech, the students took an objective test over the material presented. After completing the objective tests the subjects rated factors possibly influencing listening comprehension. They also answered a questionnaire relating items of a personal nature as well as listening habits, experiences, and training. The 20 students earning highest scores and the 20 students earning lowest scores on the battery of tests and the communication instructors of those students were individually interviewed. Standard test measures on 10 different skills and attributes were assembled for the 200 subjects, and the relationship of these skills and attributes to listening comprehension was determined by computing correlations between the standard test measures and the scores earned on the listening test battery.

The specific purpose of the Nichols (1948a) study was to identify factors influencing classroom listening comprehension. Nichols found it to be related to fairly definite skills and habits, to general intelligence, to particular facets of intelligence, and to certain factors of mental set which were not precisely delineated by the study. Nichols' interviews with the top and bottom scorers yielded conclusions that were published in an article which called the findings "the ten worst listening habits of the American people" (Nichols, 1962, p. 8). Several years later, Nichols (1962) claimed that others had repeated his study and had come to the same essential conclusion;

listening training should replace the bad listening habits with their counterpart skills.

Kelly (1962) studied the actual listening behavior and attitudes of 31 industrial supervisors. First, he administered a lecture-and-testing instrument called the "Purdue Listening Inventory." The 30-item multiple choice test was a "surprise" test given after the supervisors heard his 30-minute "guest lecture" over general semantics. The questions were designed to test recall of facts and retention of main points in the lecture. Then Kelly had a 30 minute interview with each person, giving him or her a subjective "listening demeanor" score. These scores were ranked and compared to the following: OTIS Mental Ability test scores, Brown-Carlson and STEP listen test scores, a personality inventory, ratings of supervisory effectiveness made by the plant manager and personnel director, ratings of listening performance made by employees directly under their supervision, and other researcher-designed data-gathering instruments.

Kelly (1962) concluded that personality factors were more closely related to listening behavior (measured by a "surprise" listening test) than to listening ability (as measured by advance notice of a listening test). "Good" listeners, as measured by Kelly's test of actual listening behavior, appeared to be more emotionally and mentally stable than "poor" listeners. All listening tests correlated negatively with employee ratings of supervisory listening behavior. Interviewer rankings of supervisors' "listening demeanor" appeared to differentiate general communication behavior, rather than anything called "listening." In general, supervisors felt they listened best with their boss and worst with members of an audience (Kelly, 1962).

Neither of the standardized tests measured anything related to the employees' perceived evaluations of their supervisor's listening behaviors (Kelly, 1962). All correlations between the test scores and the item "my supervisor listens with interest" were negative. The most important kind of "listening" for supervisors was probably of the "human relations" or "empathic" type, rather than the "factual recall" type found in most listening tests. It appeared to Kelly that listening skills would vary with the situation. All the results supported the conclusion that there may not be any single, identifiable phenomenon known as "listening ability," although a person could manifest listening attitudes in numerous ways (Kelly, 1962). When supervisors blamed the listener for communication breakdowns, the main reasons given were: he just doesn't pay attention; as a rule, the speaker knows his facts; if the listener doesn't get it, he should go to the speaker; the listener is uninterested (Kelly, 1962).

Pflaumer (1968, as cited in Pflaumer, 1970) collected key elements of listening into a 95-item Q-sort in which 23 university students were asked to describe themselves as they actually listen. They were also asked to describe the ideal listener. The subjects were then given the Brown-Carlson Comprehension Test. The results indicated very little correlation between the test results and their self-description.

Later, Pflaumer (1970) studied personality correlates of effective listening at Ohio State University using 106 high school, college, and adult students on a tri-level socioeconomic scale. The subjects took the Schutz FIRO-B Test of Personality and then described their own listening and personality characteristics through

sorting a 64-item structured Q-sort of two parts. One part included 32 items based on the theory constructed from Monaghan's TAFIC Model of Personality. The second part contained items representing four listening styles defined in Pflaumer's master's thesis (Pflaumer, 1968, as cited in Pflaumer, 1970). Conclusions indicated "no apparent difference found between male and female respondents or between socio-economic cells, i.e., students to adults, within the groups tested" (Pflaumer, 1970, p. 83). The results from the FIRO-B indicated very little correlation or predictive value compared to the results of the Q-sort.

Theoretic Rationale and Research Questions

Listening research has so far focused primarily on students in classroom situations. Listening has usually been conceptualized as comprehension (Kelly, 1962), and with the partial exception of Kelly, people have generally ignored the perception of listening. Since human relations may be affected as much by perceptions of listening as by actual listening, it seems that more research is needed to clearly define listening and the factors which affect perceptions of it. Through more research, problem areas of listening may be pinpointed. Then the behaviors that bother speakers most can be corrected. In this way, receivers can do something about negatively perceived behaviors that cause them to be judged as ineffective listeners. This knowledge could help people communicate more completely in their social and private lives by identifying listening behaviors which are important to communication success. Educators, trainers, and businesspersons should also find this information of help in

deciding what factors are important to use as behavioral objectives in communication training and in making performance appraisals. Heretofore, training has been based on listening comprehension and recall skills which may not be relevant to actual listening requirements at work. Since business is tied together by communication, the effectiveness of the spoken word hinges not only on how people talk but also on how they listen and how their listening behavior is perceived. In order to discover what behaviors people in the working world judge as evidence of effective listening, one must ask them what they perceive as important manifestations of effective or ineffective listening in their receivers. We can get this information by using the critical incident methodology, used in many business settings since the 1940s (Stano, 1977). To the writer's knowledge, this technique has not been used in listening research. This technique assures that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated by preconceptions of the researcher and various writers in the area of listening. The critical incident method, being nonselective, should help us develop specific behavioral patterns and significant categories of effective and ineffective listening behaviors.

Consequently, this investigation was designed as a critical incident investigation in two actual business organizations. The investigation focused on two research questions:

1. What are the critical factors which influence perceptions of effective listening and ineffective listening among adults in work environments?
2. Are perceptions of listening in work environments affected by selected demographic variables such as sex, management-staff relationship, and employing organization?

Answers to these questions may help us better understand and explain good and poor listening as perceived by others. To some extent we may be able to predict how certain behaviors will be interpreted by those to whom we communicate in an organizational context, as well as learn what is most important to them in the listening situations that arise on the job.

CHAPTER II

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceived characteristics of effective and ineffective listening in organizational settings. The importance of listening, the review of literature, the theoretic rationale, and the research questions were presented in Chapter I.

This chapter includes a description of the methods and procedures used to collect and treat the data in order to answer the major questions. These procedures are described chronologically and include:

1. Construction of Questionnaire
2. Procedures
 - a. Selection of Organizations
 - b. Questionnaire Distribution
3. Subjects
4. Analysis
5. Conclusions

Construction of Questionnaire

Questionnaire Sheets

The style of questionnaire followed the critical incident format

outlined by Flanagan (1954). This procedure allows the researcher to identify favorable and unfavorable behaviors in an objective fashion. This research report makes no effort to discuss the critical incident technique in great detail. The method has been described in some detail by Flanagan (1949a, 1949b, 1951, 1954). The specific procedures followed in this study are described in detail later in this chapter.

Subjects were asked to describe actual real-world incidents of listening. They were asked to describe one incident of effective listening and one incident of ineffective listening. Subjects were given the boundary words "effective" and "ineffective" as a frame of reference. The key terms were selected because they did not seem to pass a harsh value judgment on the behavior as would the terms "good" or "poor" listening, or "did" or "did not" listen. Thus, the final copy of the questionnaire (Appendix A) read as follows:

In the space below, please record an example of what you believe to be a time when another person in this organization listened to you effectively. In your example, try to answer these questions:

1. What were the circumstances surrounding the incident?
2. What exactly did the individual do that was so effective?
3. How is this incident an example of effective listening?

The questionnaire for an "ineffective" critical incident was identical to the above, except the word "effective" was changed to "ineffective" (see Appendix B).

Cover Letter and Demographic Sheet

The cover letter requested the subjects' assistance in order to improve communication in their organization. The letter promised that

later in the year a listening workshop would be held and their responses might be used in planning that workshop. They were asked to put their names on the survey so the researcher would know who had completed the survey, but she promised that individual responses would not be reported to management or workshop participants. Several basic demographic items were also requested: sex, age, education, job length, and management-staff relationship in their organization. A copy of the cover letter and demographic sheets is included in Appendix C.

Procedures

After constructing the critical incident questionnaires, two organizations were selected for study. Questionnaires were distributed in each organization.

Selection of Organizations

The selection of a sample for this investigation was guided by four criteria:

1. The participant organizations had to be within a 75-mile radius of Oklahoma State University to facilitate collecting the data and conducting the workshops.
2. The participant organizations had to have more than 50 full-time employees to assure an adequate number of critical incidents.
3. The management of the organizations had to be willing to endorse the project.
4. The management of the organizations had to be willing to let both management and staff be used in the study.

