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TOWARDS A HERMENEUTICAL UNDERSTANDING
OF THE LISTENING PROCESS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

The degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Molly M. Stoltz

May 2008

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2008

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“Towards a Hermeneutical Understanding of the Listening Process”

Ph.D. in Rhetoric

March 14, 2008

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ABSTRACT

TOWARDS A HERMENEUTICAL UNDERSTANDING
OF THE LISTENING PROCESS

By
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May 2008

Dissertation Supervised by Dr. Ronald C. Arnett

This dissertation offers an alternative to the behaviorist understanding of the listening process inherent in the models developed by scholars such as Brownell, Wolvin and Coakley. Using mostly close-text analysis to examine the trends of the literature to date, this dissertation introduces the ideas of Gadamer on philosophical hermeneutics and Fuimara on the connections between listening and hermeneutics to the current discussion. This dissertation argues that the process actually starts when one makes the choice to listen. It distinguishes the choice to listen from the behaviorist concepts of willingness and attention and connects it to Gadamer's understanding of tradition and bias. This work presents a hermeneutical model of the listening process that highlights the choice to listen; it compares this model to behaviorist models which suggest the process starts when one hears or perceives a message. This dissertation presents the hermeneutical model as yet another way to explain the complexities of listening.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my grandparents: I miss you all every day.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my mentors and committee members at Duquesne: Dr. Ron Arnett, Dr. Janie Harden Fritz, and Dr. Calvin Troup. I must also thank Mrs. Cynthia Burke for her never ending patience in answering my countless questions. Next, I would like to acknowledge my husband, my parents, and my sister and her beautiful family. I may have written this dissertation, but these people made it possible for me to do so.

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Chapter 1

An Introduction to the Field of Listening

1.1 Introduction

“An ‘I’M A LISTENER’ button is available from the publisher.

Do not wear it if it is simply a status symbol of the button crowd.

Do wear the button proudly and conspicuously if you plan on being a listener.

~ Loretta Girzaitis, *Listening: A Response Ability*

“Are you *really* listening to me?” People ask this question of each other constantly and numerous scholars have tried to understand the complex issue behind it: listening. This dissertation aims to join the conversation about listening already begun by scholars such as Paul Rankin and Ralph Nichols and continued by scholars such as Andrew Wolvin, Carolyn Gwynn Coakley, and Judi Brownell. The question this dissertation seeks to answer is: What lies at the heart of the listening process? This dissertation argues, from the perspective of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, that at the heart of listening process one finds choice. This dissertation goes on to argue that this choice differs from a willingness to listen and the selection of what stimuli to attend to because it has as its basis, as per Gadamer, in people’s biases and tradition.

As an introduction to the general topic of listening, this first chapter of this dissertation will look at why people should listening and why people have neglected to

study listening. Specifically some of main reasons to study include the amount of time people spend listening as found by Paul T. Rankin, one of the first researchers in the field, as well benefits to one's health, relationships, and community. Turning to why people have neglected to study listening, this chapter will examine some misconceptions about listening and some other factors influencing people's ideas about listening. Finally, this chapter will provide a description of the methodology behind this dissertation.

1.2 Why study listening?

Time Spent Listening – Rankin's 1929 study

The fact that people spend so much time listening represents one of the most compelling reasons why people should study the topic. One of the first studies published about listening addressed the question of how much time human beings spend listening on a daily basis. Paul T. Rankin conducted what Harlen M. Adams (1947) calls “one of the best” studies on listening; this study, published in 1930 in the *Chicago Schools Journal* and cited by Adams, “shows that listening ability is by far the most frequently used ability in communication in actual every day life situations” (p. 209). Rankin was the first to study how much time people spend listening in a scientific or objective way. In the excerpt of his 1926 dissertation entitled *Measurement of the Ability to Understand Spoken Language* found in Sam Duker's (1966) compilation of readings about listening, Rankin suggests that the study of how much time people spend listening lends itself to “objective study” because “individuals can keep a record of their time, and can analyze it with reference to the form of communication in which they are engaged” (p. 51); his study subjects included 21 people from different backgrounds including teachers, housewives, stenographers, students, research workers, and nurses (p. 51, 56).

The results of Rankin’s study into how much time people spend listening clearly show that people spend more time engaged in listening than any other communication activity. Rankin dissected and reported his findings in a variety of ways. He analyzed the results according to the various types of occupations of the subjects and also the different types of listening they did during the time they spent listening (Duker, 1966, p. 57). No matter how he sliced and diced the data, though, Rankin still had to conclude that people spend more of their communication time listening than writing, speaking, and reading. The following table represents the basic conclusions of Rankin’s study:

Table 1.1 Results of Rankin’s Study (Duker, 1966, p. 57).

Activity	% of Communication Time Spent
Talking	31.9
Writing	11
Listening	42
Reading	15

In the nearly 80 years since Rankin published this study, scholars in the field of listening have documented and replicated this study over and over again; the fact that people spend more time listening than any other communication activity remains one of the building blocks of listening theory. To add more detail and insight into his conclusions, Rankin also categorized the findings according to the occupations of the participants:

Table 1.2 Rankin’s Results by Occupation (Duker, 1966, p. 57).

<i>Profession</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Housewife</i>	<i>Other</i>
% of communication time spent TALKING	31	35	30

% of communication time spent WRITING	7	17	12
% of communication time spent LISTENING	47	35	40
% of communication time spent READING	15	13	18

While some may have suspected different results, Rankin has clearly shown the importance of listening in any occupation. After reporting these results, Rankin notes two points. First, Rankin says that people spend almost three times more time in “oral communication” (speaking and listening) than they do in reading and writing (Duker, 1966, p. 57). Second, Rankin writes: “the receiving forms (listening and reading) occur more frequently than the expressional forms, talking and writing” (Duker, 1966, p. 57); he claims that this should not surprise anyone “because one person may talk and a hundred listen or one may write and a thousand read” (Duker, 1966, p. 57). Clearly, Rankin’s study concludes that people spend more time engaged in listening than any other communication activity – but what do they listen to? Rankin addresses that question in a way that lends much insight into the way he formulates his ideas about listening.

While Rankin’s conclusions shed much light on the phenomena of listening and paved the path for much future research, the way Rankin categorized the communication activities he wanted to analyze may represent one of the most interesting aspects of the study. In addition to listening, speaking, reading, and writing, he included a category called “conversation,” which he defines as “a combination of talking and listening” and divided into “high order” (conversation about complex issues such as politics and social problems) and “low order” (conversation about the weather or what to eat for dinner); he calculates that a person spends half his/her time in conversation listening and the other half talking (Duker, 1966, p. 51-52). Further, Rankin divides the category of listening

into the following sub-categories: conversation, conference, oral reading, formal talks, directions, vocal music, and memorizations (Duker, 1966, p. 62); one can represent Rankin's findings about the different categories of listening as follows:

Table 1.3 Rankin's Results According to Category of Listening (Duker, 1966, p. 62)

Type of Listening	% of listening time
Conversation, low	56
Conversation, high	19
Formal talks	7
Vocal music	6
Memorizations	5
Conference	4
Oral Reading	2
Directions	1

These categorizations offer insight into Rankin's mind and the simple definitions of these complex ideas with which he worked. One need not challenge the value or accuracy of Rankin's findings to suggest that deeper questions lie beneath his approach.

Studies about how much time students spend listening in the classroom

Rankin's work opened the door for many other studies into the amount of time spent listening. Over the decades, many of these studies addressed specific questions about how much time is spent listening in a classroom. For example, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) summarize the studies that have been done addressing the question of time spent listening; the chart below highlights three studies that deal with the amount of time students are expected to listen in the classroom at the three basic levels of American education: elementary school, secondary school, and college:

Table 1.4 Percentage of Class Time Spent Listening (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 14)

Study	Educational Level	% of Class Time Spent Listening
Wilt	Elementary	58

Markgraf	Secondary	46
Taylor	Secondary/college	90

From these studies, one can see that the amount of time spent listening in the class varies from level to level. Despite this variation, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) point out that “throughout all levels of educational development, listening is the main channel of classroom instruction” (p. 13). Other studies that focus on how much time students spend listening include Goodland’s 1983 study which found that “teachers ‘out-talk’ students by a ratio of three to one” (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 14), and studies by Bird, Baker et al., and Perras and Weitzel which studied the habits of college students both in and out of the classroom and concluded they spend between 42 and 53 per cent of their time listening (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 14). Given the amount of time they appear to spend listening, one should not find surprising Bird’s finding that 82 per cent of college students deemed listening “equal to or more important than reading for academic success” (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 14). Clearly, students spend much of their time in the classroom listening; other studies have focused on listening outside the classroom.

Other studies about how much time people spend listening

Turning from the classroom back to the home and office, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) note the following studies which aimed to replicate Rankin’s study:

Table 1.5 Time Spent Listening by Occupation (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 14-15):

Study	Subjects	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Rankin	Adults	42	32	15	11
Brieter	Homemakers	48	35	10	7
Weinrauch/Swanda	Employees	33	26	19	23
Werner	Employees , students, homemakers	55	23	13	8

Barker	College Students	53	16	17	14
Mean Average		46	26	15	13

When one examines these numbers, one can see a basic similarity between them. While these studies averaged together suggest that the average person spends 46 per cent of his/her communication time listening. Brown's 1982 work suggests that the average worker spends about 60 per cent of his or her workday listening and Keefe's 1971 book *Listen, Management!* posits that executives spend as much as 63 per cent of their time listening (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 15). When considering the findings of Rankin and those who attempted to replicate his work, Walter Loban put the numbers in perspective when remarked: "We listen a book a day, we speak a book a week, we read a book a month, and write a book a year" (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 15). Clearly, based on Rankin's initial study and the many others conducted on the subject, people spend a lot of time listening, but that does not represent the only reason to study listening; scholarship suggests that effective listening also has many benefits for one's health, interpersonal relationships, and professional development.

Benefits of Listening for one's Health

One may find the idea that having good listening skills contributes to physical well-being odd, but Purdy (1997) writes: "studies have shown that when we talk our blood pressure goes up; when we listen it does down. ... When we talk to another person our whole system becomes more excited. When we listen we are more relaxed. It would seem best then, for optimum health, to balance our listening and talking" (p. 3). Ralph Nichols (1957) refers to this as the "therapeutic value" of listening; he writes: "appreciative listening to stories, poetry, drama, good conversation, and the like also can help us relax, to put aside personal worries and cares" (p. 32). From these remarks then,

one begins to see a connection between listening and health. Next, one can look at how listening impact not only health in general but directly on medical treatments and a medical professional's success; further, one finds listening has benefits not only for one's success in the medical field but one's professional life in general.

Benefits of listening for one's professional performance

In her book *The Zen of Listening*, Rebecca Shafir (2000) also acknowledges a relationship between health and listening, but she comes at the idea from a slightly different angle; she writes: "I have seen how the failure [of doctors] to listen adversely affects the accuracy of the diagnosis and subsequent treatment. Too often the patient is not given a chance to mention what's on his mind, to share his insight into the health problem. Just as often, due to various communication barriers, a patient does not understand his doctor's explanation of his illness" (p. 10). Shafir, then, looks at the relationship between listening and health more as a matter of how effective listening can help patients and doctors better understand each other and the problem at hand. Shafir (2000) also takes the connection Purdy and Nichols' make between listening and health a step further; she writes: "Contact with others promotes well-being and self-expression, both necessary for good health. By being good listeners, we promote the good health of others by allowing them to reduce their stress and empowering them to solve their own dilemmas" (p. 11). In other words, good listening not only helps one maintain one's own health but can also function as a catalyst for improving the health of others; further, one can think about how listening has benefits for a person's career.

Moving from a specific focus on the medical field to how listening skills enhances ones professional performance in general, one can turn to Purdy (1997) who

cites Tom Peters who writes: “Excellent companies are not only better on service, quality, reliability, and finding a niche. They are better listeners” (p. 3). Purdy points out that this emphasis on listening has particular importance in the helping professions and most specifically in the medical field; he cites Westen and Lipkin, who write in their book *Communicating With Medical Patients* that: “Skill in communicating with patients is the single most important skill the student physician learns” (p. 3). According to Purdy (1997), one comes to that conclusion after considering all of the communication activities healthcare professionals do such as recording patient histories and conducting patient interviews; Purdy goes on to suggest other professions involve similar activities and thus “the ability to listen effectively is essential for professional success” (p. 3).

While Purdy focuses on the necessity of effective listening in medical professions, Brownell and Wolvin and Coakley focus on in benefits in more sales-oriented corporations. Wolvin and Coakley (1996) argue that effective listening equals more money for salespeople; they also claim that effective listening by workers and managers within a corporation leads to increased customer satisfaction as well as increased employee satisfaction and productivity (p. 21-22). Along similar lines, Brownell (1996) writes: “Your listening skills affect your ability to get work accomplished...The quality of your finished product [is] related to the quality of your listening” (p. 9). So, one can see how having effective listening skills can help one succeed in one’s professional life, but one can also talk about benefits of listening for one’s personal and political life.

Benefits of listening for one’s relationships and community

When discussing the effect listening has on one’s personal development and interpersonal and communal relationships, John Stewart writes: “The quality of your life

is directly linked to the quality of your communication” (Purdy, 1997, p. 4). Purdy (1997) writes: “Listening establishes us in our life situation and enables us to maintain meaningful relationships with family, friends, and professional associates” (p. 4). Psychologist Julie Rogers writes: “If you want a friend for life, listen, truly listen, to each other, for nothing so permanently binds two people together” (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 23). While these scholars emphasize the importance of listening in establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, Brownell (1996) notes the importance of listening in establishing the environment that nurtures those relationships when she writes: “Effective listening often goes even further than building a single relationship. The practice of sincere and consistent listening contributes to the development of a unique atmosphere or climate that makes further information-sharing possible. It’s called trust” (p. 11). So, not only does effective listening help one establish and maintain relationships between two people, but it helps create the environment in which those two people learn to trust each other. This idea that effective listening works to establish an environment in which people can communicate serves as a reminder that listening plays an important but often unrecognized role in community development.

Purdy (2000) begins his discussion about the role listening plays in community formation by pointing out that the current literature does not usually take this aspect of listening into account; he writes: “Current listening theory is generally caught up in what Vernon Cronin (1998) calls the psychology project. This is the tendency of the communication studies to follow the lead of psychology in viewing communication (and listening) as a product of a thinking individual” (p. 47-48). However, he continues “there has been some study suggesting that listening is something more than the results of the

assigned meanings of the listener” (p. 48). Purdy (1991) developed a theory of the place of listening in community formation around the following premise:

Community is what we have in common with other in our group and having it in common make us related. In speaking we impart and make common, in listening we interpret, share in and give personal meaning to that commonality. By listening we share in the insight, the vision the knowledge, growth, and understanding that is common in the community in the interpretive process of listening. We also help create and shape the essence of the community in the interpretive process of listening. (p. 51)

From Purdy’s perspective, then, listening happens in a community. Listening allows one to connect to a larger context outside of one’s own individual understanding. The idea that listening happens within community also has resonance with Gadamer’s idea that when one listens to or interprets a text one also does so within the horizons or parameters of the tradition and community of both the author and the interpreters. So far, one has read about the benefits of listening for one’s health, career, relationships, and community, but many other positive effects come from listening effectively to others.

Other Benefits of Effective Listening

In addition to having benefits for one’s health, profession, relationships, and community, effective listening has other benefits as well. First, learning does not happen without listening. Ralph Nichols (1957) points out that “opportunity never ceases to knock for anyone who wishes to increase his knowledge or broaden his experience by listening” (p. 18). Making a similar point, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) remind their readers of the Sperry corporation slogan: “Nothing new ever entered the mind through an

open mouth” (p. 23). Brownell (1996) looks at the connection between listening and learning in the context of decision-making; she writes: “Decision-makers must determine who to listen to, what to listen to, and how much information to consider before making their choice. Those in key leadership positions have come to realize the consequences of poor listening and are quick to identify listening as a key competence for success” (p. 12). In these passages, one sees the strong connection between listening, learning, and decision making. Nichols and Brownell also point out that listening allows one to appreciate the beauty in the world that comes from music and literature.

Talking about the idea of appreciative listening, Brownell (1996) writes: “You often listen for simple enjoyment. From poetry readings, theater presentations and music, to the sounds of close friends laughing, there are good reasons to take pleasure in your sensory environment” (p. 12). Nichols (1957) makes the point that listening can lead to an appreciation of literature; he cites a high school teacher who taught students to appreciate Shakespeare by having them listen to him read it (p. 21-29) Nichols (1957) also points out that one can also take pleasure in listening to television or radio programs (p. 21-29). So, listening not only has benefits for one’s health, relationships, and profession, but also helps one learn about and appreciate the world; one can say that the previous listing represents only few of benefits from effective listening. Yet, despite these benefits, listening remains what some would say a lost art; why? The next section of this chapter acknowledges that interest in listening has increased in recent years but contends it still remains a neglected area of study and outlines some reasons why.

1.3 Why Listening Remains Neglected

After considering how much time people spend listening and the wonderful benefits associated with effective listening, it may surprise some to learn that scholars, particularly in Western society, have not spent much time studying or teaching the listening process; yet, within two decades of Rankin's study, scholars acknowledged this fact. Wesley Wiskell (1946) writes in his article "The Problem of Listening" that "Listening, an important and integral part of our everyday communication, has yet to become the subject of much scholarly scrutiny" (p. 505). Wiskell (1946) cites Rankin's conclusion that "44 per cent of our waking time is given over to listening" but concedes "very little recorded effort has been found which attempts to define listening *per se* except that there is an agreement as to its importance, a needs for an adequate ability in this skill, and it should occupy an important place in the educational program" (p. 505). The next section of this dissertation will offer evidence of the neglect of listening throughout the history of the field, examine some common misconceptions people have of listening, and offer some reasons why people have neglected listening.

1.3.1. Listening as a neglected but increasingly studied topic

Evidence of neglect

50 years after Wiskell wrote his article, Wolvin and Coakley see that same problem of neglect that Wiskell saw in the 1940s; particularly, they concern themselves with the neglect of listening in the classroom. On this matter, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) write: "The most neglected language art skill at all educational levels is listening...Too frequently the only listening instruction [a student receives is] requests and commands to pay attention and/or a few lists of listening dos and don'ts (p. 35-36). Wolvin and

Coakley, then, contend that, by and large, the education an American student receives from elementary school through high school and into college does not include sufficient training in the critical language skills of listening, although students do seem to receive sufficient training in other language arts – reading, writing, and, speaking. To provide evidence for their argument, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) summarize the findings of studies done to determine how much listening training takes place in American schools beginning with Markgraf’s 1962 study of teacher-training institutions:

Table 1.6 Studies of Listening Course Offerings (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 36)

Study	Subjects	Findings
Markgraf (1962)	406 teacher-training institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offered listening courses • 134 offered listening units in other courses • 44% included teaching listening in methods courses
Wolff (1977)	70 colleges/universities with whom SCA members were affiliated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 offered listening courses
Pace/Ross (1983)	100 survey courses in organizational communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 included a listening component • Listening ranked 25th of the 38 course content areas
Wolvin/Coakley/Disburg (1988)	82 colleges/universities with whom SCA members were affiliated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44 offered a listening course • 63 offered listening units in other courses
Wolvin/Coakley/Disburg (1989)	134 colleges/universities with whom SCA members were affiliated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19 offered a listening course • 63 offered listening units in other courses
Wolff (1990)	126 colleges/universities with whom SCA members were affiliated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42 offered a listening course • 40 offered listening units in other courses

Smith/Turner (1993)	682 colleges/universities with communication studies departments	• 52 offered a listening course
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While one might find it ironic that so few colleges and universities that would seem prime candidates for having a strong listening curriculum – those that have communication programs and faculty active in the discipline – do not have such a curriculum, it simply provides more evidence of the neglect of listening.

Wolvin and Coakley also make another point worth mentioning at this time.

Wolvin and Coakley (1996) contrast the 1978 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which “added listening and speaking to reading, writing, and arithmetic, as measures of literacy and as needed basic competencies” with a 1991/1992 call on the American education system by the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCAN) to teach listening as a one of a set of “foundation skills and competencies that are essential to all in the modern world” (p. 37-38); they conclude that SCAN would not have had to issue such a call if state school systems of all levels of education had taken the 1978 legislation seriously. To show what little states did to teach listening post-1978, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) summarize the results of a 1990 study by VanRheenen and Casmir which measured what actions states had done to teach listening:

Table 1.7 Actions taken to Teach Listening (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 37-38)

Reported Action Taken	Number of States
Identified listening skills	35
Developed curriculum materials for teaching these skills	31
Developed listening assessment procedures	12

Clearly, with such low numbers of states taking even minimal steps towards teaching listening, schools need to take steps to improve their listening curriculum. Wolvin and Coakley also point out that while scholars have neglected listening for decades, businesses people have started paying more attention to listening in recent decades.

Interest in listening on the increase but still lacking

After talking about the state of listening research in academia, Wolvin and Coakley turn their focus to corporate America, where interest in helping employees acquire listening skills has increased greatly over the past several decades. Wolvin and Coakley (1996) point to the work of Ralph Nichols as the impetus for the Sperry corporation (now part of UNISYS) to develop an in-house training listening in 1979 which sparked the interest of many other corporations; to show how much interest the Sperry program generated, Wolvin and Coakley cite their 1988 study which found that, 59 per cent of Fortune 500 industrial and Fortune 500 service corporations who responded to a survey provided listening training to their employees (p. 38).

While Wolvin and Coakley primarily see the increase in interest in listening tied specifically to listening training in corporations, Purdy (1997) sees a more general increase in the interest being paid to listening; he writes: “The importance of listening in college classrooms and corporate training continues to grow at a rapid pace. At the same time, the dynamic of expansion of interpersonal communications via the Internet, World Wide Web, internet phones and personal videoconferencing continue to challenge our abilities to adapt as listeners. People are seeing an ever greater need to be able to listen effectively in every part of their lives” (p. ix). But, whether one agrees more with Wolvin and Coakley or Purdy, the fact remains that neither argue that interest in listening has

reached a satisfactory level. One may find the lack of interest in listening surprising considering the amount of time people spend listening and the many benefits that have been shown to be associated with or come from having good listening skills; several scholars have argued that misconceptions about listening have led to its neglect.

1.3.2 Misconceptions about Listening

Despite the amount of time that people spend listening and that listening effectively has many benefits, and despite the fact that interest in listening seems to have increased in recent years, listening still does not attract a lot of scholarly attention. Beginning to answer the question about why people do not study listening, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) suggest that misconceptions about listening may “contribute to listening failures, educators neglecting listening instruction, poor listeners not seeking listening training, and society continuing to perpetuate fallacies about listening” (p.11). Thus, one could say that people’s misconceptions have caused them to neglect listening. Wolvin and Coakley (1996) go on to outline seven misconceptions of listening (p.11):

1. Listening and Hearing Are Synonymous.
2. Listening Competency Develops Naturally.
3. Listening Ability is Largely Dependent on Intelligence.
4. Reading and Listening Are the Same Process.
5. Listening is Primarily a Passive Activity.
6. Effective Communication is the Responsibility of the Speaker.
7. Listening Means Agreement or Obedience.

Clearly, one can easily see how believing in any of these misconceptions could cause someone not to want to study listening; the three that have the most relevance for this

project are: 1.) Listening and Hearing are Synonymous; 2.) Listening Competency Develops Naturally; 3.) Effective Communication is the Responsibility of the Speaker.

The follow paragraphs will discuss each of these misconceptions in detail.

Misconception: Listening and hearing are synonymous

Wolvin and Coakley (1996) suggest some people think that hearing a sound automatically means listening to that sound; they refute this idea when they write: “We may hear well and be efficient listeners, but we also may hear well and be inefficient listeners” (p. 12). The distinction between listening and hearing lies at the heart of this dissertation, which agrees that a person may hear well but listen inefficient but argues that a person may not hear well but still listen efficiently. While Wolvin and Coakley (1996) argue that “hearing-impaired Americans” have an excuse for poor listening habits (p. 25-26); this dissertation argues that no one has an excuse for poor listening.

Misconception: listening competency develops naturally

Further, many people see listening as a closed issue; they equate developing listening skills with learning how to walk and eat: something that most people come to learn through everyday experience; not something that requires special training or practice. Alder once remarked: “How utterly amazing is the general assumption that the ability to listen well is a natural gift for which no training is required” (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 12). This misconception develops when someone reads all the statistics about how much time people spend listening and then concludes that people learn how to listen properly simply by spending all that time listening. As evidence to refute this misconception, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) point to a study by Nichols and Stevens which provides evidence to the contrary; according to that study, the ability of students to

recall and comprehend lecture material decreased as they progressed through school, thus showing that more listening does not mean better listening skills; explaining this phenomenon, Elbing writes: “although we all learn experiences, there is no guarantee that we learn from experience. In fact, it is possible to learn downright errors and second-rate methods from experience...it is only training in systematic method which enables us to correctly analyze situations so that we can truly learn from experiences” (p. 12). Clearly, listening more does not mean listening more effectively. At this point then, after discussing two common misconceptions of listening, one can begin to understand why people have neglected to study listening as much as speaking; however that next section of this chapter will present several other reasons why people have neglected listening.

1.3.3 Other reasons why listening has been neglected

Misconception: Effective Communication is the Responsibility of the Speaker.

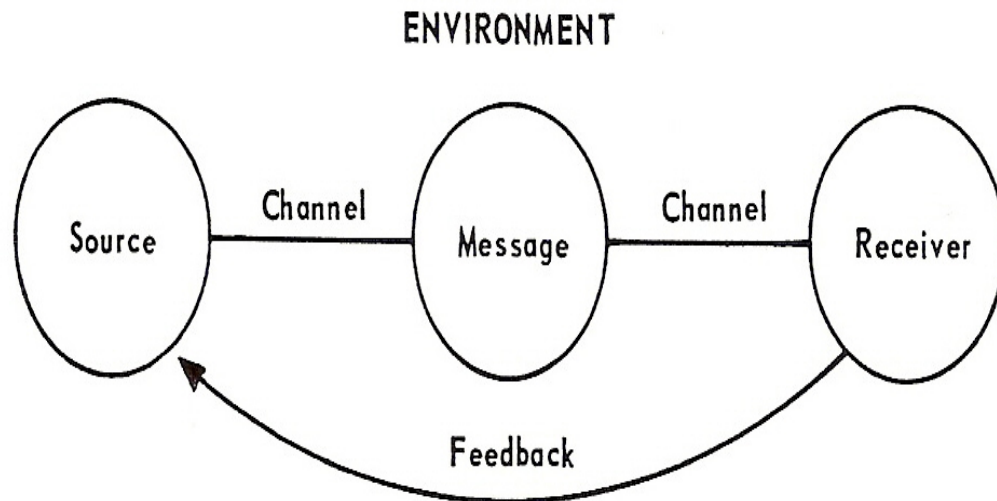
While one may argue that all of the misconceptions that Wolvin and Coakley outline, and particularly the two already discussed in detail, can help to explain why listening does not easily capture people’s interest, this dissertation argues that the common misconception of listening and speaking as not having equal roles to play in the communication process may give people even more reason not to study listening. This misconception has at its roots in ideas about the relationship between speaking and listening within the communication process; while some may see only one or two ways to see the relationship between speaking and listening within the communication process, this dissertation sees three different ways to understand this relationship: first, one can see speaking as the primary activity in the communication process; second, one can see listening as the primary activity in the that process; finally, one can see listening and

speaking as equally critical elements in the that process. The next sections of this dissertation will outline the communication process and each of these positions.