The employees of the Stillwater Medical Center and the First National Bank, both of Stillwater, Oklahoma, fulfilled all criteria. Both organizational contacts volunteered that listening was a major problem area in their organizations.

The researcher met separately with the bank president and medical center personnel director to explain the purpose and needs of the study. A letter was written to the medical center administrator (see Appendix D) offering a listening workshop in exchange for participation in the study. The medical center administrative staff indicated a willingness to help if the workshop could be held within two weeks. A minor change was made in the introductory paragraph of the demographic sheet to adapt it to the time when the workshop was held (see Appendix E).

Questionnaire Distribution

The bank president presented the listening project at a monthly meeting of employees. The researcher and major adviser were introduced to the employees as communication consultants who would be presenting a listening workshop for the bank later in the year. All employees were requested to fully cooperate.

Each person was handed a three page questionnaire with an envelope attached that had his or her name on the corner. The major adviser explained the importance of the survey and stressed the confidentiality of it. To bolster this claim, the employees were instructed to seal their forms in the envelope and place the envelope in a large folder located on the desk of a fellow employee. A list of

employees was on the envelope so they could mark off their names when they turned in their questionnaires.

The instructions were then read aloud while the bank employees followed along on the demographic sheet (see Appendix C). The major adviser explained that this information was needed to see if any patterns developed among different groups of people by age, sex, job responsibility, or length of employment.

Next, the directions on the critical incident questionnaire form were read aloud and then the researcher read one example of a critical incident of effective listening and one of ineffective listening (see Appendix F). No one voiced any questions on how to complete the survey. The subjects were told that the incident did not have to be of major importance, but something that might have occurred during a normal working day.

Over the next few days the researcher went through the same explanation process with 13 employees who missed the meeting. On the fifth day the collection envelopes were checked and people who had not turned in their forms were visited and requested to complete their forms by the next afternoon. This request was repeated over the next two weeks until all forms were turned in.

At the medical center the method of distribution deviated only in the setting. All medical center employees were invited by the administration to attend one of two listening workshop sessions. While introducing the workshop leaders, the staff development officer asked the employees to cooperate in a survey incorporated into the workshop. They were told it would help them apply the information they would be learning as well as help the consultants plan future workshops. After

a brief introductory lecture from the consultants on the importance of listening, the questionnaire was distributed and explained in the same way as at the bank. All the employees present completed the surveys at that time and turned them in before taking a break. The break was planned to give positive reinforcement for the task as well as to give flexible time for completing the assignment.

Subjects

Participating in the study were 69 employees at the bank and 46 at the medical center. One hundred and fifteen questionnaires were handed out and 100% were returned. Out of these, 106 questionnaires contained 200 usable critical incidents dealing with listening in the work environment. Some 10 separate incidents, equally divided between effective and ineffective listening incidents, were unusable; eight of them from seven bank employees and two incidents from one medical center employee. The incidents were thrown out because the researcher and a faculty adviser judged them to be unusable for the following reasons: 1) they were not about the topic of listening, but on things such as courtesy, family communication policies, cooperation, or lack of understanding; 2) they said ineffective listening was justified so it could not be determined if they meant the elements to be effective or ineffective; 3) they were not relevant to the organization where they were now employed; 4) they were about a time when they themselves listened effectively.

All employees in the study were of the white race, except for one black female manager--a teller at the bank. Of the bank's 72 employees, three were ill and could not participate, 61 wrote usable critical

incidents, two wrote unusable critical incidents, and six chose not to write any incidents. Forty-nine people wrote two usable incidents, and 12 wrote one usable incident. Of those 12, seven made no comment on why they did not write anything. The other five said they were new and inexperienced with ineffective listening there, or they had not run across any problems yet. Of those 61 who wrote usable incidents, 15 were male and 46 were female. Eighteen were management and 43 were staff. They had spent an average of .64 years in college, but their range of education extended from high school graduates (27 had high school diplomas only) to six years of college education. The median was one semester of college completed. They had worked at the bank an average of 2.7 years, though the median was three years and the range was from three days to 35 years. There were 32 under 30 years of age, 15 between 31 and 45 years of age, 11 between 46 and 60 years of age, and four were over 60 years of age. The median range was under 30 years old.

At the medical center 46 employees participated and each wrote two incidents. Forty-five wrote two usable critical incidents. Of those 45, all were of the white race. Six were male and 39 were female. Twenty-three were management and 22 were staff. They had gone to college an average of 3.2 years, but their range of education extended from high school diplomas only (five people) to eight years of college education. The median was four years of college. They had worked at the medical center an average of 2.6 years, but the range was from one day to 10 years and the median was two years. There were 22 people under 30 years old, 14 from 31-45 years old, seven from

46-60 years old, and two over 60 years old. The median age was in the 31-45 year old range.

Analysis

The analysis of the returned critical incident questionnaires proceeded through several stages. First, the researcher read through the examples given, underlining major elements of specific listening factors mentioned under "what the listener did that was effective/ineffective" behaviors. Two days later the researcher reread the incidents after having time to digest what was being said by the whole group. Categories of behavior began to emerge.

Next, each element of the incident was written in one sentence on a 5 x 7 white note card, keeping the language as near to the original wording as possible. Incidents of effective or ineffective listening as described by the respondents contained from one to seven elements. Each card contained information of the writer's sex, organizational status, organization, and whether the incident described was considered effective or ineffective. The number of elements or behaviors mentioned in the original story was written on the card, and this particular element's order in the story was also recorded (i.e., the third of five elements was written "3/5").

Many of the cards held similar incidents using slightly different terms. Working with all 361 element cards, the researcher sorted the cards into stacks of similar behaviors. Cards mentioning "effective" or "ineffective" listening factors were placed in the same stack if they appeared to be about the same behavior. Forty categories emerged (see Appendix G) and were given one sentence titles

and an identifying numeral representing the common theme. These summaries attempted to extract the heart of the behavior being discussed, phrased in a neutral, positive, and socially acceptable way. Each element card was placed in one category. The category numeral was penciled on the back of each element card.

Given the problem of wording and lack of clarity of one isolated element, many discretionary decisions had to be made in the sorting. To be sure that distinct behaviors had been discovered, to drop repetitive categories, and to check on appropriateness of category labels, the help of five volunteer sorters was sought.

Volunteer sorters were adults from different professional fields, including a computer systems analyst, a speech communication instructor, a registered nurse, a social worker, and an organizational consultant, in that order. Since the sheer number of incidents seemed prohibitive for volunteer sorters, a research assistant drew three cards at random from each of the 37 categories with three or more cards. All the cards from the three categories containing one or two cards were used, yielding a sample of 116 cards out of the original 361.

The sorters were given 40 pink file cards, with one category label typed at the top of each. They were asked to match the element cards with the best category label by dealing the cards into 40 stacks. The card was to be put into the category that best fits the statement or was just the reverse of the statement (i.e., "took the time to listen" would also contain element cards that said some listener did not take the time to listen). The sorters were not told how many cards were expected in each category or that the researcher's categorization number was penciled on the back. They were encouraged to improve the

list of categories by making new ones, rewording the labels, or combining overlapping categories. It was reasoned that there would be considerable agreement if the researcher had developed unambiguous category themes and had correctly sorted all the identifiable listening behaviors. If discrepancies arose that were not easily negotiable, a phrasing fault might be indicated, or perhaps too many elements were inadvertently put into one sentence. The sorters would note such problems for discussion after the sorting was completed.

After the first individual had dealt out all 116 cards, he and the researcher checked each category to see whether they agreed or disagreed in the categorization. The number of times of initial disagreement between sorter and researcher was counted and a Scott's Pi reliability coefficient (which will be discussed later in this chapter) was calculated (Scott, 1955). Each dissimilarity was examined and each person explained to the other why he had placed the item where he did. This process resulted in several changes, such as the combination of several previously separated categories and the rewording of a few general summary statements. At the end of the error-examination session, 100% agreement was reached regarding the language of the category labels and the sorting of behaviors into categories.

The second sorter was given the new, improved category system worked out with the first sorter. The same procedures explained above were followed and wording and card assignments were again revised and categories approved. The third, fourth, and fifth sorters received the succeeding revisions of the material and went through the identical procedure.

When the above process was carried out, the first sorter had several cards not in piles because he had forgotten to reverse the categories mentally to handle negative elements. After he was reminded to do this, he easily sorted through the remaining cards. After checking on his category placement, the researcher found 31 cards that were in different places. The corresponding percentage of agreement was .73 and the Scott's Pi was .72. The outcome of the discussion with the sorter was the rewording of three category statements that used the verb "appeared." This word was changed to more definite terms. Five element cards were reworded. Three element cards needed to be divided to make a total of seven new cards as the sentences on the original cards seemed to contain two or more elements, making the cards justifiably fit into two or three distinct categories. The researcher had the advantage (or disadvantage) of remembering the complete story which influenced her card placement. Two categories (7, 13) were deleted by putting these elements into other categories that would fit them just as well. After the negotiation, some elements were reassigned to a new category. After this sorting, 11 cards were in categories different from those originally assigned by the researcher.