The Communication Process

Wolvin and Coakley (1996) list the components of the communication process as Source, Message, Channel, Receiver, Feedback, Environment, and Noise; by their description, the source encodes a message and then transmits it through a channel to the receiver, who then decodes it and transmits feedback to the sender; this process happens within a given environment; a simple picture of this process would like this (p. 50):

Illustration 1.1 Communication Process (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996 p. 50)



In addition to naming the components of the communication process, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) also suggest variables such as the level of communication skills mastered by the sender and receiver, the amount of knowledge the sender and receiver have about the subject matter at hand, the attitudes and personal experience of the sender and receiver, the complexity and content of the message being transmitted, and language and channel used to transmit the message will affect the process (p. 51). From this simple

graphic, one might understand why people would have confusion over the place of listening and speaking in the process; Wolvin and Coakley talk about this problem.

Speaking as the primary activity in the communication process

Wolvin and Coakley (1996) write “Many people fail to realize that meaningful oral communication is a result of both the sending and receiving of messages. If only our ears were as actively involved as our mouths, our failure to listen would not be such a vital concern to so many individuals” (p. 1). Purdy (1997) suggests that this mainstream Western idea that the speaker has sole responsibility for effective communication has its roots in expectations of child behavior; he writes:

“The ability to speak and control speech [is] a source of power in American culture. The child learns that the parent has the last word and often cannot speak until spoken to. The young student can speak out only when called upon by a teacher; the rest of the time, he or she is expected to listen. Our culture has learned this lesson only too well. We listen to the voice of authority – be that authority a medical or legal practitioner, a manager, an officer of the law, or a religious leader. Listening has, consequently, come to be associated with passivity, often times with weakness. As a result of this attitude, which trivializes listening, listening training has been largely ignored in the classroom, as well as business and industry” (p. xii-xiv).

Purdy (1997) furthers his point when he writes: “Communication has two dimensions: speaking (expression) and listening (reception). For most of Western Civilization, speaking has been the form of communication regarded as the most important. The first books on communication were about how to be an effective speaker. Listeners were

recognized, but only as they were important to the purposes of the speaker. In fact, speaking has been championed as the way to success throughout Western history” (p. 1). If one accepts Purdy’s assessment, then one can clearly see how this perception of the relationship between listening and speaking could influence the likelihood of someone choosing to study listening, and how this perception still prevails today.

The introductory communication course that most college students have to take aptly titled public speaking represents one area in which the perceived primacy of speaking comes through. Harlen Adams (1946) in his article “Listening” makes the point that “The development of good speakers may well proceed by giving attention to the development of intelligent listeners” (p. 10). To explain, then, why so many teachers neglect to teach listening skills, Adams theorizes that most speech teachers would agree with the idea that “speaking and listening cannot be separated,” but then “focus their attention upon the teaching of speech and apparently assumed the skills in listening” (p. 210). One could classify Adams as an optimist on this point. Whether a speech instructor simply does not have the proper tools in his/her teaching toolbox to teach listening skills or whether the instructor sees simply listening as less important than speaking, the connection between the two still remains primary – the primary goals of communication (or at least of a speech class) by most standards has to do with effective speaking, so in that context, what sense does it make to study listening except as it helps develop speaking skills? Wiskell (1946) calls Adams’ bluff when he writes that Adams “subordinates listening to speaking so that the emphasis becomes a means towards a better ability to speak” (p. 505) but then reveals his own position by not contradicting the underlying message of the superiority of speaking one finds in Adams’ work.

One can also see examples of the perception that speaking is the most importance aspect of the communication process in more popular and recent books. *Tounge Fu!*, a recently published popular communication text – which John Gray, noted communication scholar and author of *Men are from Mars; Women are from Venus*, states “puts a new twist on communication” and “everyone should read it” – hardly addresses the issue of listening. According to author Sam Horn (1997), “*Tongue Fu!* (a mental art) is a spoken form of self-defense – the constructive alternative to giving a tongue-lashing or being tongue tied. The goal of *Tongue Fu!* is to learn how to conduct yourself with confidence so you keep from being abused verbally” (p. xii). While Horn (1997) does point out that learning to listen “can improve every relationship that you have” and suggests that everyone take the time to listen to each other (p. 110), she limits her discussion of listening to a section of her book entitled “Turn Conflicts into Cooperation;” thus, listening appears a supplementary or superfluous part of her communication strategy. Similarly to *Tongue Fu!*, *Verbal Judo* by George Thompson (1993), promises its readers: “you’ll learn how to speak with anybody without causing or escalating conflict. You’ll learn to praise without sounding manipulative. And you’ll learn to criticize so people remember what was said, are motivated to change, and still feel like valued team members. *Verbal Judo* also has solutions for dealing with people under the influence of liquor, drugs, fear, rage, or plain stupidity” (p. 13). In these examples, one sees that what to say in a given situation becomes primary and listening become secondary,

One of few exceptions to the primacy of speaking one finds in popular communication texts is Rebecca Shafir’s (2000) *The Zen of Listening*; this book seeks to explain the metaphor of mindful listening; Shafir writes: “The mindful-listening approach

is a mindset for connecting with people and information that stands up to the challenges of communicating in the twenty-first century” (p. 14). While one might find Shafir’s emphasis on listening refreshing, one must not to trade one misconception for another.

Listening as primary in the listening process: another misconception

While the list of misconceptions about listening highlighted by Wolvin and Coakley does not suggest it, one might say that those who see listening as primary in the communication process have the same logic as those who see speaking as primary in that process. Purdy (1997) offers an example of argument for the primacy of listening:

“Among the basic skills we need for success in life, listening is primary – there is no meaningful communication without listening. Developmentally, we listen before we learn to speak, read, or write. Brown, one of the pioneers of listening research has noted that ‘Of foremost importance is in the role of listening is language acquisition, [itself] the basis of all subsequent communication, the foundation of all life-long reading, writing, speaking and listening activities.’ Heidegger, considered one of the 20th century’s greatest philosophers, recognized the primacy of listening in creating meaning” (p. 4).

Purdy (1997) bases this point in biology by quoting Eric Havelock:

“The natural human being is not writer or a reader, but a speaker and a listener. This must be as true of us today...as it was 7,000 years ago. Literacy at any stage of its development is in terms of evolutionary time a mere upstart, and to this day it is in our spoken communication with each other that we reveal and operate our biological inheritance” (p. xiii).

Clearly, the emphasis on the idea that humans listen before they learn to speak tends toward a position that would see listening as primary to speaking. This dissertation, however, holds to a position of equality between speaking and listening.

Listening and Speaking as Equals in the Communication Process

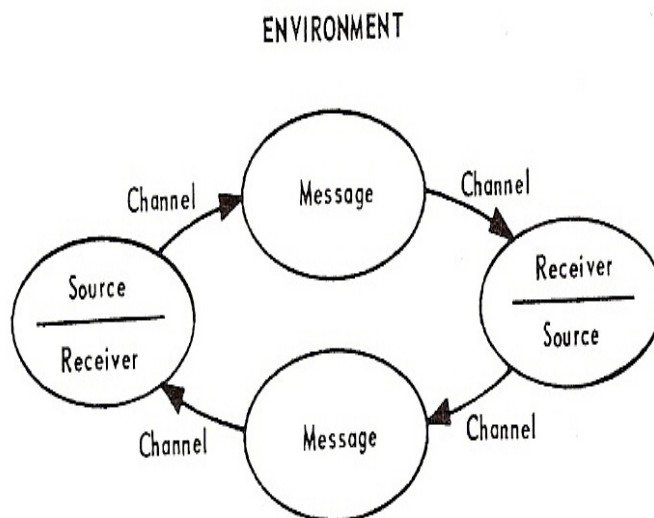
If one classifies seeing either listening or speaking as primary within the communication process as a misconception, one could suggest that viewing them as equally critical activities within that process more accurately describes the complexity of the communication process. What does it mean to see listening and speaking as equally important in the communication process? Wolvin and Coakley (1996) make this point when they explain communication from a transactional perspective; they write: “We are constantly involved in a process of encoding and decoding messages in a fairly simultaneous sequence. We really function as source and receiver at the same time... This perspective of communication as the simultaneous interaction of the roles of source and receiver has come to be known as the transactional perspective” (p. 59). Given the simultaneous nature of communication from the transactional perspective, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) suggest that, rather than sender or receiver, one should refer to those involved in the communication process as communicators (p. 59).

Further illustrating the model, Rhodes describes communication from the transaction perspective like this: “As I listen, I simultaneously ‘speak’ to you with my nonverbal responses. As you speak, you simultaneously ‘listen’ to the nonverbal messages, periodically tune into the verbal messages, and continuously adapt your communication behaviors according to your assessment of the extent to which you have been understood” (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 62). Other scholars working from this

perspective include John Stewart and Smith and Williamson; they both mention the metaphor of meaning-creating in their work; Smith and Williamson state that, from a transactional perspective, communicators “are simultaneously and mutually engaged in the process of creating meaning” (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 60). Stewart adds “From a transactional perspective, human communicating is a process of meaning-creating rather than idea-or-message sending. When you’re communication you’re not transmitting your ideas to others but evoking their own ideas or meaning” (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 60). One can say, then, that speaking and listening have equal roles to play in the communication process as seen from the transactional perspective.

In order to understand to better understand what the communication processes might look like from a transactional perspective, one can to the work of Schramm. According to Schramm, an early proponent of the transactional perspective, offers the following picture of the communication process from the transactional perspective:

Illustration 1.2 Transactional Communication Process (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 59)



The transactional perspective allows one sees listening and speaking as equally important activities in the communication process. Further, this model includes the complexity missing from more linear models highlighting either speaking or listening, which makes it more descriptive of the human experience of the communication. Wolvin and Coakley (1996) describe this complexity when they write: “It is clear, therefore, that communication is a complex process...Too frequently, we tend to sit back and require the speaker to assume full responsibility for the communication. Effective communication, however, is a shared, meaningful, active process that imposes upon speakers and listeners alike equal responsibilities for the outcome” (p. 59). In other words, the idea that the speaker has sole responsible for effective communication does not take into account the complex, active, and shared nature of the communication process. Further, one can argue that the fact that the philosophy of the day has taken what Alasdair MacIntyre would call an emotivist turn also contributes to the state of affairs that allows Michael P. Nichols to argue that American society has lost the art of listening.

Modern moral philosophy: why we have lost the art of listening

When considering other reasons for the lack of interest in listening, Michael P. Nichols (1994) argues in his book, *The Lost Art of Listening*, that the post-Enlightenment conception of the individual as autonomous as well as the chaotic lifestyle led by many people has contributed to the what he sees as a complete loss of the art of listening by society in general (p. 1-2). One can connect this to Alasdair MacIntyre’s (1998) notion of emotivism, the practice of making moral judgments based on one’s emotional response to a statement; he writes: “Emotivism does not attend sufficiently to the distinction between the meaning of a statement which remains constant between different users, and

the variety of uses, and the variety of uses to which one and the same statement can be put” (p. 259). In other words, an emotivist may find it difficult to listen effectively because he/she will have a hard time distinguishing between the content or meaning of what the another person has said and his/her reaction to that message. This mindset has contributed to Nichol’s categorization of listening as a lost art. Unlike emotivism, making the choice to listen involves stepping outside of one’s emotivist reality and opening oneself to the perspective of the other. In talking about the role of choice in the listening process, this dissertation has as its goal to remind people of the importance of listening and offer a way to discover or perhaps rediscover the listening process outside of the realm of behaviorism. In order to make the case for the choice to listen, this dissertation will rely primarily on the methodologies of hermeneutics and close-text analysis.

1.4 Methodology: Listening to the Literature

Now that one has some general understanding of why one should study, the discussion can turn to exactly how this dissertation will study the listening process. The methodologies at work in this dissertation include philosophical hermeneutics as outlined in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer and close-text analysis. Before one can understand specifically how these methodologies work and their connection to each other, one must first draw a distinction between the philosophical nature of this work and the scientific nature of much of the rest of work in this field. Making a distinction between philosophy and science, Gadamer (1981) writes in *Reason in the Age of Science*: "It is evident that what we call philosophy is not science. It is not the case that philosophy has a positive datum alongside the standard areas of the other sciences to be investigated by it alone, for philosophy has to do with the whole. But this whole it not merely, as is

true of any other whole, the whole comprised of all its parts. As the whole, it is the ideas that transcends every finite possibility of knowledge, and so it is nothing we can know in a scientific way" (p. 1). In other words, this dissertation will not use empirical methods to produce statistical results to prove or disprove the work of other theorists in the field. This may seem like an uncommon path – the second chapter of this dissertation will argue that the majority of scholarship listening has come from a social-scientific perspective – but this project takes a more hermeneutical approach.

Hermeneutics as a methodology

To more accurately describe the philosophical approach of this project, one can see it loosely follows the tenets of philosophical hermeneutics as well as some tenets of close-text analysis. Focusing first on hermeneutics and borrowing Gadamer's words again, one can describe hermeneutics as both a practical and theoretical philosophy. Gadamer (1981) states that in Ancient Greece, "hermeneutics was primarily a practical component in the activity of understanding and interpreting. Books bearing the title 'Hermeneutics' usually had a purely pragmatic and occasional bent and were helpful for the understanding of difficult texts by explaining hard-to-understand passages;" he offers Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* as one of the first examples of a work that actually began to question the nature of interpretation (p. 94); while Gadamer does see hermeneutics as theoretical, he cautions that "this theoretical stance only makes us aware reflectively of what is performatively at play in the practical experience of understanding;" he goes on to observe that "the universal desire to know does not break off at the point where concrete practical discernment is the decisive issue. The connection between the universal desire to know and concrete particular discernment is a reciprocal

one" (p. 112). Gadamer, then, believes that any theory must have a practical application; vice-versa, any concrete task that humans do, no matter how trivial it may seem, has a theory behind it. This project seeks to develop a more textured understanding or theory of listening than one finds in the literature. In order to examine the current literature, this dissertation will employ some of the principles of close-text analysis. Close-text analysis represents an approach to rhetorical criticism; a more detailed analysis will follow.

Close-textual analysis

Bernard L. Brock and Robert L. Scott (1980) categorize close-text analysis within the category of the "New Rhetorics" perspective on rhetorical criticism; though they define close-text analysis as the "focusing on stylistic choices as strategies designed to make the acceptance of a proposed action forgone conclusion" (p. 272). While this dissertation will not focus on the style of texts and literature reviewed, it will focus on looking at them strategically in order to build a case for the choice to listen. Hermann G. Stelzner (1980) refers to this as microcosmic rather than macrocosmic analysis (p. 321); this means it focuses on details of the text and the thoughts or actions it proposes rather than how favorably people perceived the text of any controversy the author or content may have caused. Thus, this dissertation will use detailed quotes from the reviewed literature strategically in order to provide evidence about the underlying thought patterns in the current literature. This approach and methodology may differ to some extent from who would seek a macrocosmically prove or disprove theories using other methods; this dissertation seeks only to further the conversation about the listening process.

1.5 Summary

To summarize the first chapter of this dissertation, one can say that it has examined reasons why people should study listening as well as some of the factors that have caused people to neglect studying listening. Finally, this chapter described the two major methodologies at work in this project – hermeneutics and close-text analysis in order to describe its approach to the field’s literature. The next chapter of this dissertation will focus strategically on the literature of the field of listening in order to provide evidence for the underlying behaviorist tendencies in the literature of the field.

Chapter 2

Trends in Listening Research

2.1 Introduction

While the main argument of this dissertation has to do with the way scholars have framed listening as process, this chapter will serve to as a touchstone to the main categories of definitions and ideas about listening besides the understanding of listening as a process. Specifically in this chapter I will look at the current state of research on the topic of listening, which most scholars describe as confused and disconnected. I will then look at one of the main reasons scholars cite for current state of listening research: the multitude and spectrum of definitions of listening. Finally, I will address what scholars have done to try to synthesize those definitions and the field of listening research.

“Firsts” in the study of listening

Before talking about the current state of research in the field of listening, I will list some of the highlights of listening research over the past century as compiled by James I. Brown from the University of Minnesota. Brown’s (1987) timeline includes:

1912 – First article (in the sense of earliest) dealing with listening listed in

Duker’s bibliography – “The Relation between Mode of Presentation and Retention” by V.A.C. Hermon, *Psychological Review*.

1926 – First major study dealing with listening – *The Measurement of the Ability*

to Understand Spoken Language by Paul T. Rankin – doctoral dissertation
(Up to this time, the word listening, as now used, was not familiar.)

- 1949 – First study committee on listening – Vertical Committee on listening, established by the National Council of Teachers of English Commission on the English Curriculum.
- 1952 – First publication to contain an chapter entire on listening – “The Program in Listening” from *The English Language Curriculum* published by the NCTE.
- 1952 – First collection of readings for college use with one entire section on listening, including an early article by Ralph G. Nichols – *Efficient Reading* by James I. Brown.
- 1953 – First standardized test devised to measure listening ability – *The Brown-Carlsen Listening Comprehension Test for grades 9 through 13*.
- 1955 – First educational journal to devote an entire issue to listening – *Education* Vol. 75. No. 5.
- 1957 – First full-length book on listening – *Are you Listening?* By Ralph G. Nichols and Leonard A. Stevens.
- 1964 – First book-length annotated bibliography, (880 references) – *Listening Bibliography* by Sam Duker.
- 1966 – First book-length collection of articles on listening, a landmark collection with over 50 articles – *Listening: Readings* by Sam Duker.
- 1971 – First person to write four book in the field of listening – Sam Duker. In

addition to the two already mentioned, Duker wrote *Listening Bibliography, Second Edition* and *Listening: Readings, Volume II*.

(Duker's 4 books have perhaps contributed more to help newcomers to the field than anything else, providing, as they do, the most comprehensive view available of early explorations in listening, of important figures and major concerns.

1979 – First professional society established solely for the advancement of listening – the International Association of Listening (ILA), brought into being through the leadership of Lyman K. (Manny) Steil.

1980 – First annual convention of the ILA – in Atlanta.

1984 – First public-supported tax-exempt foundation focused primarily on listening – Institute for the Study of Intrapersonal Processes, established through the leadership of Larry L. Barker.

1986 – First award for the best theoretical data-based research award in listening, granted by the Institute for the Study of Intrapersonal Processes – the Ralph G. Nichols Award.

1987 – First professional journal giving exclusive attention to listening – the *Journal of the International Listening Association*

This list represents some of the first “firsts” in the study listening; certainly others have happened in the two decades since 1987, but Brown (1987) points out one of the facts about this list that reveals the most about the development of listening when he writes “there are about as many firsts in the last 20 years [prior to 1987] as there were in the first 50 years [from the early 1900s through the 1950s] of activity” (p. 5). As one looks at the

history of listening research one begins to see fragmentation as the field matures and different theories and approaches are developed. Scholarly summaries of listening research highlight the disunity within the field of listening. However, this dissertation will argue that, despite the disunity that some see, some underlying trends do exist.

2.2 The Current State of Listening Research

Sam Duker (1966) published one of the first summaries of listening research. Since then, other scholars have offered their assessment of the current state of research within the field of listening. While Duker organizes his around some of the basic research questions of the time, Witkin (1990) offered her assessment the state of listening research in a special edition of the *International Journal of Listening* she writes: “We may well ask, is research on listening in a parlous state? Certainly, much of it appears confused, incomplete, messy, inconclusive—and possibly a lot of what we know isn’t so!” (p. 7). To highlight this disunity and confusion, Witkin (1990) cites several different conclusions one can draw from the current literature:

- There may be no such entity as “listening.”
- There are many definitions of listening, but no one that is generally agreed upon.
- There is no one theory about listening or how it works.
- Most research in listening is not based on theory.
- The extant research is often contradictory.
- Almost no studies have been done to replicate or verify previous research.
- There is a very serious question as to whether there is an “art” to listening research, and whether indeed the processes can be observed and studied.

These points outline some serious concerns that Witkin has about listening research; clearly she sees some disconnect among the different approaches to listening; so do other scholars. Wolvin et al. (1999) conducted a study assessing what they call the “intellectual discussion” on listening theory and research as represented in the *International Journal of Listening (IJOL)*; they point to articles published in the *IJOL* by Brown McKenzie and Clark, Fitch-Hauser and Hughes, and Halone et al. that highlight this same concern (p. 112). One can clearly see the disunity of the field by looking at its definitions, theoretical models, and research methods. However, this dissertation argues that by examining the same aspects of listening research, one can also see some unity within the field.

2.2.1 Definitions of Listening

One can clearly see the disunity that Witkin and other scholars point to in the vast array of definitions that dot the listening landscape; they range from the simple to the complex and from the scientific to the philosophical. Mark Brady (2003) offers an example of a philosophical definition of listening in the preface to his book *The Wisdom of Listening*; he writes: “Listening skillfully is difficult. Full attention is a discipline much like meditation. It requires practice, rigor, and resolve. And when our efforts slacken, it may require forgiveness, gentleness, and sometimes a bit of creative inspiration to get ourselves back on track” (p. 1). Purdy (1997) also takes a philosophical approach with his metaphor of conscious listening; he states that listening can give a person power when interacting others but cautions: “the type of listening that has power must be a conscious listening, listening with self-conscious awareness” (p. 2). Purdy (1997) goes onto explain: “We all learn to listen naturally with little striving as we mature, but learning to listening consciously takes extra effort. Becoming a conscious listener will make you more

sensitive to the needs of the listener (audience) and hence, improve your competence as a speaker. It will also make you more sensitive to the needs of people in general” (p. 2)

Thus, for these writers, working from a philosophical perspective, listening has less to do with the physiology of the human body and more to do with the human spirit

Moving to a more concrete, simplistic, and practical approach, Madelyn Burley-Allen (1995) refers to listening simply and in a quasi-scientific way as a “method of taking in information” (p. 3). Burley-Allen (1995) also outlines 3 levels of listening: 1. listening in spurts; 2. hearing words but not really listening; and 3. empathetic listening; she claims that an effective listener listens empathetically at all times (p. 14). Her idea of empathetic listening echoes Purdy’s idea of conscious listening but with less intense philosophical connotations. However, early scholars such as Nichols focused on the physical aspects of listening. Nichols (1947) first defined listening as “the attachment of meaning to aural symbols” (p. 84). In more detailed work, Nichols (1957) offers three qualifications to this definition: (a) Since much listening is done in intervals of quiet, and since silence frequently carries meaning, silence itself must be accepted as an aural symbol. (b) Since the assimilation of meaning sometimes starts before a speaker says a word, and since it very frequently continues long after he has said his final one, listening is not necessarily limited to the immediate speaking situation. (c) Although meaning may be attached to aural symbols with or without the presence of visual cues, listening as a medium of learning usually implies the presence of speakers in person, in ‘live’ situations in which visual and aural cue complement each other in the mode of presentation” (p. 1).

Nichols’ ideas – and the ideas of those who take a similar approach – still have currency today even though he does not take philosophical aspects of listening into account.

For a complex yet scientifically based definition of listening, one can point to the work of Carl Weaver, author of *Human Listening*. Weaver (1972) defines communication as “a process that occurs when an agent receives data;” he clarifies this to mean “any kind of agent and any kind of data” (p. 4). Weaver (1972) goes on to say that “listening occurs when a human organism receives data aurally” (p. 5); he explains why he has chosen this particular wording: “Of course, we could broaden the definition by deleting the word ‘human’ [because] other organisms listen too... We could narrow the definition by adding the word ‘verbal’ just before the word ‘data.’ This would restrict the definition to the reception of one kind of aurally input data; there are other kinds that are part of the listening process too” (p. 5). Weaver (1972) does not include visual data within his definition of listening because “although the senses work together, often simultaneously, to input data into the system [human being] during the process of communication... a book on the reception of communicative data that concerned all modes of input would not be a book on listening at all, but a book on communication” (p. 5-6).

Weaver goes on to clarify his definition even more. Describing his notion of “data” more specifically, Weaver (1972) says that aural data only comes in the form of sound waves and explains: “The energy in these waves is transferred to into electrical energy and carried via the eighth nerve to central nervous system, where a very complicated process occurs. This process is called cognitive structuring” (p. 6). Moving on to the notion of receiving, Weaver (1972) writes: “The listening process concerns only the selecting of such stimulus data in order to ‘receive’ it and the cognitive structuring of it. [Thus] the term includes both selecting and structuring, or handling, the data. This means...that the data will be stored somewhere in your brain and thus will be

remembered. Data that are not selected for attention usually enter the memory system and thus are not really received” (p. 6). Clearly, Weaver views listening scientifically, but he does define aspects of the listening process that do not have a completely scientific base

When defining his three aspects of listening – capacity, willingness, and habits – Weaver (1972) suggests “habits” and willingness go hand in hand and represent generally self-explanative concepts and, characteristically of someone with a scientific bend, turns towards the idea of intelligence when he describes “capacity” more specifically; he writes: “The capacity to listen concerns the ability to select and structure input data and thus remember it. Listening-improvement exercises are usually concerned with this aspect of listening. Ability depends partly on intelligence, of course, which tends to place some maximum limit on the rate and quality of data handling. General sophistication and knowledge of the subject of the message are also factors in this aspect of listening” (p. 7). Weaver (1972) also lists “biases” and “sex” (gender) as which affect the “selection and handling” of aurally input data” and then ties one’s ability to listen to one’s “intelligence,” which he sees as measurable (p. 25). The idea of relating listening to intelligence and the question of measuring listening also dates back to Nichols’ work.

Other examples of definitions of listening can be found in the work of Ethel Glenn (1989) who analyzed 50 of them in an article. These definitions include:

1. ...an analysis of impression resulting from concentration where an effort of will is required (Tucker, 1925)
2. ...the ability to understand spoken language (Rankin, 1926)
3. ...the conscious, purposeful registration of sounds upon the mind (which) leads to further mental activity (Hook, 1950)

4. ...the ability to understand and respond effectively to oral communication
(Johnson, 1951)
5. ...the process of reacting to, interpreting, and relating the spoken language in terms of past experiences and further courses of action (Barbe and Meyers, 1954)
6. ...the aural assimilation of spoken symbols in a face-to-face audience situation with both oral and visual cues present (Brown and Carlson, 1955)
7. ...the capacity of an individual to understand spoken language in the presence of a speaker (Still, 1955)
8. ...a selective process by which sounds communicated by some source are received, critically interpreted, and acted upon by a purposeful listener (Jones, 1956)
9. ...a definite, usually voluntary effort to apprehend acoustically (Barbara, 1957)
10. ...the act of giving attention to the spoken word, not only in hearing symbols but in reacting with understanding (Hampleman, 1958)
11. ...the process of hearing, identifying, understanding and interpreting spoken language (Lewis, 1958)
12. ...the composite process by which oral language communicated by some source is received, critically and purposefully attended to, recognized, and interpreted (or comprehended) in terms of past experiences and future experiences (Petrie, 1971)
13. ...the selective process of attending to, hearing, understanding, and remembering aural symbols (Barker, 1971)
14. ...the process by which spoken language is converted to meaning in the mind (Lundsteen, 1971)

15. ...a process that takes place when a human organism receives data orally
(Weaver, 1972)
16. ...the process whereby the human ear receives sound stimuli from other people
and through a series of steps interprets that sound stimuli in the brain and
remembers it (Hirsch, 1979)
17. ...the active process involved in attached meaning to sounds (Spearrill, 1962)
18. ...involves actively tapping and drawing upon the senses as receptors and a
transmitting back of information which can be assimilated and made available for
future use (Barbara, 1971)
19. ...a nonspeaking, often (but not always) nonvocal, perhaps inaudible activity from
another person (Ernst, 1973)
20. ...a rather definite and deliberative ability to hear information, to analyze it, to
recall it at a later time, and to draw conclusions from it (Kelly, 1975)
21. ...the act of selectively discriminating among the available aural inputs within
any given environment (Colburn and Weinberg, 1981)
22. ..getting inside the other person and seeing things from his or her point of view
(Montgomery, 1981)
23. ...the art of getting meaning from a situation in which the spoken word conveys
meaning (Anasiasi, 1982)
24. ...consists of four connected activities – sensing, interpreting, evaluating, and
responding (Steil, Barker, and Waston, 1983)

25. ...a unitary-receptive communication process of hearing and selecting, assimilating and organizing, and retaining and covertly responding to aural and nonverbal stimuli (Wolff, Marsnik, Tracey and Nichols, 1983)
26. ...a process that includes hearing, attending to, evaluating, and responding to spoken messages (Floyd, 1985)
27. ...the process of receiving, attending to, and assigning meaning to aural stimuli (Wolvin and Coakley, 1985)
28. ...receiving and attending to a message, interpreting the message (assigning meaning), evaluating the message, and responding to the message (Sayre, 1987)
29. ...detection, discrimination, recognition, or comprehension of speech through audition, vision, or both in combination (Berg, 1987)
30. ...the perceptual process by which verbal and nonverbal communication (including mechanical sounds) from some source or sources are selectively received, recognized, and interpreted by a receiver or receivers in relation to the perceptual files of the parties to the process (Anderson, Nichols and Booth, 1974)
31. ...attention to both verbal and nonverbal speech stimuli (McBurney and Wrage, 1975)
32. ...three interwoven processes: (1) the physical perception of auditory stimuli, (2) the perception (symbolic classification) of the stimuli, and (3) the interpretation of the stimuli (Millar and Millar, 1976)
33. ...listening well requires attention, thought, interpretation, and imagination (Shrope, 1979)

34. ...the total process of receiving, interpreting, analyzing, and retaining data
(Zimmerman, 1979)
35. ...the process of receiving and assigning meaning to aural messages involves
comprehending, interpreting, and evaluating (Brooks, 1980)
36. ...a perceptual process which centers on but which is not to sound begins before
and continues after our ears receive aural stimuli (Sproule, 1981)
37. ...the whole interpretive process whereby you make sense out of communicative
stimuli (Ehninger, Gronbeck, McKerrow and Monroe, 1982)
38. ...absorbing ideas in the mind, where they can be stored, interpreted, recalled and
acted upon (Cohen, 1983)
39. ...the process of selecting, attending, understanding, and remembering
(Masterson, Beebe and Waston, 1983)
40. ...a conscious effort using mainly the sense of hearing (reinforced by other
senses), which in turn leads to interpretation and understanding (Ross, 1983)
41. ...involves four interrelated steps – receiving, interpreting, analyzing, and
retaining certain sound stimuli in the environment (Samovar and Mills, 1983)
42. ...to listen is to act, to be alert to what is heard, to strain one's ears to catch the
oral sounds made by a speaker and to let the mind dwell upon their meanings
(Tracey, 1983)
43. ...equaling hearing – perception (focus) – attention (selection) – recognition of
cure – understanding – evaluation retention (Weaver, 1983)
44. ...four component parts – sensing, attending, understanding, and remember
(Hanna and Wilson, 1984)

45. ...requires sensing, paying attention, and remember what we hear (Bittner, 1985)
46. ...the process whereby the nervous system interprets (those received) sound waves and translates them into understandable messages (Ayers and Miller, 1986)
47. ...an intellectual or active function that involves the mind, eyes, ears, and memory (Vasile and Mintz, 1986)
48. ...making sense out of what is transmitted (Gregory, 1987)
49. ...involves four distinct processes: receiving, perceiving, interpreting, and responding (Bradley, 1988)

Looking at the vast differences in these definitions how can one not agree with Witkin's assessment of the state of listening research. When one considers that scholars have also outlined different types and functions of the yet-undefined entity of listening, the academic water surrounding listening becomes even muddier.

To further complicate the issue of what it means to listen, one can take that a step further and distinguish between types of listening done in different situations. For instance, Nichols (1957) outlines three different types of listening: (a) appreciative listening to any kind of stimuli gratifying to the senses of the hearer; (b) critical listening to persuasive speech for the purpose of evaluating the speaker's argument and evidence; (c) discriminative listening to informative speech (usually in an instructional setting) for the purpose of comprehension" (p. 1). By this idea, listening to an orchestral symphony requires a different set of listening skills than listening to a political speech or teacher's lecture. Decades later, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) add to Nichols' list as follows:

- *Discriminative Listening*: listening to distinguish stimuli, whether aural or visual; it is basic to the other four purposes of listening (p. 113).

- *Comprehensive Listening*: listening for understanding; “The comprehensive listener is successful if the message that he or she receives, attends to, and assigns meaning to is as close as possible to that which the sender intended. Remembering plays a major role in comprehensive listening when the listener’s purpose is not only to understand the message being presented but retain it for future use (p. 161).
- *Therapeutic Listening*: listening to provide a troubled sender the opportunity to talk through a problem.
- *Critical Listening*: listening to comprehend and then evaluate a message; “The critical listener makes a decision to accept or reject a message on the basis of sound criteria. Listening should be critical especially when the listener is exposed to a persuasive message designed to influence a change in the listener” (p. 247).
- *Appreciative Listening*: “Appreciative listening is the highly individualized process of listening in order to obtain sensory stimulation or enjoyment through the works and experiences of others. The process is highly individualized because it incorporates...a person’s sensitivities in order to derive impressions and/or pleasure from the stimulus. As such, appreciative listening may represent a basically emotional response” (p. 281).

In analyzing these basic types of listening as outlined, one can agree with Wolvin and Coakley that” one must decide to listen discriminately before one can listen any other way; this fundamental decision represents the key to effective listening.

Beyond the various types and definitions of listening, Purdy (1997) writes that “Equally important are the functions...of listening” (p. 10). Purdy (1997) applies the

work of Dance and Larson, who offer several functions for communication in general, to listening. Dance and Larson describe the functions of communication as “(1) the linking of the individual with the environment, (2) the development of higher mental processes, and (3) the regulation of human behavior” (p. 10). Looking at listening in terms of function – what it does – rather than trying to define or classify it offers some unique insights into the phenomenon. While one could certainly understand how having so many different definitions of listening can contribute to the confusion scholars see within the field of listening, one must also take into account the interdisciplinary nature of the field of listening and how that has impacted the struggle for unity within the field.

2.2.2. Different disciplines that contribute to the study of listening

While vast array of definitions of listening certainly shows the disunity of the field, another place that one can see them is in the various theoretical models and research methods used by what Witkin (1990) refers to as the several disciplines that contribute to the field of listening including speech communication, speech science, and cognitive psychology. She outlines her understanding of the disciplines as follows:

- *Speech communication* includes information processing and the relationship of listening to reading
- *Speech science* includes the work labeled phonetics or experimental phonetics, auditory perception, and the study of central language disorders
- *Cognitive psychology* and qualitative studies includes work primarily from the fields of humanistic psychology and therapeutic communication

Witkin (1990) also distinguishes between what she calls the “micro” view of listening – what goes on “inside the head” – from the “macro” view – what goes outside the head (p.

8). Of the four disciplines she has outlined, she claims speech communication and qualitative studies take the larger “macro” view while speech science and cognitive psychology take the more narrow “micro” view; she acknowledges that much overlap exists and her description of the disciplines make somewhat “artificial” distinctions (p. 9-11). According to Witkin, each discipline that contributes to the study of listening has a different theoretical models and a different set of research methods. By examining these, one can also see difference and disunity among the various areas of the field of listening.

2.2.2.1 Theoretical models of listening

Speech communication models

When Witkin (1990) begins to describe some of differences in theoretical models the result from the different disciplines that contribute to the study of listening, she writes that “They are attempts to explain visually the relationship of what the authors view as components or phases of the listening process, and are usually not based on experimental research. In general, they are intended to be descriptive, not heuristic” (p. 12). When discussing the speech communication models, in particular Witkin (1990) cites a 1986 paper by Wolvin which studied 12 models of listening; she writes that these models range “from simple diagrams or hierarchical ordering of listening components to Barker’s (1971) complex model of the of listening in the context of the communication process, including auditory and visual elements of reception, perception, discrimination, and response, and both cognitive and affective elements [or] Lundsteen’s (1979) flowchart model of the processes taken by an effective listening, incorporating responding and organizing, getting meaning, and thinking beyond listening” (p. 11). Witkin (1990) goes on mention other models in this vein such as those of Wolff, Marsnik, Tacey and Nichols

“who consider listening as a unitary process composed of a hierarchical and interrelated set of components” and the Sensing, Evaluating, Interpreting, and Response (SEIR) model of Steil, et al. and other models by Goss and Wolvin and Coakley (p.11)

Cognitive models

When addressing cognitive models, Witkin (1990) qualifies her summary by disclosing that “although [researchers in the area of cognitive psychology] have not developed models of listening as such, their models and in depth analysis of the processes of memory and attention are important for the understanding of listening” (p.12); she goes on to say that a complete model of listening will include both factors. As one begins to examine these models closer, one must examine these two concepts. According to Oakland and Williams, auditory attention includes “the ability to select a relevant stimulus from a background of irrelevant stimuli and to continue to attend selectively to this stimulus for an appropriate length of time” (Witkin, 1990, p. 12). Witkin (1990) claims that much of the research on attention has dealt with visual rather than auditory attention; she writes: “One of the problems with research auditory attention for speech is that there is confusion about what stimulus or language to use when testing for attention as opposed to memory” (p. 12); explains that “because of the redundancy of language, a listener may decode and comprehend a message without attending to every sound, particularly if there is a rich context. On the other hand, tests of memory span for unrelated words or syllables, where there is no meaningful context, are as much a test of attention as they are of memory” (p. 12-13). In other words, a person may pay close attention during a conversation (say about a loved one’s explanation of an illness) but only recall the discussion in generalities later, while a person may memorize some

random information (say a grocery list) long enough to purchase the correct items but then not have any recollection of it beyond that time. So the sticky question for researchers of attention and listening becomes: which represents more effective listening: being able to accurately recall random information for after a short time or general information after a long time? This question and problem relate directly into the other components of cognitive models of listening – the issue of memory.

Turning from models dealing with attention to those dealing with memory, Witkin (1990) explains that most models of memory have two stages: short-term memory (STM) and long-term memory (LTM) (p. 14). Talking about the relationship between these two types of memory and listening, Witkin (1990) writes: “One concept on memory that has been accepted for some decades is that of the limits of STM” by which she means the “the magical number 7, plus or minus 2,” a standard developed by George Miller in the 1956 *Psychological Review* which suggests people can only hold around seven items in their STM at any one time (p. 14). Witkin (1990) explains how this limit relates to listening when she writes: “The production of an isolated speech sound takes time, and this time factor necessitates that, in listening, ‘the internal representation of the acoustic event be held in storage as it is progressively synthesized’ (Sanders 209). The capacity of both STM and LTM is therefore the utmost importance in understanding how memory operates in listening” (p. 14). In other words, not only does memory allow people to listen to and recall what they have heard, it represents one of the essential processes involved in their ability to string two syllables together in the first place. Next, Witkin continues her examination of listening models by focusing on those developed by scholars in the area of speech science and qualitative studies.

Speech science and qualitative models

Focusing first on models of listening from the qualitative perspective, the briefness of Witkin's (1990) summary points out the lack of work in this area; she writes that work in this area "has been based more on phenomenology and observation than on experimental, quantitative studies" (p. 18); she points to Purdy's call for more research in this area while at the same time citing Tomilson's article, "Contributions of Humanistic Psychology to Listening," which outlines several verbal phase models, particularly models of empathy, that have come about as a result of contributions of humanistic psychology to the understanding of listening (p.18). After discussing qualitative models of listening, Witkin moves on to speech science models. Witkin (1990) writes that "model development and research by speech scientists have tended to focus on the internal, auditory perceptual aspects of listening, specifically the processes that occur in the listener at the moment of listening" (p. 15); she describes the generally agreed upon components of perceptual models: "Most perceptual models agree that that auditory processing includes (a) perception of the acoustic signal and recognition of its language, (b) analysis of linguistic units, including attention, analysis, and storage in STM, (c) judgment of the pertinence of the units, (d) retention in LTM and (e) associations leading to meaning" (p. 16). Witkin (1990) points out that this last component causes a problem: "auditory processing in the mature listener always involves an interaction of sensory input and past knowledge. There may also be separate but interrelated systems for processing speech elements, such as segmental and suprasegmental (intonation) phonemes;" she offers Doehring, who proposes a model that does not make a direct connection between brief sensory storage and higher-level perceptual systems as a way to

address this issue (p. 17). In addition to examining the models in the disciplines that contribute to the field of listening, Witkin also discusses the research done by each area.

2.2.2.2 Research Focuses and Methods within the Field of Listening

Witkin address both the research focuses and the research methods unique to each of the four disciplines. Again, one can that the vast differences in these areas have contributed to the overall disunity of the field. When discussing research speech science, Witkin (1990) writes: “There are two main thrusts to this research: the nature of the auditory signal and the nature of the response” (p. 20); “Research in this field is mainly experimental [and] often relies on sophisticated electronic equipment” (p. 23). Moving on to speech communication, Witkin (1990) says: “Here researchers have been interested in the nature of the total listening phenomenon, in how much of a message a listener comprehends and remembers and the interaction of listeners/speakers with the message, the source, and the environment” as well as effective listening; she writes that “the methodology of researchers in the field of speech communication varies considerably depending on the model used. Both observation and experimental studies have been undertaken. Self-reports, studies correlating listening competencies with personality or other traits, and interaction analyses are also used” (p. 22).

Further, Witkin (1990) writes that research in the area of cognitive psychology “aims at understanding the nature of attention and memory, and the ways in which we gather, store, and retrieve information in order to make sense out of the environment. Other pertinent research explores the nature of semantic networks, the relationship between listening and reading, and the development of oral language in children” (p. 20-21). Looking the methods of cognitive psychology, Witkin (1990) writes: “Research in

this field is also typically experimental, and based on different kinds of models of attention and memory, both STM and LTM. There have also been longitudinal studies of infants' children's listening skills in the acquisition of oral language" (p. 24). Witkin goes on to describe the method of "on-line monitoring" developed by Sitch, et al., and used to "identify the automaticity in the reading response" (p. 24).

Finally, Witkin (1990) writes that, in qualitative studies, research focuses on the "transactional nature of listening;" she points to the scholars like Purdy who want to find the "philosophical roots of listening;" she also points to research about "the contributions of listeners rather than speakers to our understanding of oral communication and language" (p. 21). About the research methods used in this area, Witkin (1990) writes: "Researchers in humanistic psychology, counseling, and interpersonal growth employ more qualitative procedures, including ratings by trained observers. They observe behavioral cues, quality of voice, manner of expression, and bodily responses in both listeners and speakers interacting in dyads or small groups" (p. 24).

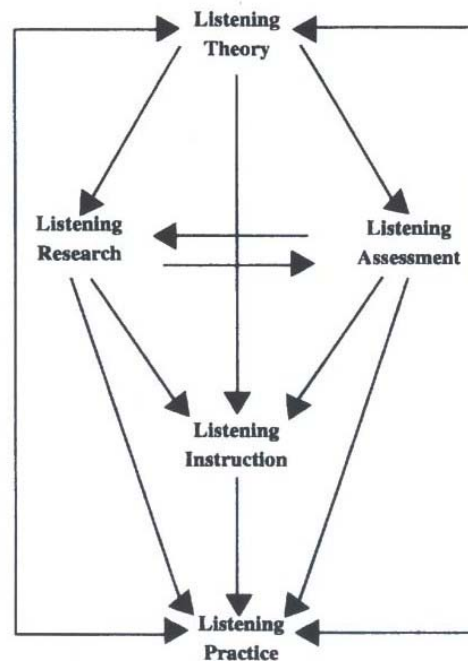
After concluding her summary of the various models of listening and the theories behind them, Witkin (1990) specifically notes the lack of cohesiveness among the models and theories; she writes: "Just as there is no generally agreed upon definition of listening, and theories and models exist that are not only contradictory but mutually exclusive, so there has been a lack of continuity in more than a half a century of research to connect the efforts into a unified field of study" (p. 19). Wolvin et al. (1999) contend that "Explaining why these claims [of disconnect and confusion within the field of listening] have continued to surface throughout the scholarly literature on listening should be of critical importance to the continued growth, development, and future of listening theory and

research” (p. 112). In order to provide some of this unity, scholars have attempted to synthesize the literature of the field. Several examples of this synthesis will follow.

2.3 Synthesizing the Field of Listening

For one example of an attempt to synthesize the field of listening, one can examine Wolvin et al.’s (1999) analysis of the intellectual discussion about listening, which sought to uncover common but primarily unstated assumptions within the literature of the field; these researchers hypothesized that by “understanding the intellectual discussion on listening provides enhanced opportunities by which to clarify the conceptual domain of listening which, in turn, should clarify the scholarly thinking that should result in the conduct of its scholarship” (p. 124). In other words, these researchers believe that if they can uncover the mostly unstated assumptions that reside in the literature on listening they will also uncover a unified theory at work in that literature upon which scholars in the field of listening can base research. Through their analysis of the articles published in the *International Journal of Listening*, they concluded that “the intellectual discussion characterizing the ILA’s [International Listening Association’s] published research collectively consists of five ‘intellectual discourses:’ (a) listening theory, (b) listening research, (c) listening instruction, (d) listening assessment, and (e) listening practice. Identifying these ‘intellectual discourses’ implicates those assumptions that listening scholars have (in)directly embraced throughout the conduct of their listening scholarship” (123). By identifying these content areas, the researchers have given further scholars categories in which to place their work; by using these categories, scholars will find some of the unity lacking within the field of listening. Wolvin et al (1999) then go on to formulate a concept map of these categories:

Illustration 2.1 Concept Map of Listening Discourse (Wolvin et al., 1999, p. 123)



About this conceptual model, Wolvin et al. (1999) write:

This model provides listening scholars and practioners with the opportunity to realize that only through possessing a clear theoretical understanding of the phenomenological nature of listening will subsequent research efforts concerning the role of listening be comprehensively understood...It is hoped that the conceptual map will clarify the research intentions of those scholars interested in various forms and functions of listening processes” (p. 124).

In other words, these scholars hope that synthesizing the intellectual discussion on listening will make it easier for other scholars to describe how their research contributes to the overall study of listening and see what other research has been done in a particular area. “This, in turn,” they write, “should provide greater opportunities for prospectively interested individuals to comfortably enter into, and confidently contribute to, the

intellectual discussion on listening” (p. 124). Witkin, on the other hand, suggests that, rather than examining the literature, one should focus on theories of listening; she offers an alternative approach to theory building as part of an effort to synthesize the field.

For her part in the effort to synthesize the various theories about listening, Witkin (1990) suggests a systemic approach; specifically, she offers two points of an alternative approach to what has been the norm in recent research. These points include:

1. Listening is what a listener does. (This turns attention away from definitions and concern about some abstract entity called “listening” and leaves the way open for many avenues of investigation.)
2. Apparent contradictions in the research can be resolved by taking a system view of listening. This approach recognizes that:
 - A system is comprised of many interrelated and dynamically interacting parts of subsystems.
 - Any change in any part of the system affects the whole system.
 - The boundaries of any system under study are determined by the researcher or interested observer.

Witkin (1990) refers to the fact that research in the area of listening comes from the different disciplines discussed earlier as a “source of confusion” within the field. She writes: “the nature of listening research derives as much from the discipline and interest of the researcher as from an overarching theory of coherent point of view...The various disciplines tend to look at different parts of the system. And possible because of the disparate viewpoints, much research applicable to listening is not labeled as such” (p. 8). So, in other words, it seems that, while Witkin wants to synthesize the field of listening

under a systemic approach, she also seems to want to warn scholars that theoretical synthesis might not bridge all the gaps or clarify all the inconsistencies.

In another article, “Toward a Synthesis of Listening Constructs: A Concept Map Analysis” Witkin and Trochim (1997) try to find relationships between the different ideas and definitions about listening and the words most commonly associated by using the method of concept mapping; they asked study participants to cluster keywords from the literature about listening and then rank the importance of the words and clusters to the construct of listening; the clusters which the participants ranked the highest included the clusters called active listening, composite process, critical listening, sensory impression, and context (84). These clusters included the following words and rankings:

Table 2.1 Clusters in the Listening Literature (Witkin and Trochim, 1997, p. 76-79)

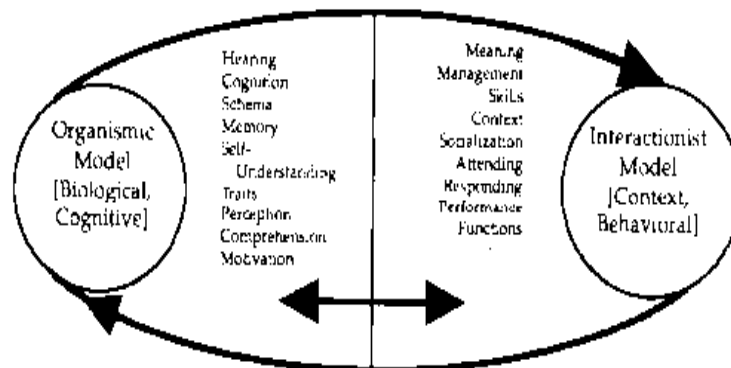
Cluster			
Active Listening (3.60)	Active (4.32)	Affective process (3.53)	Alertness (4.11)
Composite Process (3.65)	Association (3.42)	Composite process (3.32)	Decoding (4.05)
Sensory impression (3.76)	Attention (4.68)	Auditory processing (3.42)	Images (3.32)
Context (3.65)	Constructs (3.32)	Context (4.0)	Experience (3.79)
Critical Listening (3.86)	Concentration (4.47)	Conscious (4.05)	Critical listening (4.21)

Witkin and Trochim (1997) write that the clusters and rankings have to be examined by listening researchers to see how useful they are (p. 84); they recommend the study be replicated in several ways; this has not happened yet. After analyzing this data, one may notice that not even in the highest ranking cluster did any one cluster earn an average score higher than 4; yet several of the words in the top-ranked clusters earned rankings of 4.5 or better; one can wonder what an exploratory study would like that put the highest

ranked words in a cluster and try to find relationships between them. Like Wolvin and Witkin, McKenzie and Clark also offer a way to synthesize the field.

McKenzie and Clark (1995) attempt another kind of synthesis; in their article “The All-In-One Concept: How Much Must Listening Research Include?” they develop a model for listening research that they call “symbiotic” rather than based on one unified theory of listening. Explaining their decision to argue for what they call a “dual typology,” McKenzie and Clark (1995) write: “At times we appear to be asking listening to be too much – attending, perceiving, interpreting, remembering, comprehending, responding – resulting in comments that suggest perhaps listening research should be abandoned... A more parsimonious approach to listening is needed; an approach which is comprehensive, but offers the ‘logical simplicity’ necessary in theory building” (p. 35). To illustrate their ideas, McKenzie and Clark develop the following theoretical model:

Illustration 2.2 McKenzie and Clark’s Synthesis (McKenzie and Clark, 1995, p. 35)



McKenzie and Clark (1995) describe the different spheres as follows: “The organismic sphere of the model approaches objects primarily as biological and cognitive processes ... assumed to be relatively fixed and similar across individuals ... [and with] an existence apart from response and interaction.” (p. 36) In the interactionist sphere, on the

other hand, McKenzie and Clark (1995) write that “listening is ‘holistic’ (a phenomenon) and cannot be interpreted apart from environmental variables... Thus, ‘managing’ listening, trying to be a better listener, or practicing listening skills are all part of listening and viable areas of research in the interactionist model” (p.36); they describe the benefits of their model as: “(a) research is clearly focused in one part of the model or the other, (b) no research tries to encompass everything and, therefore, can be more focused, (c) what is learned in one part of the model enhances what is known in the other part of the model” (p. 40); in short, they write: “Together, the two parts of the model serve to form a ‘gestalt’ of listening research” (p. 40). While the scholarship just examined has sought to synthesize the field of listening either by look at its literature or by focusing more on the theories generated by that literature, one has also seen scholars try to synthesize the field of listening by trying to develop one definition of the term listening.