With the cards not totaling 120 (rather than 116) because of split element cards, the second sorter made 29 changes in the card placements. The percentage of agreement was .76 and the Scott's Pi increased to .75. Three element cards were reworded and four other cards were divided up into nine element cards to better fit into distinct categories. Now the total number of cards was up to 125, where it stayed through the rest of the five sorters. No categories were

added or dropped. The sorter agreed with the category wording changes worked out with sorter number one. Thirteen element cards now had new category numbers and some category statements were better worded to be more positive and non-sexist.

The third sorter made 21 differing category assignments, making the percentage of agreement rise to .83 and the Scott's Pi to .83. Two element cards were reworded to add more information from the original questionnaires. The researcher agreed with the sorter that six cards should go into other categories. In the fourth sorting, the sorter also had trouble reversing her thinking to accommodate the category labels to the negative statement cards to be classified. This was explained once more and the cards were then more easily sorted. The researcher and sorter diverged on the assignment of 14 cards and, in this case, the percentage of agreement was .89 and Scott's Pi was .88. This time only three cards changed categories. In the last check for category completeness and clarity, the fifth sorter generated only 12 discrepancies, so the percentage of agreement was .90 and a Scott's Pi value of .90 was obtained. Only one card was changed to another category, being put back where the researcher had placed it originally.

Based on an inspection of the changes in the percentage of agreement and the Scott's Pi through the five stages of sorting, it is readily seen that the cross-checking procedures were successful. The percentage of agreement moved from .73 to .90, and the Scott's Pi from .72 to .90. While the Pi's do not reach unity at the end, they continue to ascend and one possible explanation for this is that the labels became clearer and that more unique behaviors had been

legitimately differentiated. No doubt some inherent problems remained, but, given the cumbersome task of placing 116 to 125 cards "in a very large number of slots, coefficients in the area of .90 are more than acceptable" (Stano, 1977, p. 45).

As a final check for completeness, two additional adult professionals were used to sort the other 245 cards left out of the original sorting, because of the chance that the sample of element cards inadvertently omitted important or divergent element types. The sixth and seventh sorters were a real estate manager and an electronics field representative.

To not overlook the slight risk of omitting any other behaviors, the sixth sorter divided 122 cards that had not been used in the original sample of element cards. There were 23 changes in her sorting, making the percentage of agreement .81 and the Scott's Pi .80. After discussion, one element card was thrown out after being judged ambiguously worded, thus leaving 121 cards in the sorting. Two element cards were divided, making four different cards, and a new total of 123 cards. It was agreed to change nine cards to different category numbers. A seventh volunteer sorted the last 123 previously unsorted cards, which resulted in 34 misplaced items, 11 of which were put into new categories. The resulting percentage of agreement was .72 and Scott's Pi was .71 before negotiation. These final two sorters discussed and negotiated changes with the researcher only for a final check on clarity in the researcher's mind of how adults comprehended the verbal descriptions of listening effectiveness and ineffectiveness. One hundred percent agreement was obtained after negotiation. No new categories were found. On the basis of the sortings by the fifth,

sixth, and seventh sorter, each of the 371 elements was assigned to one of the 38 categories.

Following negotiation with the sorters, each category was examined to see whether the elements had originated from an incident of effective or ineffective listening, from a male or female respondent, from staff or management, and from bank or medical center. A summary table was prepared describing the final adjusted list of 38 categories (see Chapter III).

The responses were also divided on the basis of various demographic variables. Tables comparing various groups (e.g., men vs. women) were prepared and are included in Chapter III.

Conclusion

This investigation was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the listening process within an organizational context. Rather than trying to verify the prescriptions for effective listening dictated by other authors, a critical incident approach was used. This research method maximized the potential of revealing new variables and guidelines. Once preliminary sets of listener behaviors had been categorized, an attempt was made to assess the relative importance of the behaviors to various sub-groups within the sample. In Chapter III the findings are presented.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter are the findings of the research study. The divisions of the chapter include:

1. Summary of the Study
2. Research Questions and Results
3. Conclusion

Summary of the Study

Adults working at the First National Bank of Stillwater, Oklahoma, and the Stillwater Medical Center were used as subjects in this study. Results are based on a total of 200 critical incidents from 106 respondents. All respondents completed a demographic sheet and wrote one or two critical incidents describing effective listening and ineffective listening as experienced by them as speakers in the course of a normal working day in their present organization. These critical incidents were examined and the individual elements influencing the subjects' perceptions of listening were divided into one-sentence descriptive statements on 361 file cards. The elements were placed into categories of similar elements and 40 separate categories emerged (see Appendix F).

Five adult sorters, one after another, divided a 116-element sample of the 361 elements among the 40 categories to evaluate the set of categories. Any changes the sorters made were discussed and changes were negotiated until near unity of decision was achieved, as reported in Chapter II. Some element cards were divided to make two separate element cards instead of one, so the study ended with a total of 371 element cards which were all placed in categories. Two categories were dropped, leaving 38, but to reduce the possibility of confusion, the original category numbers were retained, i.e., the 38 categories were numbered 1 through 40, with categories 7 and 13 omitted. The final 38 categories and the number of elements assigned to each are reported, as they answer each of the research questions in the next section.

Research Questions and Results

The research problems were: 1) to determine the critical factors which influence perceptions of effective and ineffective listening among adults in work environments, and 2) to see if perceptions of listening in work environments are affected by selected demographic variables such as sex, management of staff position, and employing organization. The results relevant to each of the questions are discussed below.

Critical Factors Influencing Perceptions of Effective and Ineffective Listening in Work Environments

The 38 statements found in Table I are those factors which adults used to describe effective and ineffective listening in their working

TABLE I
LISTENING FACTORS IN WORK ENVIRONMENTS

Category Number	Category Description	Times Mentioned
37	The listener followed my directions or implemented my suggestions.	33
9	The listener maintained eye contact with me.	32
6	The listener gave nonverbal feedback that showed me he was listening.	24
14	The listener was attentive.	24
35	The listener seemed interested in helping me.	15
8	The listener stopped physical movements that interfered with listening.	14
27	The listener seemed interested and concerned about me.	14
33	The listener remembered what I had said in the past.	14
12	The listener ignored or didn't react to my message.	13
32	The listener asked me questions.	13
18	The listener appeared to be open-minded.	10
23	The listener showed he understood.	10
31	The listener answered my questions.	10
36	The listener tried to get changes made or the results I requested.	10
10	The listener listened quietly while I talked first.	9
11	The listener started talking to other people while we were talking.	9
17	The listener did not interrupt me.	9
29	The listener exchanged ideas and/or feelings with me.	9
30	The listener reacted to my unspoken need(s).	9
5	The listener nodded his head.	8
21	The listener listened, though I knew he was busy with other activities.	8
34	The listener acknowledged that he heard me by what he said.	8
3	The listener showed enthusiasm.	7
26	The listener seemed interested in my topic.	7
15	The listener stayed on the subject I began.	5
20	The listener took the time to listen.	5
39	The listener praised me.	5
40	The listener gave me advice.	5
1	The listener misunderstood my words.	4
4	The listener showed he was listening through his facial expressions.	4
19	The listener showed empathy, that he could feel what I felt.	4
22	The listener was prepared to or did take notes.	4
28	The listener let me know how he felt from his voice tone.	3
2	The listener made up his mind before the conversation was finished.	3
16	The listener terminated the conversation before I finished talking.	3
25	The listener repeated the words or ideas I used.	3
38	The listener thanked me.	3
24	The listener was distracted by certain words.	1
TOTAL		371

environments. The 38 factors describe the perception of the speaker as he or she talked to a listener in the course of the working day. Each category was given a separate numeral. The number of elements contained in each category was tabled, representing the number of file cards sorted into each category.

Several categories were similar in meaning, but were seen as distinctive enough to be worded and categorized separately. Some of the categories indicated immediate verbal and nonverbal reactions by the listener. The verbal reactions may be in response to the speaker or may reflect the mood of the situation or the listener. The nonverbal elements dealt with the face, eyes, hands, general body movements, and other activities such as appearing attentive, enthusiastic, and interested. Other categories focused on perceptions of the listener's mental activity or on overt follow-up behaviors that the speaker saw as evidence of effective or ineffective listening.

The factors in Table I varied in the frequency with which they were mentioned. The mean number of elements sorted into each category was 9.76. Some categories included more than 30 elements while others included less than five. Four categories stand apart as including more elements than other categories: two categories (37 and 9) included more than 30 elements and two other categories (6 and 14) included 24 elements each. All other categories contained 15 or fewer elements.

These 38 critical factors were derived from all usable critical incidents, including both effective and ineffective listening. Specific categories contained both positively and negatively stated elements so, for example, a category such as "gave nonverbal feedback" (6) included statements that the listener gave nonverbal feedback and statements

that the listener did not give nonverbal feedback. In order to explore possible differences between types of listening, the elements were separated into two groups depending on the type (effective or ineffective) of incident from which each element was derived. In general those elements from examples of effective listening were statements of positive behaviors while those from ineffective listening were either statements of negative behaviors (e.g., category 12) or statements that positive behaviors were absent (e.g., did not give nonverbal feedback).

Table II contains the list of categories which summarize elements from stories of effective listening. There were 98 usable incidents of effective listening containing 223 elements. When speakers described effective listening they used elements which fell into 31 categories. Seven categories are omitted from Table II since they did not contain any elements derived from incidents of effective listening (i.e., categories 1, 2, 11, 15, 16, 24, 28).

The range of element frequency was from 24 to two with the mean being 7.19 elements. Some categories contained more than 19 elements and many had less than five. The top three categories were clearly separated from the other categories by the frequency of their use.

In Table III is the list of behaviors derived from critical incidents of ineffective listening. There were 96 usable incidents containing 148 elements. Elements fell into 30 of the 38 categories. Eight categories were omitted since they contained no elements (i.e., categories 19, 22, 25, 29, 32, 38, 39, 40). The range of element frequency in Table III is from 11 to one. The mean number of elements in each category was 4.93. It should be remembered that the positively worded categories such as "followed by directions or suggestions" (37)

TABLE II
FACTORS MENTIONED IN EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Category Number	Category Description	Times Mentioned
9	Maintained eye contact	24
37	Followed my directions or suggestions	22
14	Appeared attentive	19
6	Gave nonverbal feedback	14
32	Asked questions	13
35	Seemed interested in helping me	11
27	Seemed interested and concerned about me	10
29	Exchanged ideas and/or feelings	9
5	Nodded	7
10	Listened quietly while I talked first	7
30	Reacted to my unspoken need(s)	7
23	Showed he understood	6
31	Answered my questions	6
8	Stopped physical movements that interfered	5
18	Appeared open-minded	5
26	Seemed interested in my topic	5
33	Remembered what I had said in the past	5
39	Praised me	5
40	Gave me advice	5
3	Showed enthusiasm	4
19	Showed empathy	4
22	Was prepared to or did take notes	4
34	Verbally acknowledged he heard	4
4	Facial expressions showed listening	3
17	Did not interrupt	3
20	Took time to listen	3
25	Repeated words or ideas I used	3
36	Tried to get changes or results I requested	3
38	Thanked me	3
12	Ignored or did not react to my message	2
21	Listened though I knew he was busy	2
	TOTAL	223

TABLE III
FACTORS MENTIONED IN INEFFECTIVE LISTENING

Category Number	Category Description	Times Mentioned
12	Ignored or did not react to my message	11
37	Followed my directions or suggestions	11
6	Gave nonverbal feedback	10
8	Stopped physical movements that interfered	9
11	Started talking to other people	9
33	Remembered what I had said in the past	9
9	Maintained eye contact	8
36	Tried to get changes or results I requested	7
17	Did not interrupt	6
21	Listened though I knew he was busy	6
14	Appeared attentive	5
15	Stayed on the subject I began	5
18	Appeared open-minded	5
1	Misunderstood my words	4
23	Showed he understood	4
27	Seemed interested and concerned about me	4
31	Answered my questions	4
34	Verbally acknowledged he heard	4
35	Seemed interested in helping me	4
2	Made up his mind before the conversation ended	3
3	Showed enthusiasm	3
16	Terminated the conversation before I finished	3
28	Let me know how he felt by his voice tone	3
10	Listened quietly while I talked first	2
20	Took time to listen	2
26	Seemed interested in my topic	2
30	Reacted to my unspoken need(s)	2
4	Facial expressions showed listening	1
5	Nodded	1
24	Was distracted by certain words	1
	TOTAL	148

contained primarily statements that the behavior was absent (i.e., "The listener did not follow my directions or suggestions").

When Table II and Table III are compared it is clear that many categories appear on both tables. In fact, 23 categories appear on both tables indicating that these categories contain elements derived from examples of both effective and ineffective listening. But there are at least three important differences between the two sets of results. First, positively stated categories contained positively stated elements in examples of effective listening and negatively stated elements in examples of ineffective listening. Second, there are some categories which do not appear on both tables, eight which contain elements from effective listening incidents only and seven which contain elements from ineffective listening incidents only. Third, the categories do not appear in the same rank order on the basis of the number of elements contained in each category. While category 37 is at or near the top of both tables, many categories appear at different ranks. A Spearman rank order correlation (Elzey, 1976) was calculated for the two sets of results (empty categories were treated as tied for the bottom rank) and a Spearman rho of 0.084 was obtained. This result does not differ significantly from zero.

Demographic Variables Affecting Listening in Work Environments

Using the 371 element cards, the cards were divided by sex, management or staff position, and employing organization to see if descriptions of listening in work environments were affected by selected demographic variables. The sortings of these pairs of variables are reported in Tables IV through IX.

TABLE IV
FACTORS MENTIONED BY MEN

Category Number	Category Description	Times Mentioned
37	Followed my directions or suggestions	9
14	Appeared attentive	8
6	Gave nonverbal feedback	6
33	Remembered what I had said in the past	5
3	Showed enthusiasm	3
8	Stopped physical movements that interfered	3
18	Appeared open-minded	3
29	Exchanged ideas and/or feelings	3
32	Asked questions	3
9	Maintained eye contact	2
10	Listened quietly while I talked first	2
11	Started talking to other people	2
22	Was prepared to or did take notes	2
23	Showed he understood	2
27	Seemed interested and concerned about me	2
35	Seemed interested in helping me	2
36	Tried to get changes or results I requested	2
39	Praised me	2
1	Misunderstood my words	1
2	Made up his mind before the conversation ended	1
12	Ignored or did not react to my message	1
17	Did not interrupt	1
21	Listened though I knew he was busy	1
26	Seemed interested in my topic	1
	TOTAL	67

TABLE V
CATEGORIES MENTIONED BY WOMEN

Category Number	Category Description	Times Mentioned
9	Maintained eye contact	30
37	Followed my directions or suggestions	24
6	Gave nonverbal feedback	18
14	Appeared attentive	16
35	Seemed interested in helping me	13
27	Seemed interested and concerned about me	12
12	Ignored or did not react to my message	12
8	Stopped physical movements that interfered	11
32	Asked questions	10
31	Answered my questions	10
33	Remembered what I had said in the past	9
30	Reacted to my unspoken need(s)	9
23	Showed he understood	8
36	Tried to get changes or results I requested	8
17	Did not interrupt	8
5	Nodded	8
34	Verbally acknowledged he heard	8
18	Appeared open-minded	7
10	Listened quietly while I talked first	7
11	Started talking to other people	7
21	Listened though I knew he was busy	7
29	Exchanged ideas and/or feelings	6
26	Seemed interested in my topic	6
15	Stayed on the subject I began	5
20	Took time to listen	5
40	Gave me advice	5
3	Showed enthusiasm	4
4	Facial expressions showed listening	4
19	Showed empathy	4
39	Praised me	3
1	Misunderstood my words	3
16	Terminated the conversation before I finished	3
25	Repeated words or ideas I used	3
28	Let me know how he felt by his voice tone	3
38	Thanked me	3
22	Was prepared to or did take notes	2
2	Made up his mind before the conversation ended	2
24	Was distracted by certain words	1
TOTAL		304

TABLE VI
FACTORS MENTIONED BY STAFF

Category Number	Category Description	Times Mentioned
9	Maintained eye contact	22
37	Followed my directions or suggestions	15
14	Appeared attentive	12
6	Gave nonverbal feedback	11
35	Seemed interested in helping me	11
30	Reacted to my unspoken need(s)	9
33	Remembered what I had said in the past	8
31	Answered my questions	8
12	Ignored or did not react to my message	7
8	Stopped physical movements that interfered	6
27	Seemed interested and concerned about me	6
10	Listened quietly while I talked first	6
29	Exchanged ideas and/or feelings	6
5	Nodded	6
32	Asked questions	5
18	Open-minded	5
23	Showed he understood	5
36	Tried to get changes or results I requested	5
17	Did not interrupt	5
21	Listened though I knew he was busy	5
34	Verbally acknowledged he heard	5
3	Showed enthusiasm	4
26	Seemed interested in my topic	4
20	Took time to listen	4
39	Praised me	4
11	Started talking to other people	3
15	Stayed on the subject I began	3
40	Gave me advice	3
1	Misunderstood my words	3
25	Repeated words or ideas I used	3
19	Showed empathy	2
2	Made up his mind before the conversation ended	2
38	Thanked me	2
4	Facial expressions showed listening	1
22	Was prepared to or did take notes	1
16	Terminated the conversation before I finished	1
28	Let me know how he felt by his voice tone	1
24	Was distracted by certain words	1
	TOTAL	210