The quest for the definition of listening

Nowhere does the desire for unity and synthesis in the field of listening manifest itself than in the quest for *the* definition of listening. After analyzing her 50 definitions, Glenn (1989) narrowed the ideas in these definitions to what she refers to as “the aspects of listening upon which scholars generally agree;” the terms she uses to represent those aspects are perception (which includes reception, hearing, sensing, detecting), attention, (which includes concentration, conscious effort, purposeful, selective, voluntary, active), interpretation (which includes understand, comprehend, assign meaning, identify, recognize, analyze, assimilate, make sense), remembering (which also includes retention and recall), response (react, set upon, evaluate, draw conclusions, further activity or course of action), spoken sounds (which also refers to oral language), and visual cues

(which includes face-to-face and nonverbal) (p. 24-25). Glenn (1989) then ranked how often these terms appeared in the definitions; she found that interpreting was the most common of these concepts, appearing in 36 of the 50 definitions, followed by perceiving (32 of 50) and attention (22 of 50) (p. 25). And yet this synthesis, along with the others, does not seem satisfy scholars; the quest for one definition of listening continues.

According to Wolvin and Coakley (1996), "*The* [their emphasis] definition of listening continues to be in the developing stages. Because listening is such a complex human behavior, because listening as a covert behavior is difficult to investigate, and because research in listening is in an exploratory state, conceptualizing the process of listening continues to occupy the process of listening continues to occupy the attention of listening scholars throughout the world (p. 68). This dissertation takes issue with their implication that scholars should make agreement on one definition of listening the focus of research. Purdy (1997) points out that one definition of listening may not work in a field in which listening "is conceived differently depending upon how people intend to apply the definition. For example, researchers who seek to predict listening behavior, versus those who interpret listening, versus consultants who provide listening skills training in the workplace may each employ a viable albeit different definition of the term listening" (p. 6). As one considers the amount of scholarly activity generated in the pursuit of *the* definition of listening one may legitimately ask: What do scholars hope to gain by establishing just one definition of such a multifaceted concept?

Since the publication of the most recent edition of Wolvin and Coakley's *Listening* text cited above, one can consider that in 1996 the International Listening Association (ILA) officially defined listening as "the process of receiving, constructing

meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages” (Purdy , 1997, p. 6). How long will this definition last before it becomes inadequate? Purdy (1997) suggests that “whatever definition of listening we choose we must know that listening is based on several premises. Listening: can be learned; is a dynamic process; is an active process; involves mind and body, with verbal and nonverbal processes working together, and; allows us to be responsive to the needs, concerns, and information of others, Oas well as the environment around us” (p. 7). Purdy (1997) combines all of these premises into his own definition of listening as “the active and dynamic process of attending, perceiving, interpreting, remembering, and responding to the expressed (verbal or non-verbal) needs, concerns, and information offered by other human beings” (p. 7). This definition, Purdy (1997) argues, keeps the spirit of the ILA definition but “is at the same time more specific emphasizing the need for attention, perceiving and interpreting, and remembering. In addition, it focuses our attention on the important needs and concerns of real people” (p. 8). Clearly the search for the definition of listening and one underlying theory of listening to unite the field continues. Some may question one’s motives for entering the field given its current state. By entering into the current field of listening, this dissertation seeks, in some way, to synthesize the field as well, by showing the unity that already does exist within the various disciplines and theoretical perspectives examined in the chapter. Further, in the spirit of Purdy’s comment the field may not need one definition, it wishes to add yet another perspective from which to view the field of listening in general and the listening process in particular; it does not do so to further divide the field, but to offer a perspective that respects the truth in all the of various ideas on the table while at the same time offering one lens through which to view them.

2.4 Summary

As one considers the points that this chapter has made thus far about the trends in listening research, one can see that the field has an interdisciplinary nature that includes a wide array of definitions, models, and research methods. Attempts to synthesize the field have offered much for scholars to consider, but none of them have truly changed the way scholars in the field have gone about their work; this disunity still exists. This dissertation, however, takes a slightly different perspective on the disunity shown here; it suggests that many of the assumptions undergirding the field of listening in general, and particularly the study of listening as a process, do represent a coherent unified perspective – that of behaviorism. The next chapter of this project will examine this perspective more closely and highlight its prevalence within the field of listening in general and the study of listening as a process in particular.

Chapter 3

The Process of Listening

3.1 Introduction

After examining some of the literature within the field of listening and paying particular attention to the state of research in the field, which many scholars have called confused or inconclusive, one might think that no unity exists within the field of listening, but this dissertation wishes to suggest that, in general, the perspective of behaviorism, albeit in many different manifestations, dominates the scholarship within in the field of listening in general and specifically the study of listening as a process. This chapter will first discuss some of the general tenets of behaviorism and its history within the field of listening. Next, it will examine various versions of the listening process put forth by scholars such Wolvin and Coakley and Brownell to show that these scholars have used a behaviorist approach to study this particular part of the listening field.

Before outlining the specifics about the various models of the listening process, a brief overview of scholarship about the listening process will help to clarify the nature of research in this area to date. First, one finds claims of a lack of literature and understanding within the field. In an article published in the *International Journal of Listening*, Halone et al. (1998) suggests that “the division between what communication scholars propose to know about the listening process, versus what is currently available in

the scholarly literature is greater than what one might initially expect” (p. 12). Halone et al. (1998) goes on to cite several scholars on this matter including Bostrom and Waldhard who writes: “little is known about the listening process and disagreement exists about its measurement (p. 12).” Clearly much work remains in the field. As one considers this, one should also consider the dominant perspective of the current literature.

In describing the scholarship on the listening process, Halone et al. (1998), borrowing from work by Wolvin and Coakley, argue that “the process of listening may be conceived of primarily in a.) cognitive, b.) affective, c.) behavioral/verbal d.) behavioral/nonverbal, and e.) behavioral/interactive terms” (p. 13); the study discussed in the article successfully confirmed that claim. Upon reading such a description of the listening process in such behavioral terms, one can begin to see the influence of behaviorism on the scholarly discussion to date about the listening process. This dissertation hopes to bring a new perspective to that discussion. Before that can happen, though, one must briefly examine the history and assumptions of behaviorism.

3.2 Behaviorism in the Field of Listening

3.2.1 An Overview of Behaviorism

John Watson (1930) defines behaviorism in terms of its view of the subject matter of human psychology as human behavior rather than consciousness, which Watson says “is neither a definite nor a useful concept” (p. 2). So, rather than focus on how people think, behaviorism focuses on what people do. According to Watson (1930) a behaviorist always asks: “Can I describe this bit of behavior in terms of stimulus and response” (p. 6). Watson (1930) defines stimulus as “so-called objects of our environment” (p. 15). When describing the idea of response, Watson (1930) writes: “an organism does

something when it is assailed by stimuli” (p. 14); he also states that each effective stimuli (stimuli strong enough for the organism to perceive) incurs an immediate response (p. 15), which he classifies as either an internal or external response (p. 16). Here then, one sees that stimulus and response make up the basic building blocks of behaviorism. Watson (1930) also discusses how to measure stimulus and response; he writes that researchers rely on observation to see the effects of their experiments, which usually involving manipulating stimuli (p. 21). Watson writes that he manipulates the stimuli in his subject’s environment “to find out how I could make them behave in a certain way” (p. 21). Watson (1930) also sees mental tests, which he describes as “measuring rods for classifying masses of individuals according to level to performance,” as another, albeit not as effective, way to study human behavior (p. 40). As one of the first people to describe and utilize a behaviorist perspective, Watson laid out some of the foundations of behaviorism. Other scholars, such as B.F. Skinner, expanded his ideas.

Taking Watson’s ideas further by focusing on what lies beyond the science of behaviorism, B.F. Skinner (1976) writes in *About Behaviorism* that “Behaviorism is not the science of human behavior; it is the philosophy of that science” (p. 3). He goes on to explain that many people come under misconceptions about behaviorism; he lists 20 specific ones. This dissertation acknowledges those ideas and has attempted to take a textured view on the topic (p. 208). That said, one of the main tenets of behaviorism that this dissertation will call into question comes in the form of Skinner’s (1976) statement: “A scientific analysis of behavior must, I believe, assume that a person’s behavior is controlled by his genetic and environmental histories rather than by the person himself as initiation, creative agent” (208). He acknowledges that “no part of the behavioristic

position has raised more violent objections” (p. 208); he goes on to point out that critics of behaviorism “often overlook the fact that human behavior is also a form of control. That an organism should act to control that around it is as characteristics of life as breathing or reproduction. A person acts upon the environment, and what he achieves is essential to his survival and the survival of the species” (p. 208). In other words, Skinner acknowledges a place for human creativity and initiative but seems to believe those traits only manifest themselves if a threatening stimulus appears in the already given environment. Does this mean that human beings create works of art simply so they do not die of boredom? Or does all art have a utility? Where does one draw the line between what an organism needs to survive and what it does not? Who or what draws that line? This dissertation argues that these questions remained unanswered even after taking into consideration Skinner’s defense of his position. This dissertation also argues that these basic tenets of behaviorism make up the foundations of much of the current scholarship of listening. One can keep in mind that if one takes the idea of behaviorism to the extreme one can see language or communication, as Watson (1930) does, as nothing more than a manipulative behavior or habit that people do (p. 225). This dissertation does not intend to label any particular scholar as a behaviorist; it simply wants to show some trends in the scholarship and their connection to some of the basic tenets of behaviorism.

3.2.2 Behaviorism and the study of listening

One can see the influence of behaviorism on the study of listening when looks at the vocabulary scholars use to define it and the methods that they use to study it. While Watson and Skinner represent some of the primary scholars in the field of behaviorism, Larry Barker and Carl H. Weaver represent some of the first to use behaviorism to study

communication in general and listening specifically. Weaver (1972) writes in his book *Human Listening: Processes and Behavior* that “listening happens when a human organism receives data aurally” (p. 5). One sees clearly here in this definition a relationship between data and stimulus, one must receive data just as one must sense a stimulus. Further, looking at Barker’s (1971) model of the listening process, published in his book *Listening Behavior*, one will see that it actually starts with a stimulus and ends with a response (p. 25). This represents a common thread that this dissertation will examine in more detail as it compares several models of the process of listening.

More recent models of the listening process based on behaviorism include the work of Wolvin and Coakley (1996) in their book *Listening*, Wolff and Marsnik (1992) in their work *Perceptive Listening*, Judi Brownell (1996) in her work *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, and Skills*, and Steil et al. (1992) in their work *Effective Listening*. One can find the influence of the philosophy on the work of these scholars in the way they define their terms and secondly in their research methods. One can see an example of this in the work of Wolvin and Coakley. Wolvin and Coakley (1996) define listening as “the process of receiving, attending to, and assigning meaning to aural and visual stimuli” (p. 69); as they continue to discuss the listening process, one comes to understand that a response follows the assignment of meaning and that this response then, in turn, becomes yet another stimulus triggering another response (p. 70). This attention to stimuli and response clearly shows their behaviorist roots and tendencies. Nothing can or does happen in their depiction of the listening process until an organism senses a stimulus.

Beyond definitions, the influence of behaviorism on the work of scholars studying also comes through when one examines the empirical and quantitative methods they

commonly use. Quantitative tests represent one of these methods. For example, Barker and Kittie W. Watson (1988) developed the widely-used Watson-Barker test; this test represents one of clearest examples of the generally empirical methodology employed throughout listening research. The researchers developed this test “to measure some of the important dimensions of the listening process” (p. 21). This harkens back to Watson’s understanding of a mental test a “measuring rod” by which to assess a subject’s performance of behavior. The idea that one can measure how well one listens underlies a perspective that views listening as a behavior. The next section of this dissertation will highlight this perspective in several models of the listening process.

3.3 The Steps of the Listening Process

3.3.1 A brief introduction to and comparison of models of the listening process

Moving from general discussion about the behaviorist tenets underlying the study of listening to an examination of specific models of the listening process, this dissertation argues that these models share behaviorist tendencies. In order to discuss the various elements of the models individually as well as comparatively, this dissertation has taken the various steps of each of these processes and categorized them around the elements of Brownell’s HURIER model. By following the chart below, then, the reader can see which steps fall under discussion at a given point in the following section, which will go into each of the elements of Brownell’s HURIER model in more detail.

Table 3.1 Comparison of Models of the Listening Process

Brownell	Wolvin/Coakley	Wolff/Marsnick	Steil
<i>Hearing</i>	Receiving and Attending	Receiving and Attending	Sensing

<i>Understanding</i>	Assigning meaning	Interpreting and Recreating	Interpreting
<i>Remembering</i>	Assigning meaning	Retaining (and responding)	
<i>Interpreting</i>	Assigning meaning	Interpreting and Recreating	Interpreting
<i>Evaluating</i>	Assigning meaning	Interpreting and Recreating	Evaluating
<i>Responding</i>	Responding overtly	Responding (and retaining)	Reaction

This chart, then represents a comparison of four different models of the listening process: Wolvin and Coakley's (1996) model published in their book *Listening*, Wolff and Marsnik's (1992) model published in their work *Perceptive Listening*, and Brownell's (1996) HURIER model published in her work *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, and Skills*, and Steil et al.'s (1983) SEIR model. One can find illustrations of these models in the following pages. The following section of this paper will examine the elements of the HURIER model in turn starting with hearing. As one goes through this chart, one sees the ideas of stimulus and response already discussed as the foundations of behaviorism as Watson and Skinner described them. This dissertation argues that the actions of hearing, receiving, attending, and sensing illustrated by these models represent the process of the subject coming an awareness of stimuli in the environment; further, the issues of reaction and response in these models all represent the action of responding to the original stimulus and creating a new one. This argument should become clear as this section proceeds to examine the steps involved in each of the models in more detail as highlight some of the aspects of behaviorism that undergird it and the other models listed.

Illustration 3.1 HURIER model of listening (Brownell, 1996, p. 12)

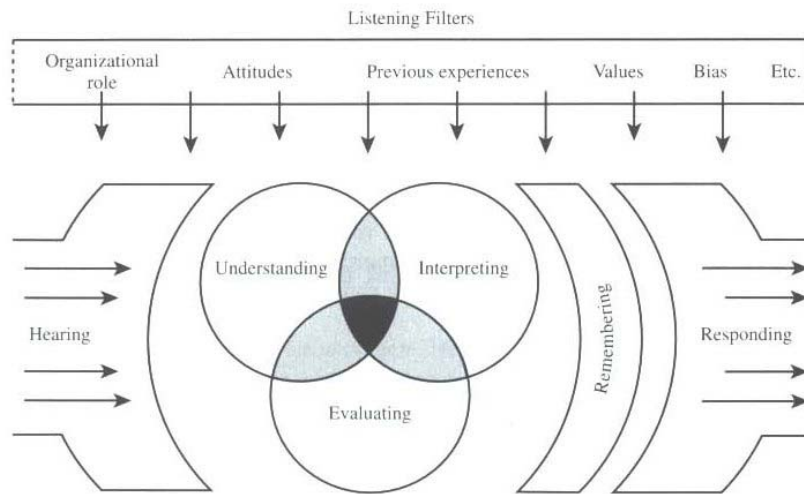


Illustration 3.2 Wolvin and Coakley's listening process (Brownell, 1996, p. 47)

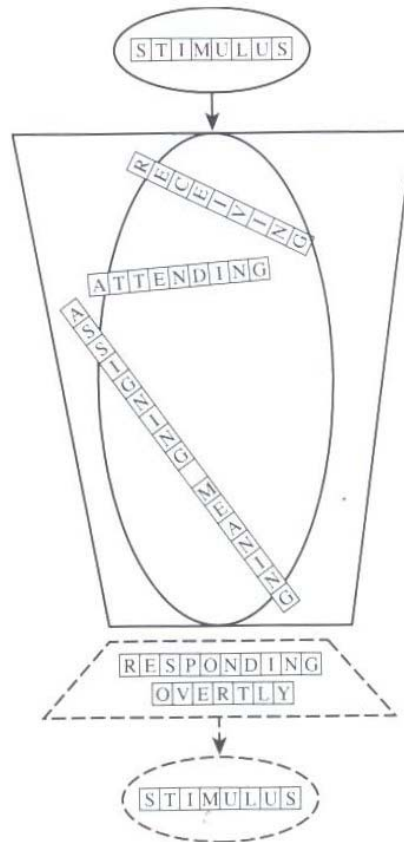


Illustration 3.3 Wolff's model of the listening process (Brownell, 1996, p. 49)

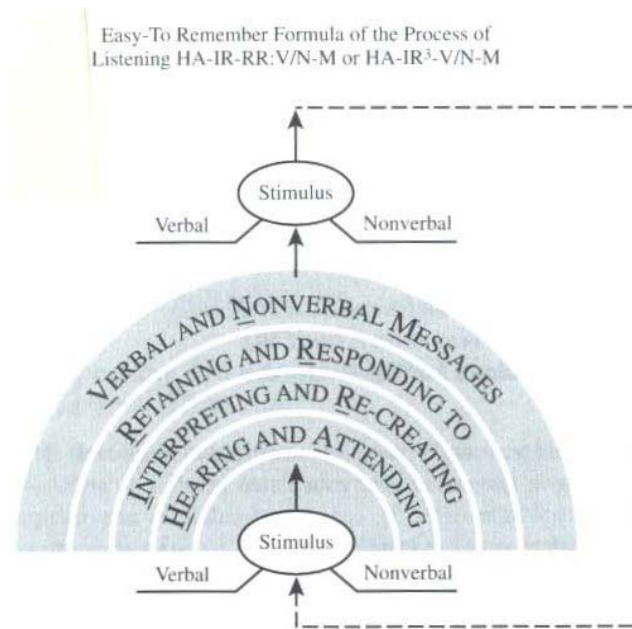
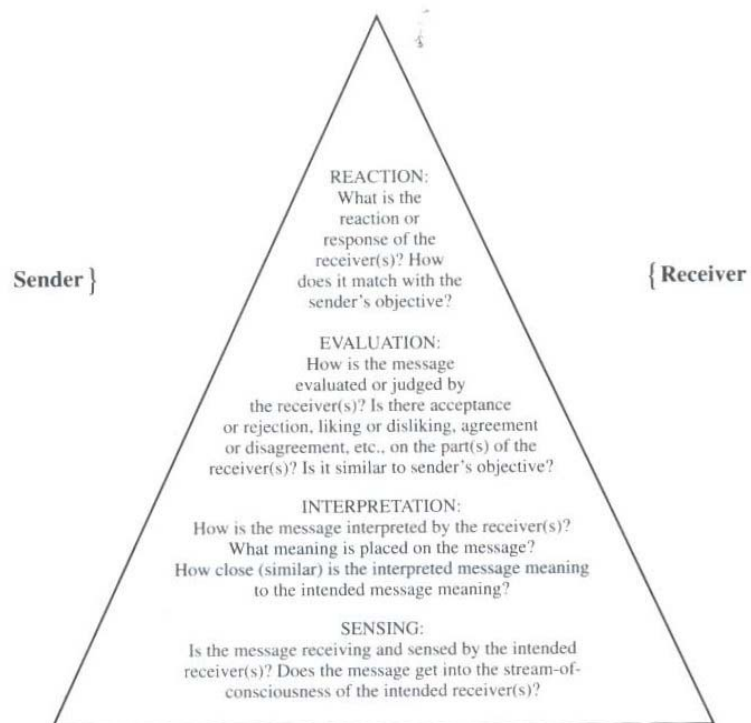


Illustration 3.4 SEIR model of the listening process (Steil et al., 1983, p. 48)



3.3.2 Hearing

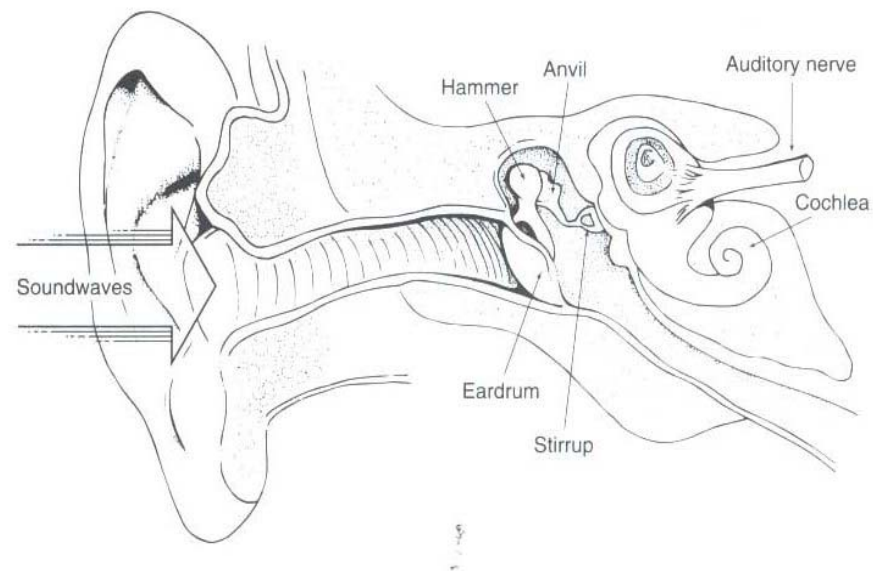
The process of hearing

According to Wolff and Marsnik (1992), “Hearing is a physical activity that occurs automatically as we mentally select to perceive and attend aural messages. Although the complete sensory and perceptual system is embodied in the listening process, hearing is the primary sensory receptor initiating listening” (p. 25); they call this process “almost magical” (p. 26). According to Brownell (1996), while hearing represents the first step in the larger listening process, it functions as a process in and of itself that “involves three interrelated stages: reception of sound, perception of sound, and auditory association. The importance of this process is clear; only when you accurately perceive what is said can you focus on the critical matter of assigning meaning to the speaker’s words” (p. 77). While in general this statement has a lot of truth, one can also consider questions about how one knows when one has perceived accurately? Does this involve accurate interpretation of the speaker’s intention or simply accurate recall of the specific wording of the message? One might also wonder about people who do not have perfect hearing – can they hear what person says accurately and thus perceive and assign meaning accurately? This dissertation wants to bring these questions to the forefront.

After discussing the importance of the process of hearing Brownell (1996) goes on to outline the various stages in detail; she writes “First, recall that sound travels in waves as it moves through the air. These waves bump into air molecules and create either positive or negative pressure. When air molecules are pushed together, positive pressure is created; sound waves may pass through the air at up to 760 miles per hour. It is actually the sound waves that [a person] hears” (p. 77). Continuing to describe the

process, Brownell (1996) writes: “Your outer ear catches the sound waves and channels them through the auditory canal to the eardrum. The sound waves cause the drum membrane to vibrate. The small bones on the other side of the – the hammer, stirrup, and anvil – amplify those vibrations. Next, sound waves reach your inner ear. Here, the cochlea, a snail-shaped structure filled liquid takes over. Inside the cochlea are hair-like nerve cells that change pressure vibrations to nerve impulses. These, in turn re transmitted to the auditory nerve and then to the brain. Finally – you perceive sound” (p. 77). This brief summary of how the ear and brain process sound gives the reader insight into the different processes involved in the hearing process. Brownell also provides the following drawing that may provide even more insight into the process of hearing:

Illustration 3.5 Parts of the Ear (Brownell, 1996, p. 77)



Three levels of hearing

Further developing her discussion of the hearing process, Brownell distinguishes between three different levels of hearing. Brownell (1996) introduces these levels of hearing when she writes: “Establishing control over the listening situation is an important

goal for anyone interested in improving his or her hearing. There are times, however, when characteristics of the sound override your voluntary selection and cause what we call switching – a change in focus from one sound to another. Switching often occurs because there are three levels or types of hearing” (p. 78). Brownell (1996) goes on to describe these different levels when she writes: “At the primary level, hearing is voluntary. You select the information you want to concentrate on, deliberately tuning into certain sounds while ignoring others...At the secondary level, your involuntary or automatic nervous system is also at work. You may be focusing on one [listening] task...and still be conscious of [other sounds]...Finally, on a tertiary level, you have little or no control over what you hear; the central nervous system is not involved in processing the stimuli. Rather, the automatic response system responds to a sound simply because of its intensity” (p. 78). The description of these levels suggests that in certain situations a person may not have a choice about what messages he or she will hear; however, without necessarily disagreeing with that statement, this dissertation argues that a person always has a choice about the messages to which he or she will listen.

The Tomatis view of hearing and listening

If one takes the view of hearing seen above, which Billie Thompson (1993) refers to in his work on listening disabilities as the “orthodox view” of hearing, one may ultimately see hearing and listening as distinct processes: First one hears; then one listens. About this idea, Thompson (1993) writes: “Listening, when it is considered to be distinct from hearing, is usually defined conceptually as a cognitive process mediated by the brain...Listening is improved through better or more efficient cognitive skills and is highly dependent on motivation...Tomatis says that, while motivation is important, the

functional ability to listen is equally important, beginning with the middle ear” (p. 128). For Tomatis, then, “Listening is the active focusing of the middle ear to accommodate and enhance the sensory perception of those sounds of particular interest...It acts more like a directional microphone to highlight the extraneous or background sound” (Thompson, 1993, 134). From Tomatis’ and Thompson’s perspective, then, one can see the brain and the ear not as two distinct and perhaps even oppositional players in the listening process but as members of the same team working together.

Continuing discussion, one can look at Tomatis’ list of functions that the human ear has and see how it differs from those already discussed (Thompson, 1993, p. 129):

- to transmit energy (cortical charge) to the brain
- to integrate information from sound and other movements from sound and motor movements to enable the development of verticality, laterality, and language
- to establish a right lead ear for efficient audiovocal control
- to establish balance/equilibrium and to stimulate neurovegetative balance
- to perceive sound
- to attend to and to discriminate between sounds we want to hear and to out those we do not want (listen)
- to locate sounds spatially

From this list, one sees the texture of the Tomatis perspective on hearing. The ear no longer has the job of simply to sending signals to the brain; it has a much deeper job. If one takes this position, then one begins to question the place of hearing as the “first step” in the listening process. If, as Tomatis suggests, listening involves both ear and brain

simultaneously, then hearing alone does not happen first. This dissertation argues that a person makes the choice to listen before any specific sound hits the ear and/or the brain.

Going beyond the idea that listening involves only the ear and brain, Tomatis sees the whole body as involved in the listening process and the ear in the role of “integrator” among various systems in the body (Thompson, 1993, p. 130). Thompson writes:

Tomatis describes how the vestibular (balancing) and cochlear (decoding of sound) functions of the ear are joined in a single system. Phylogenetically, the vestibule analyzes larger movements, those within the body, and the cochlea evolved as an addition to analyze smaller acoustical type movement. ...