TABLE VII
FACTORS MENTIONED BY MANAGERS

Category Number	Category Description	Times Mentioned
37	Followed my directions or suggestions	18
6	Gave nonverbal feedback	13
14	Appeared attentive	12
9	Maintained eye contact	10
8	Stopped physical movements that interfered	8
27	Seemed interested and concerned about me	8
32	Asked questions	8
33	Remembered what I had said in the past	6
12	Ignored or did not react to my message	6
11	Started talking to other people	6
18	Appeared open-minded	5
23	Showed he understood	5
36	Tried to get changes or results I requested	5
35	Seemed interested in helping me	4
17	Did not interrupt	4
10	Listened quietly while I talked first	3
29	Exchanged ideas and/or feelings	3
21	Listened though I knew he was busy	3
34	Verbally acknowledged he heard	3
3	Showed enthusiasm	3
26	Seemed interested in my topic	3
4	Facial expressions showed listening	3
22	Was prepared to or did take notes	3
31	Answered my questions	2
5	Nodded	2
15	Stayed on the subject I began	2
40	Gave me advice	2
19	Showed empathy	2
16	Terminated the conversation before I finished	2
28	Let me know how he felt by his voice tone	2
20	Took time to listen	1
39	Praised me	1
1	Misunderstood my words	1
2	Made up his mind before the conversation ended	1
38	Thanked me	1
	TOTAL	161

TABLE VIII
FACTORS MENTIONED BY BANK PERSONNEL

Category Number	Category Description	Times Mentioned
9	Maintained eye contact	22
37	Followed my directions or suggestions	17
6	Gave nonverbal feedback	16
35	Seemed interested in helping me	9
33	Remembered what I had said in the past	9
10	Listened quietly while I talked first	9
14	Appeared attentive	8
36	Tried to get changes or results I requested	8
29	Exchanged ideas and/or feelings	8
8	Stopped physical movements that interfered	7
12	Ignored or did not react to my message	7
31	Answered my questions	7
27	Seemed interested and concerned about me	6
30	Reacted to my unspoken need(s)	6
32	Asked questions	5
18	Appeared open-minded	5
17	Did not interrupt	5
21	Listened though I knew he was busy	5
34	Verbally acknowledged he heard	5
3	Showed enthusiasm	5
5	Nodded	4
15	Stayed on the subject I began	4
26	Seemed interested in my topic	4
23	Showed he understood	3
11	Started talking to other people	3
20	Took time to listen	3
40	Gave me advice	3
4	Facial expressions showed listening	3
22	Was prepared to or did take notes	3
38	Thanked me	3
39	Praised me	2
19	Showed empathy	2
2	Made up his mind before the conversation ended	2
25	Repeated words or ideas I used	2
1	Misunderstood my words	1
16	Terminated the conversation before I finished	1
28	Let me know how he felt by his voice tone	1
24	Was distracted by certain words	1
	TOTAL	214

TABLE IX
FACTORS MENTIONED BY MEDICAL CENTER PERSONNEL

Category Number	Category Description	Times Mentioned
37	Followed my directions or suggestions	16
14	Appeared attentive	16
9	Maintained eye contact	10
6	Gave nonverbal feedback	8
27	Seemed interested and concerned about me	8
32	Asked questions	8
8	Stopped physical movements that interfered	7
23	Showed he understood	7
11	Started talking to other people	6
12	Ignored or did not react to my message	6
35	Seemed interested in helping me	6
13	Appeared open-minded	5
33	Remembered what I had said in the past	5
5	Nodded	4
17	Did not interrupt	4
1	Misunderstood my words	3
21	Listened though I knew he was busy	3
26	Seemed interested in my topic	3
30	Reacted to my unspoken need(s)	3
31	Answered my questions	3
34	Verbally acknowledged he heard	3
39	Praised me	3
3	Showed enthusiasm	2
16	Terminated the conversation before I finished	2
19	Showed empathy	2
20	Took time to listen	2
28	Let me know how he felt by his voice tone	2
36	Tried to get changes or results I requested	2
40	Gave me advice	2
2	Made up his mind before the conversation ended	1
4	Facial expressions showed listening	1
15	Stayed on the subject I began	1
22	Was prepared to or did take notes	1
25	Repeated words or ideas I used	1
29	Exchanged ideas and/or feelings	1
TOTAL		157

Factors Mentioned by Women and Men

Table IV shows the factors listed by 21 men who participated in the study. The critical incidents written by men yielded 67 elements and these were classified in 22 of the 38 categories. Fourteen listening factors were not mentioned by men (i.e., categories 4, 5, 15, 16, 19, 20, 24, 25, 28, 30, 31, 34, 38, 40). The frequency range of the elements was from nine to one.

Table V indicates that the 304 elements produced by the 85 female participants fell into all 38 of the categories. Females mentioned some categories more than 16 times and some less than five.

When Tables IV and V are compared it is obvious that women generated elements falling into more categories than did the men. This may be due in part to the smaller number of men in the sample and also in part to the fact that women used more elements per story (3.58 as compared to 3.19). It is also apparent that there is some difference in the rankings of the categories. While the rankings are positively correlated ($\rho = .58$, $p = .01$) there are several differences in the rankings of individual categories. Several categories ranked higher in frequency of mention among women. For example, category 35 (seemed interested in helping me) ranked fifth among women but fourteenth among men. Other categories ranked higher in frequency of mention among men. Category 33 (remembered what I had said in the past) ranked fourth among men and eleventh (11.5) among women. Category 3 (showed enthusiasm) ranked seventh among men and twenty-eighth among women.

Factors Mentioned by Staff and Management

The 371 elements were also divided on the basis of management or staff position. The sorting of the element cards were viewed in this way to see if effective or ineffective listening was described differently according to job level.

The factors mentioned by the 65 staff persons are shown in Table VI. The staff generated 210 elements in their descriptions of critical incidents, and these elements were assigned to all of the 38 categories. Some categories included more than 15 elements and others less than five.

The factors containing elements generated by 41 managers are listed in Table VII. Managers' stories contained 161 elements and these were placed in 35 categories. Three categories are omitted since they contained no elements (i.e., categories 24, 25, 30). Some categories included more than ten elements, and others contained less than three.

Comparing Table VI and Table VII reveals that more categories were needed to include elements generated by staff members than were needed to include elements generated by managers. This may be due in part to the larger number of staff members included in the sample. The difference in numbers was partially offset, however, by the fact that managers tended to include more elements per individual story (3.96 as compared to 3.23).

There are also both similarities and differences in the two rankings of the categories. Though not in the same order, the top four categories (6, 9, 14, 37) for management and staff are the same. Also, several categories (e.g., 2, 16, 19, 28, and 38) were among the least-mentioned categories of both tables. Overall the correlation between

the two sets of rankings was significantly positive ($\rho = .650$, $p = .01$). But there were also some obvious differences in ranks. Category 35 (seemed interested in helping me) ranked fourth (4.5) among staff members and fourteenth (14.5) among managers. Category 11 (started talking to other people) ranked ninth among managers and twenty-eighth among staff members.

Factors Mentioned by Bank and Medical
Center Personnel

The element cards were also tabled according to the employing organization of each subject in the study. Table VIII gives the results from the 61 employees at the bank. The 214 elements fell into all of the 38 categories developed in the study. Some categories contained more than 16 elements and many contained less than four elements.

Table IX lists the categories containing the 157 elements generated by the 45 medical center employees. Their elements fell into 35 categories, omitting categories 10, 24, and 38. Some categories contained more than 10 elements from medical center personnel, while many contained less than four elements.

When Tables VII and IX are compared it is clear that there is a good deal of similarity in the ranks of categories. Several categories (e.g., 2, 25, 20, 40, 37) appear at the same or similar rank and there is a significant positive correlation between the two sets of ranks ($\rho = .527$, $p = .01$).

There were also some differences in the ranks of some categories. Several categories were ranked more highly by bank personnel. Category 10 (listened quietly while I talked first) ranked fifth at the bank

but was not mentioned and ranked thirty-seventh at the medical center. Category 29 (exchanged ideas and/or feelings) ranked eighth at the bank and thirty-second (32.5) at the medical center. Category 36 (tried to get changes or results I requested) ranked eighth at the bank and twenty-sixth at the medical center. Other categories were ranked more highly by medical center personnel. Category 23 (showed he understood) ranked seventh (7.5) at the medical center and twenty-seventh at the bank. Category 11 (started talking to other people) ranked ninth (9.5) at the medical center and twenty-seventh at the bank. Category 1 (misunderstood my words) ranked nineteenth at the medical center and thirty-sixth (36.5) at the bank.