Anatomically, the vestibular nerve presents itself at every level of the medulla and is thereby directly connected with all the muscles of the body. Tomatis proposes the vestibular integrator role for the ear, noting that all muscles depend on the vestibule for their tone, equilibrium, and relative position with relation to the whole body. (Thompson, 1993, p. 130 – 131)

Here then, one sees an even clearer case that Tomatis believes that the ear has a much different position in the listening process than scholars such as Wolvin and Coakley do.

The place of hearing and stimuli in the process of listening

Turing back to the models under examination, one can see that, in essence, all of the theorists who developed them see hearing as the first step in the listening process and that, in the simplest terms, they see the ear as little more than a pathway to the brain.

When she summarizes her views on hearing, Brownell (1996) writes: “Hearing is the first stage in effective listening. In order to hear accurately, listeners must attend to aural stimuli and concentrate on a particular message” (p. 90). Steil et al. (183) write: “good

listening begins at the level of sensing the sender's message...if the listener does not sense the message, he or she can do nothing further with it" (p.21). Wolff and Marsnik (1992) demonstrate his commitment to this paradigm when he writes "Aural understanding begins with hearing ability...hearing is the initial step in the complex process of listening" (p. 43). Finally, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) write: "Listening ability depends on hearing acuity since hearing – the physiological act of sound waves being received by the ear and transmitted to the brain – is the first step of the listening process" (p. 26). The ear-as-pathway mentality critiqued by Tomatis comes through in each of these passages. But what happens if a person has hearing disabilities?

Types of hearing and listening disabilities

Wolvin and Coakley (1996) describe six different types of hearing impairments. The more common ones include: 1.) an accumulation of wax in the outer ear, 2.) swimmer's ear – an infection that results when water remains in the ear canal, 3.) *otitis media* – an infection of the middle ear caused by a respiratory infection, 4.) *tinnitus*, or noise in the ear, which can occur if a person has high blood pressure or inner ear damage from drugs or exposure to loud sound, and, finally, 5.) *presbycusis*, loss of hearing due to effects of the human aging process on the hearing mechanism (p. 75). Wolvin and Coakley (1996) go on to cite a sixth, less common genetic condition primarily affecting Caucasian women called *ostoclerosis*; this progressive disease causes the hard bone of the inner ear to become sponge-like (p. 75). Also, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) talk about how noise pollution and other environmental factors such as lack of coordinated functioning of both ears – which leads to the inability to discriminate the direction of the source of the sound, background noise, and auditory fatigue – the overexposure of the ear

to multiple aural stimuli – have on a person’s ability to hear (p. 77, 79). According to Wolvin and Coakley (1996), citing information from the National Institute of Health, 28 million Americans suffer from some form of hearing loss (p. 75).

While Wolvin and Coakley focus on problems with the ear, Thompson and Tomatis classify their understanding of similar phenomena and cast their conceptual net wider by coining the phrase listening disabilities; Thompson (1993) writes:

Listening disabilities are the dysfunctions physically, emotionally, and mentally caused by the inability of the ear to focus on sounds (movements of the air) it wants to hear, to tune out those it does not want, and to naturally integrate and analyze those sounds and the internal movements of the body (motor) for our use. This definition acknowledges the singularity of the cochlear-vestibular system, desire as an important component of listening, and the ear’s role of integrator. From this context, a listening exists when we have (a) poor functioning of either cochlear or vestibular portions, or (b) poor control and lack of harmony between both systems, and/or (c) we are emotionally not willing to tune in. (p. 143).

For Thompson and Tomatis, then, when someone does not listen effectively, the problem probably started in the ear, but not necessarily with hearing. This perspective, then, allows for connections between listening and hearing impairment that the perspective of Wolvin and Coakley and the other scholars highlighted in this chapter does not.

The position that Wolvin and Coakley (1996) seem to take on the ability of hearing-impaired person to listen illuminates one of the major implications of taking a behaviorist position on listening; they write: “While an estimated 28 million hearing-impaired Americans might honestly be able to say ‘I didn’t hear you’ as their reason for

not engaging in the whole listening process, the remaining 230 million Americans must attribute their ineffective listening behavior to a factor other than impaired hearing” (p. 26). One might interpret this as saying deaf or hearing impaired people cannot hear well; therefore, they cannot learn to listen well. Wolff and Marsnik (1992) take a somewhat different approach, but arguably one with the same outcome, to the question of hearing impairment when they write: “It is possible to experience aural understanding without the physical ability to sense by hearing. Several years ago, a young deaf woman surprised people when they met because they presumed she heard. She became an efficient listener by substituting lip reading and nonverbal signals for her hearing loss...She listened without hearing ability because she was forced to substitute other senses for hearing” (p. 43). While this example dispels the notion that the hearing impaired cannot learn to listen, it still places the emphasis on the perception of and response to stimuli. This dissertation, however, sees the choice to listen as more than a response to stimuli.

This dissertation argues that people must make the choice to learn and use whatever skills they desire long before the opportunity or stimuli to use them presents itself. Going back to the example of the deaf woman, from the perspective of this dissertation, she listened successfully because at some point she decided she wanted to listen and then learned how to do so to the best of her ability given her physical limitations; every human being must make this same choice about listening. Put another way, one can say that by choosing to go to medical school and learn the procedure, a doctor makes the choice to perform an appendectomy when necessary long before he responds to his first case of appendicitis; in the same way, a person must choose what he or she will listen to long before hearing it. At this point, one can assume that one of the

most obvious objections of the behaviorist might sound like this: the idea of choosing to listen sounds like choosing to pay attention to certain stimuli and/or practicing discriminative listening; indeed, it does; but, as chapter four will argue in depth, to move from believing, as the behaviorists generally seem to, that a person chooses what to attend to from a pool of already present stimuli to believing, as this dissertation argues, that a person can and should make a choice to attend to stimuli that may yet appear requires a different philosophical approach than behaviorism.

3.3.3 Understanding

Principles of understanding

Moving from the process of hearing to the process of understanding, one begins to ask questions about how people comprehend the meaning of what they have heard? Brownell (1996) addresses this question directly when she talks about her process of understanding; she writes: “Prerequisite to listening comprehension is word recognition. You must be able to form tentative images from the sound cues you hear. ... In addition to recognizing sound cues, you must also put incoming data into some kind of framework to make it meaningful; you must become the author of your ‘own version of context’” (p. 110). In this passage one can begin to see the relationship between understanding and memory, or the process of remembering; Brownell (1996) talks about this connection when she writes: “A listener compares incoming information to previous knowledge, forms relationships between new and old ideas, and creates as personalized memory file. Individuals who have difficulty scanning their information warehouse often have difficulty making use of previous knowledge and so have trouble with listening

comprehension. Here you can appreciate the close ties between comprehension and memory” (110); these ties will come under examination later in this chapter.

One may claim that, from Wolvin and Coakley’s perspective, what Brownell sees as the process of understanding happens during or has a part in the process of “assigning meaning.” According to Wolvin and Coakley (1996), in the process of assigning meaning, “the listener’s goal is to attach meaning as similar as possible to that attended by the message sender” (p. 87). One sees similarities between this view of understanding or attending to a message and Steil et al.’s (1983) view that: “after the message is sensed, a second activity comes into play: accurate interpretation” (p. 21) and that “interpreting and recreating is searching and encoding in the listener’s mind, a re-creation of the speaker’s intended message” (p. 31). All of these ideas seem to suggest that the ultimate goal at this stage of the listening process involves accurately comprehending the intention of the speaker. However, without degrading this noble ambition, one must also take in account the feasibility and possibility of such an undertaking; it seems many scholars do.

A rhetorical interpretation of the process of understanding

Brownell (1996) seems to point towards a rhetorical element in her process of understanding when she writes: “Precise and concrete language facilitates shared meanings. Yet, regardless of the symbols used to express ideas, your meanings for a particular word are never replicated exactly in someone else’s mind” (p. 110). Brownell (1996) also discusses what she calls “semantic reactions” but could also fall under the heading “semiotic triangle” when she writes: “Some people have such strong reactions to words that they have difficulty distinguishing what is real from what is real – out there in the environment – and the mental images elicited by words used to describe these objects

or events. These are what are called semantic reactions: you respond to the word as if it were the thing described (p. 113-114). Similarly, Steil et al. (1983) write: “The assignment of meaning to a term is an internal process... We often misinterpret each other’s messages while under the illusion that that a common understanding has been achieved (p. 21); and Wolvin and Coakley (1996) write: “Assigning meaning is a very personal process. Therefore, because of the senders’ and receivers’ different past experiences, present feelings, and even future expectations, we often do not reach the desired goal” (p. 87). From these passages, then, one can say that these scholars have a rhetorical understanding of the process of understanding – words do not mean, people mean, and people must create shared meaning of words in order to understand each other.

3.3.4 Remembering

The process of remembering

The association of listening with memory dates back to Nichols’ definition of listening as the faculty of being able to recall sound (Brownell, 1996, p. 144), but each theorist in this chapter views memory differently. Wolvin and Coakley (1996) do not see remembering as a separate part of the listening process because, in their words:

Remembering – the process of storing stimuli in the mind for the purpose of recalling them later – is probably involved in all aspects of listening and is, thus, inherent in the listening process when a listener actively engages in the whole process. The importance of remembering can be seen as it relates to holding accumulated sound while we are initially attending and receiving to a message. Also, it is relevant to the attending to since, in general, only those stimuli to which we attend reach the LTM [Long Term

Memory]. Moreover, as we categorize or conceptualize input data, we must search our memory bank for a 'fit' in order to assign meaning. (p. 96)

While Wolvin and Coakley see memory as important in every aspect of the listening process, Steil et al.'s (1983) SIER model does not include it at all. Wolff and Marsnik meanwhile, see the place of memory in a different light; they write: "Retaining aural messages is not a *part* of the listening process. It is the *result* of perceptive listening" (p. 34). Wolff and Marsnik (1992) seem to take almost the opposite view of Brownell, who sees remembering as an essential part of the listening process.

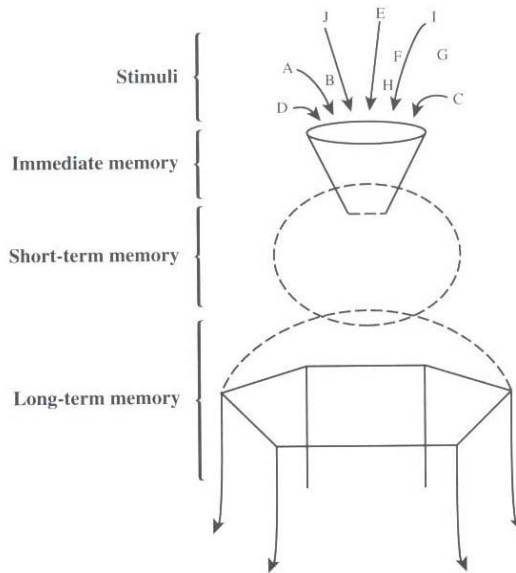
Emphasizing the importance of remembering, Brownell (1996) writes: "It makes little sense to develop your hearing and comprehension unless you can use the information in some meaningful way. Everything that is remembered is not understood and everything that is understood is not remembered (Ortony, 1978)" (p. 144). Though she sees the process of remembering as distinct, Brownell (1996) also relates it to the concept of attention; she writes, "It is important to remember that the components of listening are interrelated...One of the reasons why paying attention to the right stimuli is so critical is that memory begins with attention. Unless a stimulus is registered as an impression, it will not be remembered and therefore cannot be used. Through focusing your attention, you select only a portion of the available stimuli and direct your energies along fairly focused paths...A useful way to view attention then, is as a process that funnels selected sensory stimuli into your short-term memory" (p. 146). Here one sees the essential connection between memory and attention. To begin discussion on attention

and its relation to listening and memory, the following pages will include a description of the parts of memory followed by a discussion of different views on attention.

Memory systems

To this point, this dissertation has only looked at the outlines of memory and its place in as one of the later stages of listening process. Discussing memory more in depth, Brownell (1996) writes about three different types of memory or parts of a person memory: immediate memory, short term memory, and long term memory. Starting with immediate memory, Brownell (1996) writes: “You are always collecting and processing information. Most of what you hear, however, passes quickly through your memory system and is lost in less than a second. The saying ‘in one ear and out the other’ is not far from the truth. Information that interests you – that draws your attention – is briefly held in your immediate memory for further contemplation. You must then decide whether to snatch it into your short term memory or let it fade” (p. 145). Turning to the next type of memory, Brownell (1996) writes: “Intermediate memory is an important filtering device, determining what information will be discarded and what will be kept for further processing. If information dose not attract your attention, it never gets into your immediate memory system, and hence you have no opportunity to put it into short-term or long-term memory” (p. 147). Immediate memory, then, functions as the first step in the information processing; information must pass the filters of immediate memory before going into short-term memory and then long-term memory for permanent storage. As one begins to wonder about the relationship between these memory systems, one can turn to Brownell (1996) for an illustration of the human memory as she understands it; the following illustration shows the three types of memory and how they work together:

Illustration 3.6 Three memory systems (Brownell, 1996, 146)



Now that one has an understanding of the intermediate level of memory and seen an illustration of how they all work together, one can turn to the remaining levels.

After going through the immediate memory system, information then passes into short-term memory. Brownell (1996) defines short-term memory as “working memory” (p. 148); she claims that, like immediate memory, it has limited capacity; more specifically she writes: “Short-term memory is regarded as a necessary intermediate step in processing information that eventually finds its way into your long-term memory. Learning, then, only occurs when information is first maintained in your short-term memory. The longer the information persists, the more probable it is that it will be transferred into your long-term memory” (p. 148). Moving from short-term to long-term memory, Brownell (1996) writes: “Think of long-term memory as the ‘data bank’ or warehouse for all your impressions and experience. In long-term memory is information you heard hours, days, weeks, even years ago” (p. 150). Brownell (1996) continues her discussion on long term memory when she writes: “One of the exciting aspects of long-

term memory is its limitless capacity; in fact, the more information you have stored in long-term memory, the easier it is to remember new ideas. You might envision your long-term memory as an ever-expanding filing system where the more categories you create, the easier it becomes to find appropriate places for new information and retrieve old information quickly” (p. 150). From these descriptions of the levels of memory, one can say that Brownell has a somewhat generalized view of memory; Shelia Bentley (1993), on the other hand, in her article “Listening and Memory” takes a more detailed look at different views of memory and their relationship to the listening process.

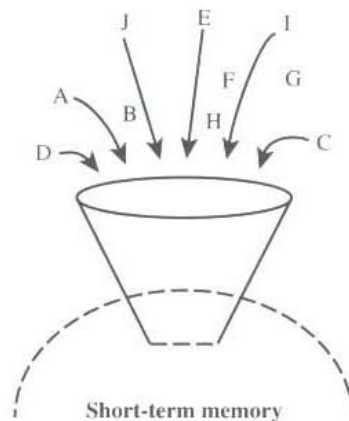
Bentley (1993) starts out her discussion on the various views of memory by writing: “For the past 30 years, memory research has taken structure vs. process approach. The question has been: Is memory performance due to the physiology of human memory and its inherent strengths and physical limitations, or does remembering depend on applying appropriate processes at encoding and retrieval?” (p. 81). Bentley (1993) discusses structure theories of memory in particular when she writes: “Structure theories of memory suggest that what we are able to remember is determined by the physiology and biochemistry of the brain...Influential structural theorists have included James (1890), Hebb (1949), Broadbent (1958), and Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968)” (p. 81). Bentley (1993) points out that the Atkinson-Shiffrin “modal” model represents one of the important crossover models between the structure models that have essentially lost support and the process-based models more accepted today because “while it focused on the structure of types of memory, it introduced the concept that the processes applied to the incoming information and during retrieval affect what is remembered” (p. 83). Bentley (1993) continues: “A precipitating factor in the decay of the modal model, as

well as the movement away from structure models of memory, was the development of the levels of processing framework of memory, which is a processing model...the emphasis [of this model] is on the cognitive processes applied at the time of input of information” (p. 85). Bentley (1993) cites Craik and Lockhart’s model as one of the first of this type of model; it “stressed processing and suggested that trace durability, and therefore memory, were a direct consequence of the process of encoding, with deeper and more elaborate encoding leading to more durable memory traces” (p. 85). Clearly the models of the listening process under examination in the chapters have come to rely on the process rather than structural theory of memory. They do not see memory as a structure but as a process in itself or part of the larger listening process.

The relationship between memory and attention

After examining the three systems of memory and various views of memory, one can move onto to a discussion of the connection between memory and attention in the listening process. As stated previously, Brownell sees attention as a process “that funnels selected sensory stimuli into your short-term memory” (p. 146). According to her, an illustration of the process of attention might look like this:

Illustration 3.7 Process of Attention (Brownell, 1996, p. 147)



When looking at the previous illustration, one clearly sees the representation of attention as a funnel; the lettered arrows represent various stimuli entering the attended sphere; one also sees here the behaviorist tendency here: one must sense the stimuli before attending to them. The idea of attention has come under much scrutiny in the field of listening; chapter four will discuss this issue further so that the reader can make a clear distinction between selecting to attend to a stimuli and making the choice to listen. At point, however, one can move from a discussion on memory and attention to a discussion of the next two steps in the HURIER model of listening – interpreting and evaluating.

3.3.5 Interpreting and Evaluating

When one considers the issues of interpreting and evaluating, one quickly notes that these two ideas make up the I and E in both Brownell's (1996) HURIER model and Steil et al.'s (1983) SIER model, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) include them in the "assigning meaning" component of their model and Wolff and Marsnik (1992) include them in the step of the listening process they call interpreting and re-creating. While each model includes these actions in general, the theorists approach them differently. Wolvin and Coakley's understanding of these ideas has much in common with Wolff and Marsnik's while Steil et al. and Brownell take an alternative view of them.

About interpreting, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) write: "The third component of listening – assigning meaning – refers to the interpretation or understanding of the stimuli heard and/or seen and attended to" (p. 87). Following the lead of Wolvin and Coakley, Wolff and Marsnik (1992) write: "Our model of the listening process designates the two integrated processes of interpreting and re-creating as occurring after hearing and attending to aural stimuli" (p. 31). Here then, one see similarities between these two

views in the sense that, for both, interpretation comes after hearing and attending to stimuli. Brownell and Steil et al. see the process of interpretation differently.

One sees subtle but profound differences between the understanding of “assigning meaning” outlined above and those of Steil et al. and Brownell. When discussing the difference between interpreting and evaluating, Steil et al. (1982) write: “Active listeners go beyond sensing and interpretation to another act: evaluation. Here the listener decides whether or not to agree with the speaker...the best listeners delay judgment until the message is fully presented [and] work hard at developing their judgmental skills and abilities” (p. 21-22). For Brownell (1996) interpretation means taking into account other factors beyond the words heard in a particular situation; she writes: “Effective listeners take into account the nonverbal and situational factors that influence the negotiation of meaning; in effect, they hear what is not said” (p. 179). For Brownell, empathy represents “the key element that enables you to go beyond the literal meaning of the words you and begin to consider the speaker’s feelings and indirect messages” (p. 179). Thus, empathy, for Brownell, takes one beyond interpretation to evaluation, a process which Steil et al. also recognize but Wolvin and Coakley and Wolff and Marsnik do not.

Talking specifically about process of evaluation, Brownell (1996) connects it to critical listening when she writes: “In almost all instances, critical listening follows the related processes of hearing, understanding, remembering, and interpreting. Until you are confident that you share the speaker’s meaning and have taken nonverbal and situational aspects into account, you cannot make a wise decision or come to a valid conclusion” (p. 229). Brownell (1996) also writes: “critical listening is particularly relevant to persuasive communication situations. When someone wants to change your opinion or behavior ...

you must determine whether to accept or reject what you hear. Persuasion implies free choice among alternatives. Your decision is best made rationally, on the basis of clear thinking, sound logic, and valid reasoning” (p. 227). Thus, from these passages, one can see the relationship between interpreting and evaluating from Brownell’s perspective: one must accurately interpret the message before evaluating it; as noted earlier, one can sense this spirit in the other models examined in this chapter as well. Continuing the examination of the steps of the HUIER model of listening, one can turn to the last step in that model – and all the models under examination in this chapter – responding.

3.3.6 Responding

The process of responding

Turning from the processes of interpreting and evaluating to the process of responding, one sees that all of the models of the listening process under examination in the chapters include as the final step in the process the act of responding or reacting to the message heard. Brownell (1996) writes: “An important part of effective listening, then, is to respond in a manner that will facilitate shared meanings, contribute to accomplishing tasks, and develop satisfying relationships. The term listening response is used to describe the mindful behavior that occurs as a result of effective listening” (p. 266). Continuing the discussion about responding, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) distinguish between covert or overt responses in detail when they write:

In analyzing responding, we think it is important to determine whether covert (internal response perceivable only to the listener) or overt (external response perceivable to others) response is intended. If covert response is meant, the response could be part of (1) the receiving process as our auditory and sensory

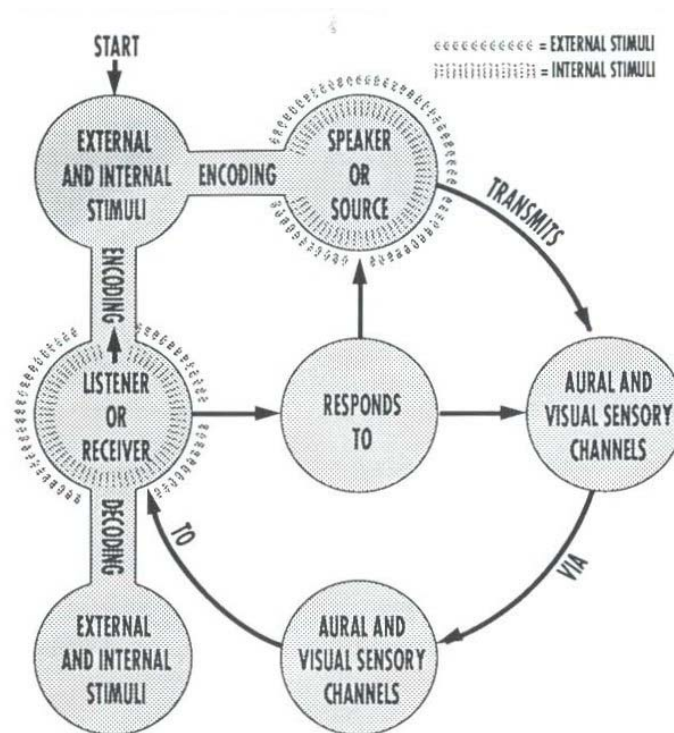
mechanisms respond to the original stimulus, (2) the attention process, since they very act of attending to a stimulus is a response by the system, or (3) the assignment of meaning process when we respond by categorizing the stimulus through our schema so that it matches the intended meaning of the source. However, if overt response is indicated, we do not consider responding to be part of the listening process. When listeners respond overtly, they are no longer listeners; rather, they become senders – that is, the encoders of new messages – in the communication process. Although we do not consider overt responding to be part of the listening process, we fully acknowledge its primacy in communication transactions. It is only through feedback that a speaker can judge whether a listener has or has not engaged in the listening process. Indeed, our perceptions of others as good or bad listeners are based largely on how others display their listening through the feedback that they communicate. (p. 96)

Building on Wolvin and Coakley's focus on the difference between overtly and covertly responding to the stimuli, Wolff and Marsnik (1992) claim that a listener "is processing two kinds of response: covert and overt" responses to the speaker (p. 35-36). While Wolvin and Coakley and Wolff and Marsnik agree on this aspect of response, they do not see eye to eye on all aspects of it. Unlike Wolvin and Coakley, but like Brownell, both Wolff and Steil et al see responding in any form as part of the listening process. Wolff and Marsnik (1992) see it as the "final act" (p. 35) and Steil et al. (1983) write that the listener must respond in order for the listening process "to be complete" (p. 22). However, despite these differences, each of the models seems to treat a response as a stimulus. This goes to show once again the behaviorist tendencies of these models.

Response as stimulus

While differences do abound between the examined approaches to the place of and understanding of response as it relates to the listening process, one can see again the one major similarity that has run through all of these models: a behaviorist or transactional view of communication. Each of the models begins with a stimulus (message) and ends with a response (in essence another message or response). This behavioral cycle of stimulus and response creates what Wolff calls the circular process of oral-aural communication. This process looks at communication as a transaction that starts with a stimulus and ends with the next stimulus. While the scholars highlighted in this chapter all have a different take on the on the process of communication and listening in general, one could argue that, at least to some extent, they would agree that those processes function and work together in some basic way as illustrated here:

Illustration 3.8 Communication (Wolff and Marsnik, 1992, p. 24)



This model represents a standard stimulus-response transactional model of communication where one person sends a message, and the other person receives it and sends another message. While one certainly cannot discount that much communication human beings experience every day – from the morning staff meeting to the call to the significant other about dinner – does have a transactional nature to it, this dissertation simply wishes to bring a different voice to the discussion by reiterating, without implying that the scholars highlighted in this chapter would disagree, that this view does not encompass all possible types or categories of communication.

3.4 Summary

In conclusion, then, of chapter three, this chapter has taken a look at several models of the listening process. That examination determined that all of those models under scrutiny take a behaviorist approach to listening; this dissertation wants to bring a more philosophical approach to the discussion of the listening process. The next chapter of this dissertation will develop that approach more fully by looking in depth at the difference between what the behaviorists call attending to or paying attention to a message and what this dissertation will call making the choice to listen.

Chapter 4

Making the Choice to Listen

4.1 Introduction

Now that has examined the behaviorist tendencies within the literature about listening within the field of communication and has looked extensively at several models of the listening process based on those tendencies, one can begin to turn towards a model of the listening process that offers an alternative to those tendencies. This fourth chapter of this dissertation will focus specifically on the notion of making a choice to listen, which, it argues, represents the heart of the listening process. First this chapter will distinguish that idea from two ideas prevalent in the literature – the ideas of paying attention or attending to a message and also the willingness to communicate and/or listen. Next, it will examine the philosophical, specifically hermeneutical, underpinnings of the idea of making the choice to listen. Finally, it will present a model of the listening process that makes choice the heart of the listening process.

After looking at the different models of the listening process, one has seen that all of them, to one degree or another, represent a view of the process based on the perspective of behaviorism. This dissertation aims to put forth a different view of the listening process based loosely on ideas of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. The model of the listening process that this dissertation will put forth begins with a human

being making the choice to listen. To better understand the intended meaning of making a choice to listening, one can distinguish it from different concepts that already exist in the literature, namely the concepts of attention and willingness to communicate and/or listen. Looking at the issue of attention, one will see the prevalence of the notions of performance and task; this dissertation does not classify making the choice to listen as a task attends to or performs to some measurable degree of effectiveness. Next, when considering the notion of willingness, this dissertation will digress from the understanding of willingness or will put forth in the literature of the field; thus differentiating making the choice to listen from having a willingness to listen. Only after understanding these distinctions and the philosophical underpinnings that make up this dissertation's understanding of the listening process can one fully understand its model.

4.2 Attention

The first section of this chapter will discuss the notion of attention. It will specifically address the history as well as several definitions of attention and models of attention. As one examines these definitions and models of attention, one will begin to see that, despite their variety, they all demonstrate behaviorist tendencies; mostly this stems from the fact that the study of attention has happened mostly within the field of psychology, which, as discussed in chapter three, does not necessarily embrace all the tenets of behaviorism, still has a close kinship to it. Further, keep in mind that this dissertation wishes to distinguish making the choice to listen for a particular message from the selection among stimuli that the behaviorist perspective describes. At this point, one might find helpful a brief summary of the study of the issue of attention.

History and definition of attention

As one begins to get a handle on the lay of the academic landscape surrounding this idea that has already been mapped about, one immediately sees that the usage of this term creates some difficulty in defining it. In his book *Listening and Attention*, Neville McCray (1969) writes about what he calls “the problem of the operational definition of attention or selectivity” (p. 19). McCray (1969) gives a brief synopsis of the history of the definition of attention when he writes:

There was a great deal of research on attention up until about 1910, but remarkably little thereafter until the 1950s. The laboratories of Wundt, Titchener, and Pillsbury, writers such as Hamilton and James all dealt exclusively with nature of attention. (Bakhan, 1967, provides a good source of readings for this early work). But after those workers attention research fell into disrepute, until restored by to new respectability through the work of Broadbent in particular in the mid-fifties. One reason for this marked break in the continuity of the research is without a doubt that the early definitions of attention were tired rather too closely to the common intuitive idea that paying attention to a stimulus makes it somehow “perceptually clear.” (p-19-20)

Johnson and Proctor (2004) in their book *Attention: Theory and Practice* disagree with the idea that no research existed between WWI and WWII; they write: “Not only was research on attention conducted continuously during the 20th century, but this research also provided a close link both to the work done prior to 1910 and to contemporary work” (p. 15); in their summary of the trends in attention research, they argue that:

Empirical investigations of attention began in the last half of the 19th century. One of the major methodological advances at that time was the use of reaction time procedures to study attention...much research shifted to a behavioral emphasis in the first half of the 20th century, with the study of attention relegated to a secondary role. Despite this reduction in importance...research has flourished since the middle of the 20th century, in large part due to the development of theories and models that characterize human information processing in detail. (p. 25)

While different interpretations exist of the history of attention research, one can safely say that scholars have studied attention since the dawn of the enlightenment. One can now move from a history of attention to an examination of various models of attention.

Models of attention

Wolvin and Coakley (1996) offer a helpful summary of the major models of attention that have developed as scholars have studied the idea over the decades. Highlighting specific models of attention, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) explain that older models of attention, such as those developed by Broadbent, Deutsch and Deutsch, Treisman, and Neisser, view attention as a step in the information-processing process while more recent models, such as the one by Kahneman, treat attention as a limited resource “that can be flexibly allocated” to various stages of information processing (p. 79). This change represents a major shift in thinking about attention; now the question about attention becomes: how much attention does a person need to process a certain type of information. The chart below offers a description of models used to explain the process of attention; these include example of both the processing and resource theories:

Table 4.1 Models of Attention (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996)

Broadbent	In this model of attention “aural stimuli enter the nervous system through a number of input channels ... [these] input channels converge onto a sensory filter that functions as a selective mechanism. The filter selects stimuli, not on the basis of analysis of meaning but rather on certain physical features (such as location in space, pitch, and intensity) toward which it is biased. It then allows the selected stimuli to penetrate consciousness through a limited-capacity channel [such as short-term memory]” (p. 80).
Deutsch and Deutsch	“Deutsch and Deutsch found Broadbent’s theory attractive when applied to simple and few discriminations. The question it’s application, however, to cases where numerous and complex are required”; thus, they proposed a different model which took into account the importance of the message; they assumed that “Only the most important signals coming in will be acted on or remembered”. [and] “a person will attend to any incoming stimulus [that] is not accompanied by a more important one” (p. 80).
Treisman	Treisman “posited that messages...are first analyzed for physical characteristics such a pitch, loudness, and location in space. A filter uses the information obtained by this analysis to identify the messages that will be selected for attention. On other occasions, the filter bases its selection on more complex discriminations, such as the analysis of syllabic patterns, grammatical structure, or meaning”; he also argued that the filter has a flexibility that allows information perceived as important to be accentuated (Wolvin and Coakley 81).
Neisser	Neisser proposed a “two-process theory of analysis-by-synthesis. He postulated that incoming stimuli go through preattentive processing. During this process, stored knowledge is actively used to analyze the stimuli’s sensory and semantic features for important information. ... Discounting the others’ view that some incoming are never attended to...Neisser theorized that they are not attended to merely because they have not been processed as fully as attended stimuli have been” (Wolvin and Coakley 81).
Kahneman	“Kahneman proposed a capacity model that views attention as a limited-capacity resource that can be flexibly allocated to various stages of information-processing....According to Kahneman, an individual can change his or her attentional distribution from moment to moment in order to meet the varying attentional requirements of conscious mental task (which demand considerable attentional energy...) and automatic mental tasks (which demand little attentional energy...)” (p. 81).
Wickens	Wickens posits a “multiple resource theory of attention” in which he suggests that “an individual may use attentional resources that are specific to a particular modality or to a particular processing task. Attention results from activating a sensory modality (visual or auditory) through the allocation of attention resources that the person has available” (p. 81). In other words, this theory seems to suggest a person can watch a television show while listening to music and pay equal attention to both.

While one sees examples of a variety of views on attention represented in the chart above, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) suggest that the view of attention as a limited resource dominates the field of study (p. 82). Again, this view represents a shift in thinking from the original conception of attention as simply a part of a larger process to something that permeates the process. One can wonder how this understanding could impact current ideas of the listening process as articulated in chapter three. Wolvin and Coakley's model of the listening process, for example, lists as its second step "attending to" – would this have to change to accommodate the notion that one allocates a certain level of attention at each step in the process? One can ponder these questions during the following discussion of the place of attention in the listening process.

Attention in the Listening Process

Now that one has some general understanding of attention, one can focus on the issue of attention as it relates to listening and the listening process. One finds a strong articulation of the connection between listening and attention by Mortimer Adler (1983) in his book *How to Speak, How to Listen*; in that book he writes:

The ears have nothing comparable to eyelids, but they can be as effectively sealed as eyelids can be closed. Sometimes both close at the same time, but it is often the case that the ear is turned off while the eyes are open. That matters little if, in either case, the mind's attention is turned to other matters than what is being seen or heard....Listening, then is primarily an activity of the mind, not of the ear or the eye. When the mind is not actively involved in this process, it should be called hearing, not listening; seeing, not reading. (p. 85-86)

Clearly Adler sees a connection between attention and listening – one cannot listen to what does not attend to; Brownell and Wolvin and Coakley also see this connection and give attention a prominent place in their understanding of the listening process.

Brownell (1996) addresses the place of attention in the listening process in general and the process of hearing specifically when she writes: “Attention determines which auditory or visual stimuli are processed. If you don’t pay attention to something, it’s as if it never existed” (p. 82). Brownell (1996) goes on to clarify her understanding of attention when she writes: “Attending to a stimulus, whether auditory or visual, involves following its pattern over time against a background of on-going activity in the same medium. Hearing trumpets in a particular symphony, for instance, requires that you learn what sounds listen for and discriminate among a variety of patterns” (p. 82). Turning to a different model of the listening process, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) recognize attention in their second step or component of the listening process; they write: “The second component of listening – attending to – refers to focused perception on selected stimuli” This act embraces the moment before and the moment during the reception of a potential stimulus. Many consider the elusive nature of attention to be the major trap that listeners encounter in their efforts to focus on messages” (p. 79). Looking at these passages one sees a clear connection between listening and attention within the framework these scholars work; from this perspective, one must attend to a stimulus before listening to it; this dissertation takes a different perspective; it argues that the choice to listen comes first. Furthering the discussion about the connection between listening and attention, Brownell and Wolvin and Coakley attempt to answer the question of how one attends to a stimulus by addressing the issue of auditory discrimination in their research.

Auditory discrimination

Beginning her discussion about auditory discrimination, Brownell (1996) writes: “Beyond the reception of sound, your job also involves distinguishing different sounds and identifying what you have heard. Otherwise, sounds would have no meaning for you” (p. 80). As she continues her discussion of this, Brownell (1996) makes the case that a person begins learning how to discriminate sounds in infancy learn more complex discriminating skills within the first eight years of life; she cites research by Weaver and Rutherford “who developed a hierarchy of auditory skills that are developed during early childhood” (p. 80). Wolvin and Coakley (1996) also cite these researchers: “Although [Weaver and Rutherford] have distinguished between environmental skills (pertaining to sounds other than verbal) and discrimination skills (pertaining to verbal sounds), both sections are relevant to the development of auditory discrimination” (p. 162). A summary of Weaver and Rutherford’s findings follow (Wolvin and Coakley, 1996, p. 162-163):

Environmental Skills

Prenatal

- Fetal movement in response to sound

Infancy

- Responds reflexively to sudden loud noises
- Responds to loud noises by crying
- Listens to the human voice
- Is quieted by sound
- Changes activity in response to the human voice
- Turns head in search of sound
- Learns that people and objects make sound
- Learns that objects make sound with manipulation
- Localizes sound sources and moves toward them

Preschool

- Associates a sound with an object
- Repeats a sequence of sounds
- Learns that unseen objects make sounds

- Learns that sound sources can be labeled or named
- Given three noisemakers can find the one that sounds different

Kindergarten – Grade 3

- Learns that sounds different in intensity, pitch, pattern, and duration
- Learns the concept distance in relation to sound localization and movement

Grade 4 – Grade 6

- Identifies sounds in the environment at certain times of day and evaluates them in terms of orientation and mobility
- Promotes growth of echo perception and spatial orientation

Discrimination Skills

Infancy

- Responds differentially to sounds
- Responds to his or her name
- Begins imitating speech sounds

Preschool

- Separates certain sounds from background sounds
- Identifies like sounds and different sounds
- Can match verbal sounds

Kindergarten – Grade 3

- Recognizes differences in words sounds
- Recognizes rhyming words
- Recognizes discrete words and sequences within sentences
- Differentiates sounds among words parts – syllables, consonants, vowels

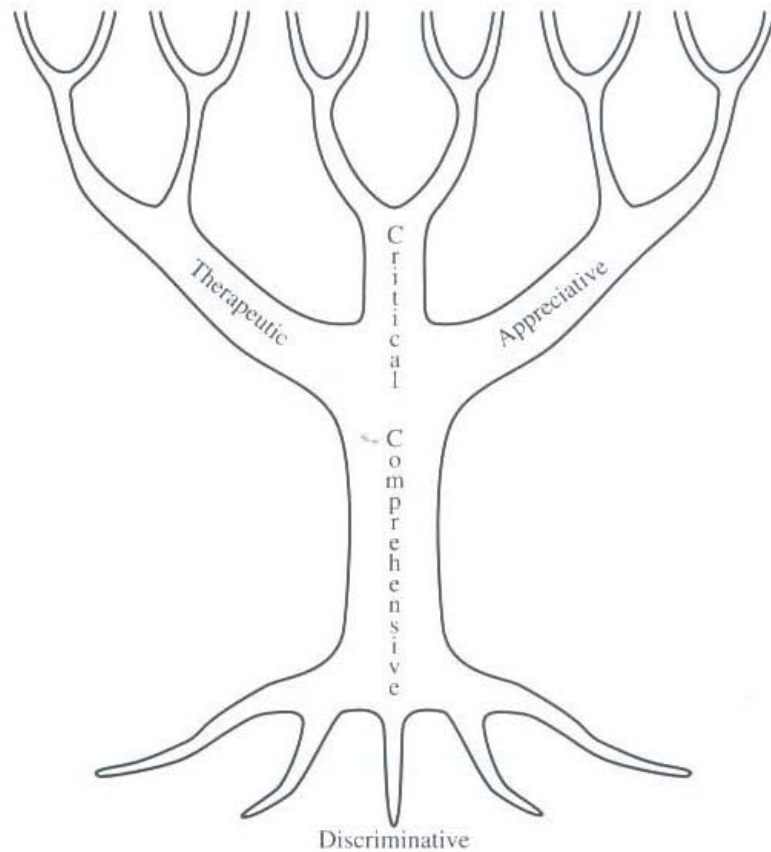
As one looks at the skills listed on the previous page, one can see that, in the words of Wolvin and Coakley (1996), “developing the auditory discrimination skills is an ongoing process” (p. 162). Wolvin, Coakley, and Kelby K. Halone (1995, 1996, 1997) look closely at this development across what they refer to as the “life-span” in a series of articles. When listing these skills Wolvin and Coakley (1996) clarify that while the authors of this hierarchy, Weaver and Rutherford, group the skills according to environmental skills – “pertaining to sounds other than verbal” – and discriminative skills

– “pertaining to verbal sounds” – both types of skills “are relevant to the development of auditory discrimination;” further, they suggest that, because they acquire them early, people may need to refine these auditory skills as they mature (p. 162). Wolvin and Coakley focus on the discrimination as the fundamental “purpose” of listening.

Discriminative listening and Wolvin and Coakley’s taxonomy of listening

Wolvin and Coakley’s (1996) view of discrimination as the fundamental “purpose” of listening has allowed them to organize an entire taxonomy of listening around this purpose; as they begin to describe their taxonomy, they write: “At the first level, a listening listens for discrimination – to distinguish the auditory and visual stimuli. Discriminative listening is at the base of all listening that we do; we must differentiate the auditory and visual and distinguish their identifying features before we can process the messages at any other level. However, we may not wish to listen to at a higher level” (p. 152). Clearly, then, Wolvin and Coakley see discriminative listening and auditory discrimination as necessary to the listening process. While discriminative listening represents the first level in their taxonomy of listening, other levels of listening that Wolvin and Coakley outline include comprehensive listening, therapeutic listening, appreciative listening, and critical listening. The levels represent higher-order types of listening; one can only master these types of listening after one has mastered the skills necessary for discriminative listening. About their taxonomy of listening, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) write: “This taxonomy could be viewed graphically as a tree, with discrimination as the root listening hierarchy and comprehension as the trunk supporting in the other listening purposes that shape our behaviors as listeners” (p. 152-153). Wolvin and Coakley created the following graphic to illustrate their taxonomy of listening:

Illustration 4.1: Wolvin and Coakley's Taxonomy of Listening (Brownell, 1996, p. 57)



This model illustrates how Wolvin and Coakley understand that a person can only learn how to engage in a somewhat higher-order type of listening after they have learned how to listen discriminatively. For instance, one cannot learn how to appreciate a distinction between jazz and classical music or between instruments until one has learned how to discriminately listen to music as opposed to other stimuli present at any given time. Having already examined the idea of discriminative listening, one can begin to look at some of the other types of listening represented in Wolvin and Coakley's taxonomy.

Before doing that, however, one should mention that Paul G. Friedman (1993) in his book *Attention, Understanding, Evaluation*, paints a picture of listening similar that of Wolvin and Coakley both in the way he approaches the listening process and his

taxonomy of listening. His version of the listening process includes elements labeled in his title – attention, understanding, and evaluation; one can speculate on at least some general connections between his idea of attention and Wolvin and Coakley’s notion of attending to as well as his idea of understanding and Wolvin and Coakley notion of assignment of meaning. Further, Friedman’s (1993) taxonomy of listening suggests that people first listen for content in order to obtain “task-related material” and then they listen for emotion because emotions affect “how the speaker or listener is feeling, the involvement, the degree of intensity, and the value that each places on a comment” (p. 8); finally, a person listen for aesthetic value of a message; he claims that some message intend “to be enjoyed or appreciated, to affect the senses. Included are messages expressed through the arts – music, poetry, drama, literature, etc.” (p. 8-9). Clearly one can see comparisons between Freidmans idea of listening for content and Wolvin and Coakley’s understanding of comprehensive listening and Friedman’s view of listening for emotion and aesthetic value and Wolvin and Coakley’s understanding of therapeutic and appreciative listening. Noting these similarities should not imply that subtle as well as significant differences do not exist in the work of these researchers; it merely highlights again the fact that much common ground does exist in the field of listening.

Continuing to examine Wolvin and Coakley’s taxonomy, one can say, based on their hierarchy, they see comprehension as the second level of listening followed by appreciative, therapeutic and critical at a third level. About comprehensive listening Wolvin and Coakley (1996) write: “At the next level, we listen for comprehension. The comprehensive listener strives to understand the message in order to retain, recall, and – possibly – use that information at a later time” (p. 152). Wolvin and Coakley (1996) the

describe the relationships between the remaining levels and the two already mentioned; they write: “Just as discriminative listening forms the base for the Wolvin-Coakley Listening Taxonomy, so, too, does listening comprehension serve as a foundation for the third level” (152). Describing therapeutic listening in more detail, they write: “At the first of the three higher levels of learning, we can listen for a therapeutic purpose – to provide help to a person who needs to talk through a concern” (p. 153). Moving on to critical listening, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) write: “The second of the three higher levels is critical listening – listening to evaluate the merits of the message” (p. 154). Finally, highlighting the difference between critical and appreciative listening, Wolvin and Coakley (1996) write: “The appreciative listener...must develop the skill of critical judgment until after the appropriate comprehension of the piece” (p. 154). So, the processes of appreciative, therapeutic, and critical, listening all start with the processes of discriminative and then comprehensive listening. One can also see relationships between the notion of discrimination and attention. As one considers the concept of attention as presented in this section, one can begin to distinguish it from making the choice to listen.

4.3 Distinguishing a Choice to Listen from Attention

To this point, this chapter has looked at the metaphor of attention and its relationship to listening in general and its place in the listening process by looking closely at the idea of auditory discrimination and discriminative listening; this dissertation acknowledges these connection and agrees in general principle that in order to listen effectively one must pay attention to those stimuli or messages to which one wants to listen. However, one must carefully distinguish between the issue of making a choice to listen and simply choosing to pay attention to a particular stimulus. On one hand, a

person may choose to listen but then fail to pay attention and thus listen poorly. On the other hand one may pay attention and hear every word of a message but fail to listen to it. The distinction this section seeks to make rests on the idea of performance. One may argue that one can measure how well a person has paid attention, but this dissertation contends that one cannot measure how well one makes a choice to listen.

Attention and Performance

The focus on performance represents one of the main differences between the notion of making the choice to listen and the idea of attention. Walter Schneider, Susan T. Dumas, and Richard Shiffrin (1984) describe the connection between performance and attention in their essay “Automatic and Control Process and Attention” when they write: “Human performance in almost any cognitive or motor skill changes with practice....At first, effort and attention must be devoted to each movement or minor decision, and performance is slow and error prone. Eventually, long sequences of movements or cognitive acts are carried out with little attention, and performance is quite rapid and accurate” (p. 1). Clearly, from this perspective, performing a task or behavior well or effectively requires one to pay attention to that task; Schneider, Dumas, and Shiffrin, seem to suggest that one must pay more attention to a task while learning it than after already mastering it. According to Schneider, Dumas, and Shiffrin, (1984) this connection between attention and performance also must also take into account whether the subject has focused or divided attention; other scholars suggest that differences between people and environments also influence attention; further, James Reason, relying heavily on the work of William James, looks at the issue of habit in relation to lapses of attention. All of these have relevance to the current argument.

Divided attention and dichotic listening

About divided attention, Schneider, Dumas, and Shiffrin (1984) write that “Many studies show that subjects exhibit reduced performance when they try to accomplish simultaneously to an increased number of stimuli” (p. 3). An example of this that has application to listening theory would involve trying to listen to two conversations at once. Research into the workings of divided attention has a direct connection to listening; Schneider, Dumas, and Shiffrin (1984) describe the issue of dichotic listening and associated methodology when they write:

A major research paradigm used to examine the limitations of information processing is dichotic listening, in which subjects are presented different streams of auditory stimuli in each ear; the subject is told either to attend to one ear, or to attend to both. For the unpracticed subject, target detection performance drops substantially when subjects shift from attending to a single ear to attending to both ears (Treisman, 1960). However, after extended (4-10 hours) CM training at detecting a specific target, performance is equivalent whether subjects are attending to one or both ears as long as both channels do not simultaneously contain targets (Duncan, 1980; Morary, 1975). (p. 5)

As one considers these passages, one can see the connection between dichotic listening and divided attention: if someone has to listen to two different messages with two different ears, then one must divide one’s attention. Some researchers want to find out how this phenomenon affects how well someone can listen while others look at shadowing, the primary methods used in research into divided attention.

D. R. Davies, D. M. Jones, and Ann Taylor (1984), in their essay “Selective- and Sustained- Attention Tasks: Individual and Group Differences” also discuss the idea of dichotic listening; they describe the process in detail when they write:

In both selective and dichotic listening, two different auditory messages (continuous prose, words, or digits) are simultaneously presented via headphones (one to each ear), with the rate of presentation being generally quite high (often between 150 and 200 items/min.)...In dichotic listening tasks, the listener is required to attend to both messages, and again either recall both (dichotic memory) or to detect target items in both (dichotic monitoring). Dichotic memory is exemplified by the so-called “split-span” procedure (Broadbent, 1954), involving rapid dichotic presentation of pairs of digits; in this task, subjects typically organize their report by ear of input, recalling as many items as possible from one ear (the first half-set) before reporting those presented to the other ear (the second half-set). For right-handed individuals in particular, the right ear is usually given priority in recall, a phenomenon known as right-ear advantage (REA). (397).

While Davies, Jones and Taylor focus on the intricacies of how one creates a situation involving dichotic listening, Geoffrey Underwood (1975) writes more about REA in his book *Attention and Memory*; citing Kimura (1961) Underwood suggests that REA “has clinical implications and was originally used to determine the location of the speech centre (right or left cerebral cortex) in patients prior to cortical surgery. We know that the speech centre is generally located in the left cerebral hemisphere (“dominant” hemisphere) in right- and left-handed people, but between 10% and 20% of the

population have the speech centre located in the right hemisphere (Milner, Brance, and Rasmussen, 1964)” (p. 40). Turning back to the issue at hand – the phenomenon of dichotic listening and its connection to attention – Davies, Jones and Taylor suggest that shadowing represents the main method used in dichotic listening research.

Davies, Jones and Taylor (1984) contend that researchers use shadowing to “ensure [subject’s] attention is fully focused on the designated message in selective-listening tasks” (p. 397). They describe this technique in more detail when they write:

In this technique, the listener is asked to repeat aloud each word of the message as soon as it has been presented, sometimes, while shadowing, the listening is additionally required to detect target items....However, individual differences in shadowing ability are considerable (Lerner, 1975) and as Underwood (1974) has pointed out, shadowing is not “a normal mode of transcription of information, and so the unpracticed subject must first master this skill before any experiment can be attempted” (p. 368). Not surprisingly, as Underwood (1974) demonstrated, a highly skilled shadower can detect many more targets in both the attended and unattended message than can relatively unpracticed subjects....Because the reliability of shadowing efficiency tends to be fairly low, and such measures do not seem to be significantly correlated with measures of selective attention obtained from speeded classification and central-incidental tasks (Pelham, 1979), there are some grounds for questioning the usefulness of the shadowing technique as a means of focusing the subject’s attention, particularly in subjects who are unaccustomed to the procedure (Lewis, Honeck, & Fishbein). (p. 397).

So, as one can see here, the use of the shadowing method may not represent the most effective means of understanding divided attention or dichotic listening. Further, Davies, Jones and Taylor have done research on another type of attention – focused attention.

Focused attention

Davies, Jones and Taylor (1984) distinguish between divided attention and another category: focused attention. About these two types of attention, they write:

Selective-attention tasks can be broadly classified as involving either focused or divided attention (see Kahneman, 1973; Treisman, 1969 for classification schemes). The former require attention to be focused on one source of kind of information to the exclusion of others, for example, one of several competing sensory inputs or information channels, or one of several stimulus dimensions or attributes; whereas the latter require attention to be divided or shared between two or more sources or kinds of information, or two or more mental operations. (p. 396)

To more clearly understand the distinction these scholars have made between focused and divided attention, one can picture oneself at a dinner party. A person wanting to divide his or her attention would try to effectively carry on several conversations at the same time while a person wanting to focus his or her attention would block out all other conversation and noise to fully participate in one conversation. Further, Davies, Jones and Taylor (1984) subdivide the category of selective-attention tasks (which involve either divided or focused attention) into five categories, naming selective and dichotic listening as one; the other categories include: central-incident learning; speed classification and visual search, the Stroop test, and time-sharing (p. 396).

As an aside, one can examine one of these categories in particular: time sharing. The issue of time sharing also connects to performance and divided attention. Christopher Wickens (1984) in his essay “Processing Resources in Attention” puts forth a resource theory of attention that looks at attention as a variable commodity possessed by each person; he describes the connection between time sharing and performance when he writes: “Tasks are assumed to demand resources for their performance, and these resources are limited in their availability, There, when the joint resources demanded of two tasks exceeds the available supply, time-sharing efficiency drops and will be more likely to do so as the difficulty of either component task increases” (p. 63). As one considers the notion of time-sharing and its relation to task performance, one can clearly see a connection between it, the more general idea of divided attention, and the questions asked by George Sperling. In his essay “A Unified theory of Attention and Signal Detection,” Sperling (1984) looks at the issues of divided attention and time sharing in a slightly different way when he talks about “concurrent tasks” such as driving a car and listening to the radio and asks whether a person can do both tasks simultaneously without loss (p. 103); in other words, Sperling wants to know if a person can divide his or her attention in such a way as to successfully complete more than one task at a time. While Wickens focuses on laying out the problems associated with time-sharing and how to measure the phenomena, Sperling offers an answer to the question of what one should do when faced with two tasks competing for attention that relies on a theory of optimization – finding the most favorable compromise between conflicting agendas (p. 176). While the scholars examined thus far divide and then sub-divide the issue of selective attention into divided and focused attention, Wolvin and Coakley leave it in tact.