Conclusion

The findings of this critical incident study on listening factors in work environments were presented in nine summary tables. Categories were listed in descending order by the number of elements contained in each category. Spearman rho correlations were calculated to compare the frequencies of mention by rank across demographic variables.

Factors derived from the incidents of both effective and ineffective listening were in Table I. The incidents included 371 elements which could be classified into 38 categories illustrating the main listening behaviors described. These elements were divided in Tables II and III according to the classification of their story of origin, whether it was relating an effective or ineffective listening encounter. The next six tables helped to visualize how various demographic variables affected the perception of listening in work environments. Tables IV and V listed elements mentioned by men and women, respectively.

Tables VI and VII divided the elements by staff and management. The last two tables, VIII and IX, separated the responses of bank and medical center personnel. Interpretations and conclusions are given in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Listening is an important, but not well researched, part of successful communication in business, society, and education. Research is needed on subjects other than listening comprehension. Research is also needed that deals with situations other than listening as a member of an audience to a formal speaker, and with participants other than college students. This study sought to determine the factors constituting effective and ineffective listening as perceived by adults in working environments. To derive these factors and categories the critical incident method was used.

Discussion of Results

Research Question One

The first research question was: what are the critical factors which influence perceptions of effective and ineffective listening among adults in work environments? The first set of results relevant to this question is the list of 38 categories found in Table I (see Chapter III). Several conclusions can be drawn on the basis of Table I.

First, listening in the work environment is a complex, multidimensional activity. It required 38 categories to adequately summarize elements of listening behavior. While some of the categories are

similar (e.g., 20 and 21; 36 and 37), it is clear that listening is not adequately described with only a few concepts. The sorters felt that similar but not identical categories were needed to capture the subtleties of the critical incident elements.

Second, listening in the work environment occurs within concrete contexts including time pressures (categories 20, 21), interruptions (11), and ongoing relationships (33, 36). Speakers note behaviors during an encounter (9, 14, etc.), and also behavior subsequent to the encounter (12, 36, 37). Listening is a skill which may be context specific and which perhaps cannot be adequately considered outside realistic organizational contexts. The data in this study provides a context-specific perspective: listening at the work place.

Third, perceptions of listening in work environments are affected by message sending as well as message receiving (11, 29, 34). Assessments of listening behavior seem to be inseparable from the communication process.

Fourth, speakers form impressions of listeners' motivations (35), objectivity (2, 18), comprehension (1, 23), interest level (3, 26, 27), and empathetic capacity (19). That is, speakers use observable behaviors to form impressions of nonobservable, internal mental processes. They report these impressions made with their visual and auditory senses as facts. These facts seem to give a frame of reference for classifying encounters as effective or ineffective.

Fifth, listening is assessed on the basis of both verbal (11, 15, 25, 29, 31, 32, 34, 38, 39, 40) and nonverbal behavior (3, 6, 23). Nonverbal behavior includes facial expression (4), head nods (5), eye contact (9), vocal quality (28), and bodily movement (8, 22). The cessation or lack of behaviors may also be important (6, 8).

These results and conclusions partially correspond to those of Nichols (1948a). He studied college freshmen and their listening behaviors in classroom lecture situations. He identified several factors believed to affect the effectiveness of listening. Four of Nichols' 10 factors, "calling the subject uninteresting . . . getting overstimulated . . . tolerating or creating distractions . . . [and] submitting to emotional words" (Nichols, 1948a, p. 8) are similar to such categories as 26 (seemed interested in my topic), 2 (made up his mind before the conversation ended), 8 (stopped physical movements that interfered), and 24 (was distracted by certain words). The results of this study did not include categories similar to the other six items mentioned by Nichols, "critizing the delivery . . . listening only for facts, outlining everything, faking attention . . . evading the difficult . . . [and] wasting thought power" (p. 8).

The results of this study are more nearly consistent with Kelly (1962). He studied the comprehension of adult industrial supervisors, partly through a "surprise" written comprehension test and interviews. A battery of tests all correlated negatively with employee ratings of supervisory listening behavior, and he concluded that tests do not measure what people in organizations mean by listening. Kelly said his own rankings were more about general communication behavior than anything called "listening." Kelly felt the most important kind of listening for supervisors was of the "human relations" or "empathic" type, not "factual recall." The conclusions of Kelly seem to point toward the industrial supervisors correlating "good" listening with understanding what the speaker needs at that moment and responding in an appropriate manner.

Further information relevant to the first research question is found in Tables II and III (Chapter III), where elements were separated on the basis of whether they came from effective or ineffective listening incidents. In general, it seemed that the ineffective incidents tended more to be less effective rather than ineffective. Some respondents may have been reluctant to write incidents of ineffective listening because of the label "ineffective," which may have seemed to mean they were unhappy with their jobs over particular incidents. Reluctance to describe negative experiences may also help to explain why effective listening incidents contained more individual elements ($\bar{x} = 1.54$).

The smaller number of elements per incident of ineffective listening may also be due to the fact that ineffective listening is not so much the presence of negative behavior as it is the absence of positive behavior. In describing ineffective listening, the respondents described persons as ignoring (12) or not following directions (37), or not even trying to follow them (36). Lack of follow-up was seen as visible evidence that the speaker did not listen well enough. Not giving nonverbal feedback (6) and making interfering body movements (8) were seen as examples of an ineffective listener, as well as talking or speaking to other people while the speaker was trying to make a point (11). Failure to remember what the speaker said in the past (33) was seen as poor listening, as well as not making enough eye contact with the speaker (9).

When respondents in the present study focused on effective listening, the elements they used in their stories fell into several rather expectable categories; for example, free ventilation of thoughts

(10, 16, 17), verbal following (12, 15), reflective listening (25), appreciative listening (19, 30), comprehensive listening (23, 31, 36), and critical listening (29).

Effective listening was also described in Table II (Chapter III) as including advice (40), praise (39), questions (32), and other active verbal behaviors, which, according to some theorists, are not good listening. Gordon (1970) suggests these behaviors communicate rejection. Stano and Reinsch (1982) report that some authors believe praise complicates the appraisal interview. Guerney (1977) says the empathetic listener does not ask questions, as they divert the speaker's attention and change the information and the order of preference in its presentation. But in this investigation, such behaviors were mentioned only in descriptions of effective listening.

Overall, speakers see effective listening as being able to respond mentally, physically, and vocally as appropriate to the situation. The respondents noted most often that good listening consisted of maintaining eye contact (9), appearing attentive (14), and acting interested (27, 35). It also meant following directions (37), asking questions (32), and exchanging ideas and feelings (29).

To profile effective listening, the 38 categories can be put in three areas of responses encompassing not only inputting and processing activities but outputting activities as well. These three areas might be classified as mental, nonverbal, and verbal responses. They can be organized to contain all 38 categories:

1. Demonstrate a readiness to receive (Mental Set).
 - a. Have a positive anticipatory set (1).
 - b. Take out time to listen (17, 20, 21).

- c. Be interested in the person and his or her topic (19, 26, 27, 33, 35).
- d. Be fair (2, 18).
- 2. React to the reception (Nonverbal).
 - a. Use your head (4, 5, 9).
 - b. Use your body (8, 22).
 - c. Use your voice tone (28).
 - d. Focus your attention (10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 24).
 - e. Give general nonverbal feedback (3, 6, 23, 30, 36, 37).
- 3. Respond to the reception (Verbal).
 - a. Acknowledge the message (25, 29, 31, 32, 34).
 - b. Give appropriate response to the speaker's specific purpose (38, 39, 40).

Research Question Two

The second research question was: are perceptions of listening in working environments affected by selected demographic variables such as sex, management or staff position, or employing organization? The relevant results that answer this question are found in Tables IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, and IX (see Chapter III). Conclusions concerning the second research question must be regarded as more tentative than conclusions concerning the first question. This is due primarily to the fact that samples are smaller and unequal (21 men versus 85 women). Also, it is unwise to speculate too much concerning organizational differences when only two organizations have been examined.

Male-Female

Males represented only a small portion of the sample (21 out of

106), so we cannot conclude anything definite about sex differences. But we can see that in this sample the sexes differed somewhat in their perceptions of listening behaviors. The top four categories used by males were:

1. The listener followed my directions or implemented my suggestions.
2. The listener was attentive.
3. The listener gave nonverbal feedback that showed me he was listening.
4. The listener remembered what I had said in the past.