Selective attention

Of the process of selective attention Wolvin and Coakley (1996) write:

There are a number of stimuli to which we can attend at any one time. However, there is no limit to the number of stimuli constantly competing for our attention. If all stimuli seeking our attention at any given time were sent to the cortex, a neural overload would result. Thus, we must constantly engage in a process of selecting only those stimuli to which we will attend. It is believed that some discriminatory mechanism assists us in selecting the wanted from the unwanted aural stimuli. (p. 79)

Wolvin and Coakley (1996) also discuss the details and consequences of this process:

The dominant view of attention presently follows Kahneman's capacity theory, which – like Shiffrin and Schneider's capacity theory – emphasizes the flexible nature of attention. However, disagreements continue as to how selective attention operates, where discriminatory decisions are made, and what happens to unselected stimuli. There is, though, experimental evidence – as previously cited – that attention is selective. As listeners, we base our selection of aural stimuli upon a priority system that exists within each of us. This priority system may stem from the “tendency for people to pay close attention to information that is consistent with their attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors, and little attention to stimuli which are inconsistent.” This need for consistency has led McCroskey to conclude that “selective attention is not so much the conscious ‘tuning out’ of information as it is the unconscious ‘tuning in’ of consistent information.... This process of tuning in and tuning out on messages has critical implication for our

understanding of listening behavior. Bartlett summarizes the relationship of selective attention to listener perception: “Selective listening is determined mainly by the qualitative differences in stimuli in relation to predispositions – cognitive, affective, and motor of the listener” (p. 82).

From these passages one can see the strong connection that Wolvin and Coakley see between selective attention and what they see as the performance of listening. Simply put, one can interpret Wolvin and Coakley as saying that people select to pay attention or “tune into” information that confirms what they already think and believe; while undoubtedly this does happen, this dissertation argues that one can – and often times should – choose to listen with an openness to whatever another may have to say regardless of how well the message may conform to already held beliefs.

Factors influencing attention and performance

Now that one understands the notion of selection attention and the differences between focused and divided attention, one can move onto other factors that influence attention and thus performance such as the individual trying to pay attention and the environment in which the individual finds himself. Davies, Jones and Taylor (1984) cite studies which suggest age, sex, personality, and cognitive style as factors that influence a person’s ability to attend to and thus perform a task; these scholars pointed out that some of these same types of differences manifest themselves whether the tasks in question require selective attention or more sustained attention, also known as vigilance. Johnson and Proctor (2004) highlight the difference between vigilance and arousal; they write:

The concept of cortical arousal is closely related to that of vigilance....Both terms are often used to refer to a general state of wakefulness, and factors that increase

or decrease arousal are associated with corresponding increases or decreases in vigilance task performance. However, the association between cortical arousal and vigilance is not perfect, suggesting that vigilance is a multidimensional construct (Parasuraman, Warm, & See, 1998). In particular, although arousal level seems to determine the overall level of vigilance, it cannot explain why vigilance performance typically decreases after a short (20-30 minutes) period of vigilance task performance. (p. 39)

Here, then, one sees another individual force at work in the arena of attention besides the already mentioned: the ability of a person to sustain attention. Proctor and Johnson continue their discussion of this topic when they write about conducting studies to measure how long people can sustain attention to one task; according to the researchers, “the most common finding for vigilance tasks is the vigilance decrement: the hit rate decreases as the time on the task increases” (p. 257). So, when considering why someone’s performance of a task has decreased or increased, one can ask questions about a person’s ability to sustain attention as well as questions about the person’s age, sex, personality, and cognitive style. In addition to these factors, scholars suggest that one must also always consider factors related to the environment in which the task happens.

Robert Hockey reports on some of the effects of the environment on attention in his Essay “Varieties of Attention State: The Effects of the Environment.” After reviewing studies to measure the effects on attention and task performance of environmental factors such as noise in the situation or the arousal level of the subject, Hockey (1984) concludes that these stressors cause “counter-intuitive” effects; he writes:

Although coping with environmental changes will normally require effort, which is limited and costly, so that a pattern of decrement will emerge eventually; it is nevertheless the case that for any state change, whether it is produced by noise, sleeplessness, old age, or drugs, there well may be some task demands that is consonant with it. In this case, little or no effort will be required to maintain the appropriate state, and no decrement will be observed. The many examples of counter-intuitive effects of stressors in the literature provide ample support for this predication. (p. 479)

In other words, while environmental factors do have some affect on task performance, ultimately people do adapt to them; Hockey (1984) theorizes about this phenomena as Adaptive Resource Management; describing this idea, he writes: “Shifts in state produced by environmental changes do not, then, impose and any strict limits on performance capabilities. Rather, as I have stated in the preceding they push the system into a different baseline state” (p. 477). So, while, for example, a new mother’s performance of everyday tasks might decrease for a period due to the environmental change of sleeplessness, eventually she will adapt to those changes and her performance of the necessary tasks of motherhood will not suffer; in fact, she will develop new skills – such as breast feeding – and come expertly to perform old skills – such as diaper changing – that she had only previously performed at a mediocre level. As this process happens, Hockey would say that she has learned to manage her attention resources in an adaptive way.

One might question how the issue of the adaption of task performance to a new environment ties into the issue of habit. James Reason, relying heavily on the work William James, looks generally at this idea; specifically he looks at the issue of habit in

relation to lapses of attention. In his essay “Lapses of Attention in Everyday Life” Reason quotes James as saying that “Habit diminishes the conscious attention with which our acts are performed (James, 1980 p. 114)” (515). Here, then one sees a dichotomy between how the factors already discussed might affect the attention necessary to perform a task and the role of habit – how much something has become “old hat” – plays in task performance; Reason writes that “Both habit and attention clearly have leading parts to play in the guidance of action” (p. 516). Going back to the new mother mentioned earlier, imagine that, though she has learned how to expertly change a diaper at three o’clock in the morning after only sleeping for two hours, she discovers she has placed a diaper on a doll in her baby’s crib instead of her baby. What happened? The performance of the task, in one respect, did not suffer – the mother changed the diaper expertly despite the environmental factors – but, on the other hand, she had what Reason and James would call a “lapse in attention” which caused her to apply the task to the wrong object. Here, then, one can see the effect of habit on the performance of a task. Reason makes the case that a pattern exists behind these lapses and explains it using a model of human action called the Heuristic Model of Action that looks “beyond the behavioral level of analysis” of performance. While this model and understanding of attention may have a closer connection to the willingness to listen than some of others previously examined, one still must make some important distinctions between the processes of selection and attention already discussed and the notion of making the choice to listen. One must also distinguish the choice to listen from what some may call the willingness to listen.

4.4 Distinguishing a Choice to Listen from Willingness to Listen

To this point, then, this chapter has claimed that the idea of making the choice to listen differs from the idea of choosing to attend to or pay attention to a stimulus making the choice to listen does not involve a measurable performance component. Further, one might assume similarities between the idea of making the choice to listen and what James McCroskey and other scholars refer to as a desire or “willingness” to communicate or listening but this dissertation wishes to distinguish the two ideas. One cannot say that simply because one has a willingness to communicate or listen one will choose to do so. For example, a student may have a general willingness to listen in class but on any given day may choose not to listen. Further, scholars view “willingness” as a measurable quality and this dissertation has already argued that the choice to listen does not have a measurable quality. This next section, then, will look more specifically at this literature.

Measuring the willingness to communicate

According to Anthony Clark (1989), willingness to communicate (WTC) “is measured by a self-report instrument called the Willingness to Communicate Scale (McCroskey and Richmond, 1987)” (p. 238). Clark starts to make a connection between WTC and listening when he writes:

The WTC scale is intentionally broad-gauged and elicits responses to four different types of communication situations as well as three different types of receivers (listeners). McCroskey and Richmond claim that findings on the scale’s reliability are very promising, and demonstrate that a person’s willingness to communicate in one context and/or with one receiver type is closely related to

his/her willingness to communicate in other contexts and with other receiver types. (p. 238)

Here, then one sees the measurability of the issue of willingness. One can find an explanation of one of the reasons that scholars have chosen to measure this quality in the article “Willingness to Communicate, A Potential Confounding Variable in Communication Research” in which McCroskey and Zakahi (1989) write: Researches in communication may have failed to consider the impact of communication orientations on their own research...If [potential participants] do not like or are unwilling to communicate, they may choose not to participate in the study” (p. 98); they go on to distinguish between people with “high WTC” and “low WTC” and suggest that communication scholars need to “undertake additional research to determine what can be done to increase participation in our research by low WTC subjects” (p. 103). In other words, scholars devised a scale to measure WTC partly because they believed it had an impact on their research. Other scholars, like Andrew Clark, chose to pursue the connection between a person’s willingness to communicate and one’s ability to listen

Clark (1989) takes the next logical leap and hypothesizes that “There is a positive relationship between a person’s WTC scores and his/her ability to listen comprehensively [and] to listen for emotional meaning in messages” (p. 239). Clark (1989) tests this hypothesis and then concludes: “In summary, it seems relatively clear that being more willing to communicate and less apprehensive about both speaking and listening is an index of better listening comprehension. But, when it comes to ‘hearing what is inferred but not actually said,’ as Galvin phrased it, self-confidence may serve as an inhibitor rather than a facilitator” (p. 247). Thus, one can say based on this evidence that the

connection between WTC and one's ability to listen may not have such clear benchmarks when the issue of performance comes into play. As Clark's study showed, just because one has a willingness to communicate does not mean one will listen effectively. While Clarke did his research to measure one's ability to listen, other scholars devised a scale to take McCroskey's scale further and measure one's willingness to listen (WTL).

Measuring the willingness to listen

Charles V. Roberts and Larry Vinson (1998) take to task McCroskey and his methodology of determining WTC when they state that they "disagree with the tacit assumption that to measure the willingness of an individual to talk in a variety of situations validly measures how willing a person is to communicate in those situations" (p. 46); they posit that a WTL scale "would be very similar in many ways to what McCroskey and Richmond, among others, have developed to measure willingness to communicate, but would vary in several important ways. It would focus on listening rather than speaking. It would also differ due to the intentional nature of encoding" (p. 46). Roberts and Vinson (1998) go on to make an important statement about how they understand listening and speaking and the role of motivation in listening when they write:

Speaking is generally an intentional act. Listening activity is as often nonconsciously increased or decreased as it is consciously adjusted...People listen differently due to the motivation they have to listen...they decide, either consciously or unconsciously, how much of their optimum listening ability is called for by the situation. Motivation alone cannot explain the consistent listening pattern that individuals seem to display, since often the motivational aspect of communication comes after, rather than before, the actual event (p. 46).

In this passage one finds several statements that this dissertation must contest. First, this dissertation does not believe listening requires any more or less intention than speaking. Secondly, it argues that the motivational aspect of communication comes before, rather than after, the event of perception: one does make the choice to listen to a message after one hears it; one makes the choice to listen and then perceives or hears it.

Roberts and Vinson (1998) expand on their understanding of the connection between motivation and listening when they distinguish between “open-system individuals” with high WTL and “closed-system individuals” with low WTL “who monitor cues only briefly except in situations where motivational possibilities are patently obvious” (p. 47); they also suggest that “open (high willingness to listen) individuals monitor cues longer than close (low willingness to listen) individuals, perhaps to search further for possibilities” (p. 47). This issue of motivation also caused Roberts and Vinson (1998) to reconfigure their original WTL scale. About that scale, they write:

We reasoned that that individuals choose to listen differently in situations because of differences in their desire to monitor the communication for potential motivational possibilities. The data analysis confirmed this. The major problem we encountered with the scale seems to have been centered around the level of importance of that message. It was strong enough so that it disallowed possible weaker influences of situation and speaker to emerge. (p. 48)

Analyzing these assumptions, one can see a possible flaw in the logic used here. Of course, if one knows in advance that a speaker has important information to give then one knows to listen; but how does one know what another has to say in advance? One can argue that even in the cases where one has knowledge in advance of the gist of a

communication, one still has not listened to the communication. Having some prior understanding of what a person has to say and choosing to listen to it based on that knowledge has a vastly different connotation and implication than simply choosing to listen to another person for the sake of listening to that person. One must acknowledge the possibility that often one may think he or she knows what another person has to say, and hears that, only to learn later that the other person did not say that at all.

Willingness and attention

The idea of willingness to communicate or listen calls to mind the idea of will, which W. B. Pillsbury (1973) addresses in his book *Attention*; he distinguishes between external and internal will and talks about their connection to attention when he writes:

Another function that cannot easily be disassociated from the attention is that which results in action – what is ordinarily known as will. One phase of the subject has already been discussed and has been found to be practically identical to the problem of attention. This is what is ordinarily known as internal will, the ability to choose what is to enter consciousness and to direct the course of ideas. But the control of the entrance of ideas we have seen to be dependent upon the attention, to be conditioned by a series of circumstances rooted in heredity, in the social and physical environment, and not to be the exhibition of any new or peculiar process. The control of the course of thought is also a function of the same influences, and can, as we have seen, be ascribed to attention with equal right. There remains to consider the so-called external will, or the manifestations of will in control of bodily movements. The close connection of the internal will

and attention would at least suggest that there was a close connection also between the attention and the external phase of the will problem. (p. 149)

Here one sees a view of will as determined by external circumstances; a view that does not allow for many options when it comes to human choice. Pilsbury (1973) looks at the ideas of choice, action, and attention in this way: “Action...only takes place after corresponding sensations have been in consciousness. It follows, then, since attention controls the entrance to of sensations that it must also control action” (p. 164); further, he writes, “Choice is a result of attending to one of two possible sensations or ideas with its corresponding movement” (p. 165). So, for instance, one can interpret Pilsbury as saying that in order for a person to choose to take a swim, that person must first know what taking a swim would feel like. But how does a person who has never taken a swim know what taking a swim feels like? Perhaps a more textured view of will, that of Augustine, can clarify issues about will, choice, and action that Pilsbury does not address.

Augustine's view of will

While McCroskey and Pilsbury and others that share their behaviorist point of view, implicitly understand a person's will as that which that person wants to do or chooses to do, Augustine takes a much more complex view of will in his *Confessions*.

Augustine (1960) refers to a person's will as incomplete and divided when he writes:

As for me, when I deliberated upon serving the Lord my God, as I had longed planned, it was I myself who willed and I myself who did not will it. Therefore, I was at war within myself, and I was laid waste by myself. This devastation was made against my will indeed, and yet it revealed not the nature of a different mind within me, but rather the punishment of my own nature. (p. 198)

In other words, for Augustine, human beings naturally find themselves conflicted about what to do. Now, some might see spin this in terms of a conflict between good and evil but, ever complex, Augustine (1960) responds: “If there are as many contrary natures as there are conflicting wills, there will not be only two natures but many of them” (p. 198); he gives examples of four activities that a person might want to do; “Let us suppose,” he hypothesizes, “that all of these occur together at exactly the same time, and that all are equally desired but cannot be carried out simultaneously. The mind, torn asunder, with these four wills opposing one another, or even many more, in accordance with the great range of things that are desired” (p. 199). So, for Augustine, a person can have many conflicting wills or desires, far more than Pilsbury’s “two possible sensations or ideas” or McCroskey’s singular concept of willingness. Augustine recognizes that people make choices while in a particular place and a particular time; as in the example, one may desire to do four different activities at the same time but cannot physically do so; thus, one must choose to do one at that moment. Gadamer, whose work underlies the last chapter of this dissertation, also sees people and their choices as bound within a horizon of a particular time and place. Thus, neither Augustine or Gadamer can say that a person has the freedom to simply exercise one’s will and do as one desires; one must always consider the whole range of desires competing for recognition at the same as well as the range of possible options within the horizon of one’s community and tradition. The next chapter of this dissertation will examine Gadamer’s ideas of horizon and tradition more closely; this chapter will conclude with a discussion on his ideas about will and prejudice.

Gadamer on will and prejudice

Gadamer (1975) associates his understanding of will with Nietzsche's idea of will to power; he writes that "even a slave still has a will to power, which turns against his master" but cautions that the master's understanding of the slave as only a servant to do his bidding and the slave's understanding of the master as simply a tyrant whose bidding he does masks the will of both because their "withdrawing from dialectic" of the reciprocity of their relationship results in their "reflecting [themselves] out of relation [to each other]" and so become "unreachable" to each other; further, he says that "the claim to understand the other person in advance performs the function keeping the claim of the person at a distance" and thus the relationship becomes "a reflexive form of the power to dominate" (p. 323). In other words, two people who do not open themselves to each other – who think they completely understand and know each other and no longer have anything to learn from each other – can only relate by struggling for power in the relationship. On the other hand, Gadamer (1975) claims that when two people do not assume they know each other and have an openness to learning, then they have the freedom to choose how to relate to each other; he writes: "openness to the other, then includes the acknowledgement that I must accept some things that are against myself, even though there is no one else who asks this of me" (p. 324). So, for Gadamer, only after two people in a relationship agree not to see each other as already known and understood can they choose to act out of concern for the other rather than out of duty or obligation or to secure a better position in a struggle for power in the relationship.

One can also relate the idea of "withdrawing from dialectic of reciprocity" and its resulting power struggle to the idea of prejudice, and here one finds the key to

understanding the difference between the behaviorist basis of the listening process as generally viewed in the literature and the hermeneutical basis this dissertation seeks to establish. The behaviorist understanding seems to suggest that a person involuntarily takes in stimuli and then selects the stimuli to which to listen based on what he or she wills to hear. Having already distinguished between making a choice to listen and simply hearing what one wants wills hear, this dissertation takes a hermeneutical stance that a person makes the choice to listen on the basis of one's given prejudices or biases. Obviously, those who believe they either do not or should not have bias or prejudice would not agree with this assumption. Gadamer (1975) responds to such criticism with the same logic seen in his critique of willing oneself to power over another. He writes:

A person who imagines that his is free of prejudices, basing his knowledge on the objectivity of his procedures and denying that he is himself influenced by historical circumstances experience the power of the prejudices that unconsciously dominate him...A person who does not accept that he is dominated by prejudices will fail what is shown by their light....A person who reflects himself out of the mutuality of such a relation changed this relationship and destroys its moral bond. A person who reflects himself out of a living relation to tradition destroys the true meaning of this tradition in exactly the same way...To stand within a tradition does not limit the freedom of knowledge, it makes it possible (p. 324).

So, from Gadamer's point of view, denying one's bias means becoming a victim of its power or engaging in a constant power struggle with it, just as the slave who chooses to deny the personhood of his or her master by seeing the master as a tyrant will constantly

struggle for power in that relationship. For Gadamer, whether in relationships or interpretation, one only finds the freedom to learn by acknowledging the limits of what one already knows. Relating this specifically to the idea of making the choice to listen, one can say that, from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics, making the choice to listen does not mean exercising one's so-called "free" will to listen to whatever one wants because one can only understand one's self, and thus one's will, in relation to one's tradition and prejudice. The final chapter of this dissertation will examine Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and the notions of prejudice and tradition in more detail and look at some scholarship that relates these ideas specifically to listening before presenting an alternative model of the listening process that takes these ideas into account.

4.5 Summary

This chapter has examined how making the choice to listen differs from the idea of choosing to pay attention to a stimuli or having a willingness to listen. After looking at these distinctions, it argued that a proper understanding of the choice to listen requires a different framework than the behaviorist perspective that includes the concepts of attention and willingness; it began to introduce Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as that alternative framework by looking at differences between his notion of will and the notion of willingness discussed in the behaviorist literature. The next chapter, then, will examine Gadamer's work and its connection to listening in more detail.

Chapter 5

Philosophical Hermeneutics: An Alternative Basis for the Listening Process

5.1 Introduction

If making the choice to listen does not involve an act that one performs or that one can measure and means more than exercising one's will, then how exactly can one describe the phenomenon? Making the choice to listen, from the perspective of this dissertation, goes beyond simply choosing which stimuli to attend to; it includes choosing to *listen for* as well as *listening to* a particular message while current the models and understandings of the listening process only allow a person to choose to *listen to* a stimulus after he or she has perceived it. This chapter then examines how one makes the choice to listen. It argues from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics that people make the choice to listen based on what Hans-Georg Gadamer would call bias or prejudice based in tradition. After outlining philosophical hermeneutics and its differences with the behaviorist perspective underlying the models of the listening process examined in chapter three, and looking at the work of one scholar who connects listening to philosophical hermeneutics, this chapter will conclude by offering a model of the listening process as a process that starts with a person making the choice to listen.

To understand the claim that making the choice to listen goes beyond a simple exercise of one's will, one must understand some of the basic tenets of philosophical hermeneutics, namely prejudice and tradition. This chapter will give a brief overview of philosophical hermeneutics, then focus on the ideas of horizons, prejudice, tradition, and the hermeneutical circle, to highlight some of the major differences between the approach this dissertation takes and the behaviorist approach then underlies the models of the listening process examined in chapter three. As evidenced by the scholarship reviewed thus far in this dissertation, most scholarship on listening and the listening process within the communication field comes from the perspective of behaviorism and empiricism. The scholarship of Gemma Corradi Fiumara, however, actually connects the issue of listening to hermeneutics. After looking specifically at her understanding of the concepts of *logos* and benumbment, this chapter will conclude with the introduction of a new model of the listening process that takes into account the idea of making the choice to listen as well as the principles tested and verified by the empirical methods of the behaviorists.

5.2 An Overview of Philosophical Hermeneutics

For a short history of hermeneutics and a sketch of the academic landscape, one can turn to the work of Jean Grondin. In the book *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* Grodin (1994) writes: "Since its emergence in the seventeenth century, the word hermeneutics has referred to the science or art of interpretation. Until the end of the nineteenth century, it usually took the form of the theory that promised to lay out the rules governing the discipline of interpretation...The idea of an art of interpretation can, of course, be traced much farther back...even to the tradition of the Greek rhapsodies" (p. 1). Of course, after the scientific revolution and the enlightenment, people began to seek

an alternative to the undergirding philosophy of the scientific age and this paved the way for philosophical hermeneutics. About this kind of hermeneutics, Grondin (1994) writes:

Philosophical hermeneutics, by comparison, is of very recent date. In the ordinary, narrow sense, this term refers to the philosophical position of Hans-Georg Gadamer, and sometimes that of Paul Ricoeur. Significant forms of hermeneutics undoubtedly existed before then, but they hardly ever presented themselves as philosophical conceptions...Even though Gadamer's philosophical endeavors would have been impossible without Heidegger, Heidegger nevertheless could not help stating: 'Hermeneutic philosophy – that's Gadamer's business.' (p. 1)

Here then one sees the connection between hermeneutics as a school of thought that sought rules to regulate interpretation and Gadamer's fully developed philosophical position that begins to question them. While some may suggest that the ideal method of interpretation involves a scientific method free of prejudice or bias, Gadamer, particularly in his seminal work *Truth and Method*, questions the pursuit of an ideal methodology or science of interpretation; further, he argues that any method or process of act of interpretation, a category in which this dissertation would include any act of listening, begins with the interpreter's biases and prejudices.

Building on the idea that interpretation begins with an understanding of one's being as prejudiced or biased, and also looking at the place of methodology in what he calls and Gadamer refer to as "the hermeneutical task," David E. Linge (1977) writes in his collection of essays by Gadamer entitled *Philosophical Hermeneutics*:

The task of philosophical hermeneutics, therefore, is ontological rather than methodological. It seeks to throw light on the fundamental conditions that underlie the phenomenon of understanding in all its modes, scientific and nonscientific alike, and that constitute understanding as an event over which the interpreting subject does not ultimately preside. For philosophical hermeneutics “the question is not what we do or what should do, but what happens beyond our willing and out knowing.” The universality of the hermeneutical question can emerge, however, only when we have freed ourselves from the methodologism that pervades modern thought and from its assumptions regarding man and tradition. (p. xi-xii)

One can say, then, that the metaphor of hermeneutical task as ontological refers to Gadamer’s notion that one must start the process of interpretation by acknowledging one’s biases and tradition; this forms the basis of interpretation as well as the choice to listen. Gadamer goes into detail about this idea in *Truth and Method* when he describes the connection between these biases and horizons in the interpretation process.

Horizons

To begin the discussion on the place of bias and tradition in the hermeneutical process, one can examine Linge’s (1977) summary of Gadamer’s notion of horizon:

Hermeneutics has its origins in breaches in intersubjectivity. Its field of application is comprised of all those situations in which we encounter meanings that are immediately understandable but require interpretive effort. The earliest situations in which principles of interpretation were worked out were encounters with religious texts whose meanings were obscure or whose import was not

longer acceptable unless they could be harmonized with the tenets of the faith. But this alienation from meaning can just as well occur while engaging in direct conversation, experiencing a work of art, or considering historical actions. In all these cases, the hermeneutical has to do with bridging the gap between the familiar world in which we stand and the strange meaning that resists assimilation into the horizons of our world. It is vitally important to recognize that the hermeneutical phenomenon encompasses both the alien that we strive to understand and the familiar world that we already understand. The familiar horizons of the world, though perhaps more difficult to grasp thematically, are as integral a part of the event of understanding as are the explicit procedures by which he assimilates the alien object. Such horizons constitute the interpreter's own immediate participation in traditions that are not themselves the object of understanding but the condition of its occurrence. Yet, this reflexive dimension has all but been ignored by the "science of hermeneutics" during the last century. The result has been a distorted and one-sided picture of understanding and our relationship to tradition. (p. xii)

With this understanding of horizons as familiar and integral to the interpretation process one starts to see one of the basic tenets of philosophical hermeneutics – that people cannot escape what they know. Also one sees the idea that the study of science in general and specifically the "science of hermeneutics" typically does not take into account this "reflexive dimension" of understanding. A later section examines differences between hermeneutics and science while the next outlines Gadamer's connections between horizons, prejudice, and tradition as they relate to the process of interpretation.