The top five clearly-noted categories mentioned by females were:

1. The listener maintained eye contact with me.
2. The listener followed my directions or implemented my suggestions.
3. The listener gave nonverbal feedback that showed me he was listening.
4. The listener was attentive.
5. The listener seemed interested in helping me.

Females and males both agreed that following directions, giving nonverbal feedback, and paying attention are clear signs to them that people are listening effectively. The biggest difference was that females wrote about eye contact more than anything else. At the bank workshop men commented that they felt uncomfortable maintaining eye contact with females over a length of time. They attributed it to their cultural background or to an effort not to have the eye contact (especially at close range) be mistaken for sexual interest. However,

women did appreciate eye contact in a listener, and the category was used three times more in positive incidents than in negative incidents.

Staff-Management

Sixteen of the 21 males and 25 of the 65 females were managers. Proportionately more males were in management positions, but they were numerically outnumbered by females overall. However, the choices management made to describe listening more closely resembled male choices, while staff descriptions more closely resembled female choices.

The top four categories that are used most frequently by managers were clearly set apart from the other 31:

1. The listener followed my directions or implemented my suggestions.
2. The listener gave nonverbal feedback that showed me he was listening.
3. The listener appeared attentive.
4. The listener listened quietly while I talked first.

The categories used most often by staff were these:

1. The listener maintained eye contact.
2. The listener followed my directions or implemented my suggestions.
3. The listener appeared attentive.
4. The listener gave nonverbal feedback that showed me he was listening.
5. The listener seemed interested in helping me.

Management (and males) felt that if the listener followed directions and suggestions, then he or she was a good listener. They also used words denoting attentiveness and body language to describe effectiveness. Managers wanted to talk first and lead the conversation while the listener stopped interfering movements, asked questions, and showed interest and concern.

Staff members (and women) saw eye contact as the number one indicator of listening. They agreed with managers that following directions, being attentive, and giving nonverbal feedback are also important.

Staff members also noted a good listener shows an interest in helping me and reacts to my unspoken needs. This behavior may have been mentioned because their critical incidents were about requests for help that were not ignored. Staff chose to mention nine times how listeners responded to unverbalyzed needs, but management did not mention this once. It may be harder for staff members to tell managers what they need, so they hope that through better eye contact, managers may "see" their needs and meet them. When they do, staff members are pleased.

Bank-Medical Center

There was no empirically-based reason to hypothesize that there would be a difference in bank and medical center employees' perceptions, but the results of two organizations, both serving the same community, although with different thrusts, makes an interesting comparison and one that may suggest different needs in differing types of organizations.

The most-used categories at the bank were these three:

1. The listener maintained eye contact with me.
2. The listener followed my directions or implemented my suggestions.
3. The listener gave nonverbal feedback that showed me he was listening.

At the medical center the most-often used categories describing listening were also three in number:

1. The listener appeared attentive.
2. The listener followed my directions or implemented my suggestions.
3. The listener maintained eye contact with me.

The top three choices in each organization are quite similar. These three factors may be the best descriptors of listening in most mixed-sex working populations.

Other important factors at the banking institution, with a rank of four, dealt with letting the initial speaker talk first, acting interested in helping the speaker, and remembering what he had said previously. These items represent a continuum of the listening episode from initiation to follow-through. The fifth position items, another three-way tie, showed the same progression: the listener acts attentive, exchanges ideas and feelings, and tried to get the changes I asked for. The listener not only heard or input the information, but he acted after the encounter to indicate the speaker's words affected him.

The medical center mentioned their top three categories in the same order in which staff members in the study used the categories.

After the top three categories, three other categories were tied for fourth place: the listener was effective who gave nonverbal feedback, acted interested and concerned about the speaker, and asked questions. All these top-ranked categories were like those of females, except that females gave more attention to whether or not listeners were interested in actually helping them. Medical center personnel also wanted people to stop interfering body movements and to give feedback that showed they understood the speaker and message. These fifth-ranked categories may refer to the eye contact and attentiveness mentioned in the top categories. Medical center employees also complimented the listener who did not ignore them or start talking to other people during the speaker's conversation with the listener. Many of the incidents had stories where ineffective listeners did everything but make the speaker feel listened to, such as walking off, shuffling through papers, answering in a distracted tone, and not taking appropriate notes on an important conversation. The top medical center categories centered more on immediate actions during the actual listening encounter. This may be why being attentive, interested in the subject, and asking questions were rated higher at the medical center than at the bank. These factors call for a listener who is ready to listen well at any point in time.

Bank employees had elements in all categories, but hospital employees avoided mentioning three. They did not mention being thanked. They also did not feel they had to talk first. Since most of the women were nurses and therapists, they explained that they were used to doctors taking and being given precedence in a conversation. In communicating, medical center personnel did not report that individual

words distracted people. It seemed that employees were more distracted by physical objects like beepers, telephones, log books, papers, and people walking by.

Application

Thus far the results have been discussed as they answer two research questions. In this section the discussion is expanded to highlight practical applications of the results.

Most trainers probably realize that basic personalities cannot be changed, but skills to modify ineffective behavior and enhance effective behavior can be taught. From this study, one can see that some factors are more often associated with effective listening. These factors can be enhanced by training and development. Weaver (1972) said that all listening training programs are different, but unfortunately, most of the commercial listening programs available on tape, records, and film teach comprehension skills suitable for dealing with recall, outlines, summaries, and evaluation of large bodies of spoken language in one-way communication. Listening at work, as workers used it, was more concerned with two-way communication between two adults who had a vested interest in maintaining good human relations.

Trainers need something other than material based on Nichols' (1948a) findings to improve "listening" as people in organizations use the term. Most organizational employees are not paid to listen to lectures, but to listen to their superiors, their subordinates, and their customers or patients. Interpersonal listening skills on a one-to-one or a small group basis might be improved through training

related to being attentive, maintaining eye contact, giving nonverbal feedback, and following the directions or suggestions given.

College courses in listening likewise need to be evaluated to see on what research they are based. Haberland (1956) found most college courses were primarily based on recall and comprehension practice. These mental aspects of listening may be easily taught and practiced in a classroom but may not be as important to the student after he goes to work. Educators need to ask if such training will meet all the needs of graduates going into business and professions. Wolvin and Coakley (1979) report that former students of the University of Maryland listening course who hold positions requiring considerable listening communication stress that they use all levels of listening which they were taught: appreciative, discriminatory, therapeutic, comprehensive, and critical. They feel that all levels are beneficial. They observed the carryover of their training helped them in their professional positions and in their social and familial environments.

Teaching proper listening behaviors that are expected by people in general, by the different sexes, and by people in management or staff positions can enhance the communication climate of an organization. This could influence productivity and increase understanding. It could enhance human relations while decreasing frustration and confusion and hurt feelings. When people are trained to listen "effectively" as it is required at the workplace, the training should be geared to needs of the adults who work there.

Limitations

There are almost always flaws which exist in the design, execution,

and interpretation of research. While there may be others, seven limitations of this research will be discussed here.

The most obvious flaw is the ratio of males to females (21 to 85) and staff to management (65 to 41). As a result of unequal numbers, the overall results may be more reflective of females and staff. However, these ratios are probably typical of most service organizations today. This sampling flaw may be partially compensated for by the fact that the survey did have a large return rate.

A second weakness was that not all medical center employees participated in the survey; only those who came to two workshops. Thus, a complete picture of listening in a medical center was not obtained. Only 25% of the hospital's work force was represented, while 85% of the total bank employees wrote usable incidents. (All at the bank had an equal chance to participate, however, except three who were on sick leave.) Because it would have been an almost impossible task to get three shifts of workers together in one place at one time at the medical center to explain the project and then collect the incidents, the administration felt the workshop method would be least disruptive and would probably get more returns.

A third limitation was that some bank participants wrote only one incident. These were not followed up, on the advice of the bank president and major adviser. When the researcher was told in advance that the respondent could not think of what to write, encouragement was given and the examples retold.

A fourth limitation is that this research focuses on perceptions of listening rather than "real" listening. But perceptions are important. They are believed to be real, so it is important to understand

how people view behaviors observed during the listening process in order to better explain how to be perceived as a better listener.

A fifth problem was that a single-sentence description taken out of context may have caused the sorter to miss the thrust or focus of the critical incident taken as a whole. But putting too much information on the cards would have made them difficult to fit into a single category.

A sixth weakness was the failure to always distinguish between the presence and absence of a factor. It would have strengthened the discussion of ineffective listening to have identified within each category the number of elements noting the presence of a factor and the number noting the absence of a factor.

A seventh problem was that only about one-third of the element cards could be used in sorting because of the amount of time sorting and debriefing required for volunteer sorters. However, all the cards were eventually sorted by two sorters, and they agreed with the basic categorization of the 38 factors developed previously.

Recommendations

Research in listening needs to continue. Recommendations based on the conclusions and findings of this study follow:

1. Replicate this study in other types of organizations (e.g., less people-oriented businesses).
2. Replicate this study using a balanced number of males and females or staff and management to see if the list of factors differ by sex and job orientation.

3. Develop an observation form to use in organizations to evaluate what listening factors are being used effectively and ineffectively by individuals or groups.

4. Do a survey to find out how the respondents rate the factors in importance. In this study, importance is assumed based on frequency of mention of various elements in critical incidents.

5. Try to clarify the relationship between perceptions and "reality."

6. Try to find out how adults define such elements as "attentive" behavior, and how it differs from "giving nonverbal feedback," "showing enthusiasm," "maintaining eye contact," "acting interested in me and my topic," and "asking questions."

7. Use key words other than "effective/ineffective" to describe listening behaviors (e.g., "good/poor," "does listen/does not listen").

8. Try to find out if advice, praise, and appreciation is really effective or ineffective.

9. Select a group of college seniors of comparable sex, grade point average, major, and similar work and extracurricular experience. Dividing the group in half, train one in recall-comprehension listening techniques and the other in eye contact maintenance, feedback techniques (both verbal and nonverbal), and following verbal directions. One year later, give a listening behavior questionnaire based on the 38 categories developed in this study to their supervisors, peers, and subordinates. Compare the data to find out which group was perceived as more effective listeners in their work environments.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COLLECTING A CRITICAL
INCIDENT OF EFFECTIVE LISTENING

In the space below, please record an example of what you believe to be a time when another person in this organization listened to you effectively. In your example try to answer these questions:

1. What were the circumstances surrounding the incident?
2. What exactly did the individual do that was so effective?
3. How is this incident an example of effective listening behavior?

Be as specific and detailed as possible. Remember, you are to focus on effective listening within this organization and that you should describe behaviors rather than personalities.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COLLECTING A CRITICAL
INCIDENT OF INEFFECTIVE LISTENING

In the space below, please record an example of what you believe to be a time when another person in this organization listened to you ineffectively. In your example try to answer these questions:

1. What were the circumstances surrounding the incident?
2. What exactly did the individual do that was so ineffective?
3. How is this incident an example of ineffective listening behavior?

Be as specific and detailed as possible. Remember, you are to focus on ineffective listening within this organization and that you should describe behaviors rather than personalities.

APPENDIX C

COVER LETTER AND DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET FOR
THE BANK SURVEY

This year your organization is focusing on improving communication. Later this year several of you will have the opportunity to attend a communication workshop. Your response on this short survey may be used in planning the workshop.

You are asked to put your name on this form so that we may know who has completed the survey. Individual situations or names will NOT be reported to management or to workshop participants. Individual responses will be made available only to workshop leaders.

Marilyn H. Lewis
N. Lamar Reinsch
Workshop Leaders and
Communication Consultants

NAME: _____

SEX: Female

Male

AGE: Under 30

31-45

46-60

Over 60

EDUCATION: High school diploma

Number of years of college education

JOB LENGTH: _____ How long have you been with this organization?

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO MEDICAL CENTER ADMINISTRATOR FOR
APPROVAL OF THE STUDY

January 25, 1982

Mr. Robert Parks
Hospital Administrator
Stillwater Medical Center
Stillwater OK 74074

Dear Mr. Parks:

We would like the opportunity to study communication in your organization. To do this, we will give each full-time employee a short, 10 to 20 minute survey on listening. Enclosed is a copy of the letter and survey your employees will receive. Individual responses will be made available only to the researchers, who may use the responses in planning a workshop for some of your personnel later this year.

The workshop could be on one of these communication topics:

- conflict management
- communication barriers
- family communication
- effective listening

Thank you for your desire to improve your organization's communication as you serve the people of our community.

Sincerely,

Marilyn H. Lewis
N. Lamar Reinsch, Ph.D.
Communication Consultants and
Workshop Leaders

P.S. Details of giving or mailing the questionnaire can be worked out with Mr. Brumley and Mrs. Lawson. We could give them to each individual at a large meeting, at small group meetings, or mail them out. We could have a drop box or one of us could be there to pick up the forms as they are filled out and turned in during a shift.

APPENDIX E

COVER LETTER AND DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET FOR
THE MEDICAL CENTER SURVEY

To help us focus on effective and ineffective listening, please respond to this short survey. Your responses will NOT be read aloud, and names will NOT be reported to other workshop participants or hospital personnel. Individual responses will be made available only to the workshop leaders and may be used to plan future communication workshops.

Marilyn H. Lewis
N. Lamar Reinsch, Ph.D.
Workshop Leaders and
Communication Consultants

NAME: _____

SEX: Female

Male

AGE: Under 30

31-45

46-60

Over 60

EDUCATION: High school diploma

Number of years of college education

JOB LENGTH: _____ How long have you been with
this organization?

MANAGEMENT: _____

STAFF: _____

APPENDIX F

EXAMPLES OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS OF EFFECTIVE
AND INEFFECTIVE LISTENING

Effective Listening

One time I went to see my supervisor about some of my plans and goals for the future. He smiled, looked me in the eye, and nodded his head as I talked. He moved his chair toward me several times as if he were really getting into the conversation physically and mentally. Once he even interrupted me to tell me that my ideas were "super." He ended our conversation by saying he was glad I came in and that we had talked. He said it would help him make better plans for my future in the department.

I felt he listened to me effectively because his body language and words told me he was on my "wave length" and that he understood and approved my future plans and goals.

Ineffective Listening

I went in to see my supervisor to tell him I had finished a particular project. He just stared at me while I told him what had happened. I was really happy but he didn't seem to care. He replied blandly, "Okay--fine." Then he went on working, shuffling through some papers, leaving me standing there feeling dismissed.

I felt it was ineffective listening on his part because he paid no attention to me. He acted like he didn't care about my work. I thought he wanted me to do well, but now I'm not sure he really cares.

APPENDIX G

ORIGINAL 40 CATEGORIES OF LISTENER BEHAVIORS

1. The listener misunderstood my words.
2. The listener made up his mind before the conversation was finished.
3. The listener showed enthusiasm.
4. The listener showed he was listening through his facial expressions.
5. The listener nodded his head.
6. The listener gave nonverbal feedback that showed me he was listening.
7. The listener changed his body position or moved his body.
8. The listener stopped physical movements that interfered with listening.
9. The listener maintained eye contact with me.
10. The listener listened quietly while I talked first.
11. The listener started talking to other people while we were talking.
12. The listener ignored or didn't react to my message.
13. The listener was influenced by my sex.
14. The listener appeared attentive.
15. The listener stayed on the subject I began.
16. The listener terminated the conversation before I finished talking.
17. The listener did not interrupt me.
18. The listener appeared to be open-minded.
19. The listener showed empathy, that he could feel what I felt.
20. The listener appeared to take the time to listen.
21. The listener appeared to listen though I knew he was busy with other activities.
22. The listener was prepared to or did take notes.
23. The listener showed he understood.
24. The listener was distracted by certain words.
25. The listener repeated the words or ideas I used.
26. The listener seemed interested in my topic.
27. The listener seemed interested and concerned about me.
28. The listener let me know how he felt from his voice tone.
29. The listener exchanged ideas and feelings with me.
30. The listener reacted to my unspoken need(s).
31. The listener answered my question(s).
32. The listener asked me questions.
33. The listener remembered what I had said in the past.
34. The listener acknowledged that he heard me by what he said.
35. The listener seemed interested in helping me.
36. The listener tried to get changes made or the results I requested.
37. The listener followed my directions or implemented my suggestions.
38. The listener thanked me.
39. The listener praised me.
40. The listener gave me advice.

VITA

Marilyn Hermann Lewis

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: LISTENING FACTORS IN WORK ENVIRONMENTS

Major Field: Higher Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Washington, D.C., July 22, 1943, the daughter of Charles Paul and Erma Pauline Hermann; married to Phillip V. Lewis, December 14, 1963; sons, Brook and Blair.

Education: Graduated from Jesse H. Jones High School, Houston, Texas, in May, 1961; received Bachelor of Science in Education degree from Abilene Christian University, Abilene, Texas, in 1964; received Master of Arts degree from University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado, in 1966; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1982.

Professional Experience: Elementary Teacher, Sunset Ridge Elementary School, Westminster, Colorado, 1964-66; Elementary Teacher, Kinsey Elementary School, Flagstaff, Arizona, 1966-67; Teacher, Christian Women's Course, Ron Willingham, Inc., Amarillo, Texas, 1977-80; Graduate Teaching Assistant, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1977-82; Communication Consultant for Business Extension and Arts and Sciences Extension, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1978-81; Communication Consultant, National Association of Accountants, New York City, New York, 1980-82.

Professional Memberships: Speech Communication Association, International Listening Association, Phi Delta Kappa, American Society for Training and Development, American Association of University Women.