Prejudice

Gadamer (1975) suggests that a person's prejudices make up his or her horizons; he writes: "We started by saying that a hermeneutical situation is determined by the prejudices that we bring with us. They constitute, then, the horizon of a particular present, for they represent that beyond which it is impossible to see" (p. 272). Here then one begins to see Gadamer's connection between horizon and prejudice or bias. As one thinks about the idea of prejudice one can consider some of the common notions of prejudice as negative or wrong and definitely a trap to avoid, but, as Gadamer (1975) points out, "historical analysis shows that it is not until the enlightenment that the concept of prejudice acquires the negative aspect we are familiar with. Actually 'prejudice' means a judgment that is given before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined" (p. 240). Further, Gadamer (1975) insists that "prejudice certainly does not mean a false judgment," but explains that, in the view of those with an enlightenment mentality, it appears that this pre-judgment "does not have any foundation in the facts themselves, i.e. that it is 'unfounded'" (p. 240). Gadamer (1975) explains this apparent lack of basis in fact "is the reason for the discrediting of prejudices and the claim by scientific knowledge completely to exclude them" (p. 240) because "it is only its having a basis, a methodological justification (and not the fact that it may be actually correct) that gives a judgment its dignity" (p. 240). Here then we see his understanding of prejudice as integral to interpretation as well as his bias against adhering to a particular method of interpretation. He questions the claim that only an interpretation arrived at by a so-called objective scientific method has validity. He claims that one can come to a valid interpretation of a text based on the acknowledgment of one's bias and tradition.

Continuing his defense of prejudice as necessary for interpretation, Gadamer (1975) critiques the enlightenment philosophy which favors the apparently objective reason over an apparently subjective prejudice in matters of interpretation; he writes:

This recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives that hermeneutical problem its real thrust. By the light of this insight it appears that historicism, despite its critique of rationalism and of natural law philosophy, is based on the modern enlightenment and unknowingly shares its prejudices. And there is one prejudice of the enlightenment that is essential to it: the fundamental prejudice of the enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself” (p. 239-240).

For Gadamer, then, the beginning of the enlightenment marks a transition in people’s understanding about the nature of reason, prejudice, and interpretation. He continues his discussion about the enlightenment, reason, and interpretation when he writes: “it is the general tendency of the enlightenment not to accept any authority and to decide everything before the judgment seat of reason... It is not tradition, but reason that constitutes the ultimate source of all authority... [This] makes the tradition the as much an object of criticism as do the natural sciences the evidence of the senses” (Gadamer, 1975, p. 241-242). Gadamer (1975) goes on to say:

This is where the hermeneutical problem comes in... That which prevents itself, under the aegis of an absolute self-construction by reason, as a limiting prejudice belongs, in fact, to historical reality itself. What is necessary is a fundamental rehabilitation of the concept of prejudice and a recognition of the fact that there

are legitimate prejudices, if we want to do justice to man's finite, historical mode of being" (p. 246).

Here again one sees the ontological claim of philosophical hermeneutics that unbiased human beings do not exist. Further one sees more of the conflict between hermeneutics and science – that science does not want to recognize biases. Finally, one sees the mention of tradition and Gadamer's claim that the emergence of enlightenment philosophy has changed the place of tradition in interpretation. While further discussion about the substantial differences between hermeneutical and empirical processes will follow shortly, one can turn to Gadamer for more detail on his understanding of how hermeneutics works and the notion of the hermeneutic circle before continuing into a discussion about the place of tradition in philosophical hermeneutics.

The hermeneutical circle

After discussing the issues of prejudice and the enlightenment's "prejudice against prejudice," Gadamer (1975) describes how interpretation based on prejudice works; he starts with a reiteration of the relationship between the part and the whole:

We remember here the hermeneutical rule that we must understand the whole in terms of detail and the detail in terms of the whole. This principle stems from ancient rhetoric, and modern hermeneutics has taken and applied it to the art of understanding. It is a circular relationship in both cases. The anticipation of meaning in which the whole is envisaged becomes explicit understanding in that the parts, that are determined by the whole, themselves also determine this whole... Thus, the movement of understanding is constantly from whole to the part and back to the whole. Our task is to extend in concentric circles the unity of

the understood meaning. The harmony of all details with the whole is the criterion of correct understanding. The failure to achieve this harmony means understanding has failed (p. 259)

Thus, one can envision someone hypothesizing about what a text means, dissecting the text to see if it means that, and then checking that evidence against the anticipated meaning of the whole and repeating this process until somehow the interpreter knows he has the correct interpretation. Gadamer (1975) explains that “this view of understanding culminated logically in Schleiermacher’s theory of the divinatory act, by means of which one places oneself entirely within the writer’s mind and from there resolves all that is strange and unusual about the text” (p. 261). The question then, of course, becomes: how does one know what the author intended? Gadamer sees the flaw in this approach and offers some thoughts from Heidegger as an alternative paradigm.

Describing the work of Heidegger as offering an alternative to Schleiermacher’s methodological understanding of the hermeneutic circle, Gadamer (1975) writes:

Heidegger describes the circle in such a way that the understanding of the text remains permanently determined by the anticipatory movement of fore-understanding. The circle of the whole and the part is not dissolved in perfect understanding but, on the contrary, it is most fully realized. The circle then, is not formal in nature, it is neither subjective nor objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter. The anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from the community that binds us to the tradition. But this is contained in our relationship to tradition, in the constant process of

education. Tradition is not simply a precondition into which we have come, but we produce it ourselves, inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition and hence further determine it ourselves. Thus the circle of understanding is not a “methodological” circle, but describes an ontological structural element in understanding. (p. 261)

From Gadamer’s point of view, then, Schleiermacher’s idea of testing and retesting one’s interpretation until one gains absolute certainty in the correctness of his interpretation has a methodological basis to it. Gadamer rejects this notion of Schleiermacher’s for Heidegger’s understanding of interpretation as a process that starts with a part of the ontological nature of human beings – that they have biases – and moves from there.

Tradition, subjectivity, and the fusing of horizons

Now, since Gadamer starts with the assumption that people cannot look at a situation objectively, one may interpret Gadamer, at least at a first glance, as advocating a paradigm of interpretation based on subjective relativism – that an interpreter can interpret the text anyway he or she wants. However, Gadamer does not advocate such a position. He sees an interpreter’s horizon of possible interpretations of a text as limited by his or her tradition. Describing this connection between horizons, tradition, history, and the interpreter, Gadamer (1975) writes:

It is important to avoid the error in thinking that it is a fixed set of opinions and evaluations that determine and limit the horizon of the present, and that the otherness of the past can be distinguished from it as from a fixed ground. In fact, the horizon of the present is being continually formed in that we have continually to test our prejudices. An important part of this testing is the encounter with the

past and the understanding of the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present than there are historical horizons. Understanding, rather, is always the fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves. We know the power of this kind of fusion chiefly from earlier times and their naïve attitude towards themselves and their origin. In a tradition this process of fusion is continually going on, for there old and new continually grow together to make something of living value, without either being explicitly distinguished from the other. (p. 273)

Thus, for Gadamer, understanding becomes a fusion of horizons. He explains that horizons do not exist in isolation from tradition and history. This means that horizons do not constitute completely subjective constructs based simply on how someone wants to interpret a text. To Gadamer (1975), the fact that interpretation within the paradigm of philosophical hermeneutics has this basis in tradition and history gives it as firm a basis as a so-called scientific fact; he writes:

The hermeneutical task becomes automatically a questioning of things and is always in part determined by this. This places hermeneutical work on a firm basis. If a person is trying to understand something, he will not be able to rely from the start on his own chance previous idea, missing as logically and stubbornly as possible the actual meaning of the text until the latter becomes so persistently audible that it breaks through the imagined understanding of it. Rather, a person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something. That is why a

hermeneutically trained mind must be, from the start, sensitive to the to the text's quality of newness. (p. 238)

For Gadamer, then, the basis of hermeneutical interpretation becomes the question that one asks at the onset of the task. Gadamer (1975) expands his notion of sensitivity to the text when he writes: "this kind of sensitivity involves neither neutrality nor the extinction of one's self, but the conscious assimilation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text may present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings" (p. 238). So, the fusion of horizons that Gadamer associates with understanding can only happen if one asks a question of a text and then opens oneself to an answer to that question that may go against one's acknowledged biases. While this might seem like a magic trick of opening the book and having a different meaning appear every time, Gadamer uses the issue of tradition to temper subjectivity – what the text yields to the interpreter must also make sense to his community and tradition.

At the conclusion of this overview of philosophical hermeneutics one can begin to see some significant differences between an approach to listening based in philosophical hermeneutics and one based in the tenets of behaviorism as seen the models examined in chapter three as well as the general literature on listening examined in chapter two. The next section of this chapter examines two of those differences in greater detail: first, that behaviorists rely on the use of a particular methodology as a verification of their interpretation of information while someone working from a position of philosophical hermeneutics would check the veracity of his or her interpretation of certain information against the background of his or her tradition and community; second, that, from the

perspective of behaviorism, one can only make a choice to *listen to* a message once one has perceived it while, from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics, one could make a choice to *listen for* a message within the context of a given tradition but never perceive it or choose not to *listen to* it once one does perceive it.

Hermeneutics and empiricism: methodological differences

The most basic difference between philosophical hermeneutics and behaviorism lies in their approach to methodology. At this point, one might find helpful a specific understanding of hermeneutics that cuts straight to the heart of the issues at hand; for such a definition, one can turn to the work of Robert L. Woolfolk, Louis A. Sass, and Stanley B. Messer (1988), editors of the book *Hermeneutics and Psychological Theory: Interpretive Perspectives on Personality, Psychotherapy, and Psychopathology*; about hermeneutics in relation to psychology and other sciences, they write

Hermeneutics defies straightforward and concise definition. One negative definition is perhaps best stated in relation to positivism: the philosophical view which hold that genuine knowledge is scientific and that no procedures other than those utilized by the natural sciences can determine truth. Questions that science cannot answer are deemed unanswerable. Positivism may be thought of as a counterpoint to hermeneutic thought, and one aim that unites such dissimilar thinkers as Wilhelm Dilthey, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Jurgen Habermas is that of countering the misappropriation of natural science models to various spheres of investigation. Much hermeneutic thought seeks to criticize the position that the methods and criteria of the natural sciences are normative for all forms of

intellectual activity and that an ahistorical, objective, empirical account of science is sufficient. (p. 3)

Given this understanding of hermeneutics as a “counterpoint” to positivism after examining the dominant trend in the research about the listening process to measure and systematize human behavior, but without going so far as calling any specific scholar highlighted in this dissertation a pure positivist, one can begin to see the tension between the two perspectives. Gadamer (1975) responds to some of this tension by arguing, as quoted earlier, that empiricists believe “it is only its having a basis, a methodological justification (and not the fact that it may be actually correct) that gives a judgment its dignity” (p. 240). He questions this belief by pointing out the problem of the language used implementing scientific experiments and describing their results. Gadamer talks specifically about the implications of this dilemma for both scientists and those using hermeneutics in his essay entitled “The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem.”

In his essay entitled “The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem,” Gadamer (1977) addresses the fundamental problem of how to reconcile philosophical hermeneutics, which believes in the “conditionedness of our being” with modern science – or any field – “which stands or falls with the principles of being unbiased and prejudiceless” (p. 10). In the same essay, Gadamer (1977) says that, while some fields may see themselves as exempt from the “conditionedness” of the human beings who work in them, he insists that “the problem is really universal” (p. 10) because “understanding is language-bound” (p. 15). In other words, even scientists – and behaviorists – have to explain their so-called raw and unbiased numerical data in language. Gadamer (1977) also uses his essay on universality to rebut the main

opposition to his view; he quickly shuts down the argument that this fact leads to “linguistic relativism” because “while we live wholly within a language, the fact that we do so does not constitute linguistic relativism because there is absolutely no captivity within language” (p. 16). In other words, the fact that a person must interpret with the bias and prejudice inherent in his/her being and given language, that does not mean that language cannot open up to the interpreter new and helpful – and true – interpretations never thought of before. Further, beyond the fact that they see different bases for knowledge and have a different approach towards methodology, philosophical hermeneutics and empiricism differ in that the empirical methods used within the behaviorist perspective that dominates the literature and research landscape on listening can only test or measure how effectively someone *listens to* particular stimuli while the tenets of philosophical hermeneutics already discussed would suggest that someone can *listen for* a message within the context of one’s tradition and community. A brief illustration of this distinction and some further discussion on this idea will follow.

Distinction between listening to and listening for

In order to understand what it means to say that an understanding of listening process based on tenets of philosophical hermeneutics allows for someone to *listen for* a message while the notion of the listening process based on behaviorism and empiricism focuses only on what someone *listens to* one may find the following illustration helpful. The song lyrics listed below, written by V. O. Stamps, represent an excerpt of a traditional Christian hymn entitled “I’ll be Somewhere Listening;” a close-text examination of these lyrics can shed some light on what it means to *listen for* a message and how this differs from hearing or attending *to* a message:

Chorus

I'll be somewhere listening

I'll be somewhere listening

I'll be somewhere listening for my name

Verse 1

When the Savior calls I will answer

When He calls for me I will hear

When the Savior calls I will answer

I'll be somewhere listening for my name

Verse 2

If my heart is right when He calls me

If my heart is right I will hear

If my heart is right when He calls me

I'll be somewhere listening for my name

Beyond the religious images in this song, one can see the idea of listening *for* a message as well as the distinction between making the choice to *listen for* a message and actually *listening to* that message. Clearly, the singer of the song has made the choice to *listen for* a message, in this case his/her name. However, while the singer assumes that the other – in this case the Christian Savior Jesus Christ – will eventually speak the message for which he has chosen to listen, the singer does not assume that he/she will automatically choose to *listen to* that message; this depends on whether or not the singer's "heart is right." Perhaps one can liken this to the idea to the notion of attending to a message to which one has chosen to listen. Even though one may choose to listen for a message, one

must also effectively attend to it once one actually perceives it. Further, one might suggest that the question of the rightness of one's heart within the lyrics resonates at least in some way with McCroskey's notion of willingness discussed in chapter four; one might hear a message for which one has already chosen to listen but at that particular time, may not have the willingness – or rightness of heart – to attend to that message.

Listening, then, involves both choice and skill. First one must make a choice to listen for what Gadamer would call the newness of what the other has to say; however, in order to complete and continue the communication process, one must also have the skills of discriminating and attending to that newness, that message, once it has reached the senses. This more complex understanding of the choice to listen shows that this dissertation does not attempt to invalidate in any way conclusions about listening effectiveness derived from empirical methods. However, this dissertation does suggest that the dominance of behaviorism and has led to some stagnation within the field of listening and hopes to generate some new discussion by adding the to current conversation the already-examined work of Gadamer, and the voice of Gemma Corradi Fiumara, who takes many of Gadamer's ideas and applies them to listening.

5.3 Gemma Corradi Fiumara's Hermeneutic Approach to Listening

Fiumara represents one of the few scholars interested in studying listening from a perspective other than behaviorism; she works from perspective of philosophical hermeneutics and relies heavily on the work of Gadamer. The next section of this chapter will focus specifically on the connections she presents in her book, *The Other Side of Language: A Philosophy of Listening*, between some Gadamer's ideas and listening. The ideas that she specifically addresses include questioning and openness; she connects these

ideas to listening and then, after a discussion on the problems of power and benumbment that have stemmed from the current understanding of *logos* in western philosophy, suggests that, to use some of the language of this dissertation, making the choice to listen can transform a person's perspective. After the discussion on Fiumara's work, this dissertation will conclude with a presentation of a hermeneutic model of the listening process based on the ideas of Fiumara and Gadamer examined in this chapter.

Fiumara on questioning and openness

In beginning to describe the connections she sees between philosophical hermeneutics and listening, Fiumara (1990) refers to the already discussed notion of openness when she quotes Gadamer: "Anyone who listens is *fundamentally* open. Without this kind of openness to one another there is no genuine relationship. Belonging together always also means being able to listen to one another" (p. 28). Fiumara (1990) goes on to explain her understanding of fundamental:

The fact that there is an openness that is *more* fundamental than the question – the openness of listening – seems to be noticed almost *en passant*....Moreover, the general opinion would appear to be that the *fundamental* openness of listening neither needs nor deserves more attention, as if we already possessed the vital capacity. The illusion that we can speak to others without being able to listen is, perhaps, one that we all share. (p. 29)

For Fiumara, then, the process of listening starts with the openness to whatever answer one may hear, not asking the question. This contradicts models of the listening process which start with someone hearing a message and ends with then responding to it. One might say, then, that from Fiumara's perspective, the process of listening could start with

a person making the choice to listen for an answer, then asking a question, and then attending to the other's response. Fiumara (1990) discusses the drawbacks of focusing on asking questions when she writes:

The "question" then might prove to be an unfortunate procedure, apparently *philo*-sophical but, effectively, simply logocratic. We might be able to learn more by stopping to listen, if we were only able to free ourselves from a logico-dialectical *furor* that drives us on to come up with ever more critical questions while tacitly opposing proper hearing – as the contemporary individual, increasingly impoverished by expanding and inexorable logomachies, knows only too well. Although the formative value of critical questioning is extolled, Tommasone remarked one century ago that "Even when many people hear criticism, few *listen* to it, very few *understand* it and even fewer *feel* it. (p. 29)

Reading this passage, one may interpret Fiumara as criticizing critical thinking; or, if one reads the passage with a more textured perspective, one interprets her point as suggesting that people spend too much time criticizing others and honing their critical thinking skills that they never bother to learn how to listen to criticism about a particular phenomena and use it to improve that phenomena. In simple terms, she wants people to stop talking and asking questions and start listening. She associates people's desire to question and speak and their lack of focus on listening with the idea of *logos* so pervasive in western thought, which she wants to reconsider. She argues that a reconsideration of *logos* that includes elements conducive to listening will not only give people a philosophical basis to focus on listening but also represent a closer interpretation of the original term.

Fiumara's fuller understanding of logos

When Fiumara (1990) explores the issue of why people focus on speaking rather than listening, she writes: “Invoking Gadamer’s claims, we are confronted by an illuminating hermeneutical openness which is, nonetheless impinged upon by those prejudicial elements in our philosophical tradition which overshadow the function of listening” (p. 28). She connects this to the issue of power and discourse and the idea of *logos* as she outlines what she refers to as a “fuller understanding of *logos*,” she claims that one can begin to come to an understanding of *logos* that goes beyond simply “saying” to include a notion of listening or “proper hearing” by placing it alongside the term *legein* (Fiumara, 1990 p. 2-6). In addition to explaining how she wants to reconsider *logos*, Fiumara (1990) also explains why she wants to reconsider *logos* when she writes:

We could...better render the meaning of the term *logos* if we also refer to the verb *legein*....There is a need...to look further into the possible ways of understanding such a pivotal word in the west as *logos*. Perhaps we could start by admitting that there could be no saying without hearing, no speaking which is not also an integral part of listening, no speech which is not somehow received. In view of the problems and contentions which can be encountered in research into the phylogenesis and ontogenesis of language we are inclined to believe that an individual can speak only if he is listened to, rather than there being something he might say that one would subsequently attend to “by means of” listening. (p. 2)

In other words, Fiumara wants to understand *logos* in such a way that it cannot stand alone or simply mean “to speak” or some similar notion; she wants to understand *logos* in a way that includes listening and she believes connecting it to the word *legein* will make

that possible. She believes that once people see that *logos* did not originally mean only to say or tell as they have come to understand it today that they will start once again to see the importance of listening and take some of their focus off speaking.

Fiumara's connections between logos and legein and proper hearing

Writing specifically about *logos* and *legein*, Fiumara (1990) turns to Heidegger, who did an “etymological-philosophical study” of the terms; she quotes Heidegger:

No-one would want to deny that in the language of the Greeks from early on *legein* mean to talk, say or tell. However, just as early and even more originally, *legein* means what is expressed in the similar German word *legen*: to lay down, to lay before. In *legen*, a “bringing together” prevails, the Latin *legere* understood as *lessen*, in the sense of collecting and bringing together. *Legein* properly means the laying-down and laying-before which gathers itself and others. (p. 3)

Fiumara (1990) suggests that this “gathering of itself epitomizes that sort of concentrated listening that is required in intellectual midwifery – the maieutic method” (p. 3). Perhaps one can interpret the distinction that Fiumara wants to make in this way: *logos* without *legein* means simply to tell or to speak; *logos* with *legein* means laying an idea down before someone to consider; one can see why Fiumara would see *logos* with *legein* as more inclusive of listening and proper hearing and more in line with her philosophy.

According to Fiumara (1990), the notion of proper hearing comes from Heidegger, who started his study of *logos* and *legein* with the famous fragment from Heraclitus that states: “When you have listened, not to me but to the...*logos*, it is wise to agree that all things are one” (p. 14). Looking at this statement and beginning his inquiry, Heidegger asks: “What happens then, when such hearing occurs? When there is such

proper hearing there is *omolegein* which can only be what it is as *legein*. Proper hearing belongs to *logos*...this hearing is itself a *legein*. As such the proper hearing of mortals is in a certain way the same as the *logos*” (Fiumara, 1990, p. 14). In other words, Heraclitus separates the *logos* from his self and lays it down before the other for consideration.

Fiumara (1990) writes that, by Heidegger’s approach, no *logos* can be posited apart from the ways of *legein*. No *logos* outside of proper hearing; or perhaps only a *logos* reduced by half may unfold: overwhelming in its manifold expressions and yet primitive and lacking in other basic respects” (p. 14). As she makes her arguments, Fiumara gives several reasons why scholars and people in general tend not to share this fuller understanding of *logos* as connected to *legein* and describes several benefits of doing so.

Fiumara on logos and power

In explaining the importance of an understanding of *logos* as connected to *legein*, Fiumara connects the issues of speaking, power, and benumbment. Fiumara (1990) claims that what she calls the “reduced-by-half notion of *logos*” – that is, *logos* that does not take into account *legein* – has prevailed in the itinerary of western thinking” and that:

It should not surprise us to recognize that ‘truth’ is not located outside of power, and that it is not power itself. Truth based on multiple constrictions, themselves bearers of inevitable effects of power, are generated in our culture....One ought to accept as a consequence the prospect that manifestations of truth be linked in a circular way to the systems of power the produce them as well as to the conditions of power induced by truth (and in which truth is reproduced). (p. 56)

For Fiumara, then, a reduced-by-half notion of *logos* implies that one’s speech can have power even if no one wants listens to it; she claims that “logic, as the doctrine of *logos*,

considers thinking to be the assertion of something about something. According to logic, such speech is the basic characteristic of thinking. A thinking primarily anchored to saying without listening” (p. 3). One can argue that the models of the listening process already examined seem to take, perhaps unwittingly, the position articulated above: that *logos*, understood as thought anchored in saying without listening, starts the communication process; interestingly, this notion subverts the very process of listening they seek to support. On the other hand, one could say Fiumara simply swaps listening for speaking when she says: “there could be no saying without hearing.” Putting a twist on this stagnant argument, this dissertation contends that focusing only on processes of listening or speaking does not give one an accurate picture of the communication process: that one may speak a message over and over to which no one listens just as one may listen over and over for a message that another never speaks but that communication cannot or does not happen until a speaker connects with a listener.

Further, one could argue that this saying without listening dominates Western politics in which people struggle for the power to speak but not the opportunity to listen. But when does the struggle for discursive power end? Only by connecting, or anchoring as she may say, speaking with listening does Fiumara see a way to truly transform language and discourse from a power struggle into helpful communication in a non-violent way. “If we were apprentices of listening rather than masters of discourse,” she writes, “we might perhaps promote a different sort of coexistence among humans: not so much in the form of utopian ideal but rather as an incipient philosophical solidarity capable of envisaging the common destiny of the species” (Fiumara, 1990, p. 57). In other words, she has reconsidered the issue of *logos* because she believes that a fuller

understanding of *logos* –one that includes *legein* – can turn people away from the reduced-by-half understanding of *logos* they currently have and give them a reason to stop using language to win some cosmic power struggle to control the world and use it talk about the issues and solve problems faced by all those living in the world together.

Fiumara on benumbment and victimization

Further, Fiumara believes that people have stopped listening and simply allowed a few others to control the discourse because they have become benumbed. Fiumara (1990) talks about the philosophical problem of benumbment when she writes:

In a culture that is almost saturated with the din of innumerable messages intent on formulating codes, priorities and orientation, the inhibition of our listening potential could be regarded – paradoxically – as a genuine philosophical option. In order to safeguard authentic philosophical resources one may develop “non-listening” defenses which in fact tend to protect one’s inner self, perhaps naturally inclined to philosophy. It is almost as though the individual tacitly said to himself: “I am trying to find a way of not thinking because I no longer want to think the thoughts of others;” or else, “I wonder why I should carry on thinking if I find myself entertaining thoughts that do not allow my own philosophical development buy only a culturally mimetic form of survival.” (p. 82)

In other words, Fiumara claims that human beings have a philosophical nature and also an innate sense of when the discourse around them does not have anything of philosophical value to say; when they sense that unfruitful discourse, they simply choose not to listen to it in favor of other discourse and when they begin to sense that all discourse has lost philosophical value they stop listening altogether. Fiumara (1990)

writes that only by listening – by making the choice to listen to stop the benumbment process and start to listen to each other again – can people “reawaken” their “epistemic potential” because “by remaining vigilant we can attempt to hear without fear of becoming victim of what the others are saying. It is almost as if we become amenable to being linguistically overwhelmed in proportion to our lack of listening awareness and ability” (p. 83). In other words, Fiumara ironically believes that people make themselves susceptible to domination when they choose not to listen; this belief wholly contradicts a commonly held misconception of listening, addressed in the first chapter of this project, which sees listening as a sign of weakness implying that one not having the power to speak. Gadamer also addresses this issue in his work in relation to the idea of openness.

Fiumara believe that people have stopped listening in ill conceived attempt to preserve an ill conceived concept of freedom. Gadamer (1975) also understands that one may choose not to listen out of fear that opening oneself to another might lead to some kind of victimization; he refers back to the type of openness described earlier and writes: “To hear and obey someone does not mean simply that we do blindly what the other desires. We call such a person a slave. Openness to the other, then includes the acknowledgement that I must accept some things that are against myself, even though there is no one else who asks this of me” (p. 324). Relating this to the idea of making the choice to listen, one can see again that making the choice to listen means more than simply exercising one’s will to hear what one wants to hear; it includes anticipating that one may not like what the other has to say but deciding to listen anyway. For Fiumara, when a person listens, one may make a connection to the other or learn information that

may cause the listener to undergo a transformative experience.

Listening as a transformative experience

Rather than conforming to the multiple scholars who see listening as an act, Fiumara (1990) suggests that people approach listening as an experience; she writes:

A listening experience could actually come across like a storm and overwhelm us – silently – distancing us from the constant din of discourses that saturate our culture, ready at all times to convey on the market the most philosophical devices against the storm. At a remarkable distance from such cultural orientation, Cannetti suggests that “Most important of all is talking to unknown people. But it must be done in such a way that they do the talking, and the only one does oneself is to get them to talk. When that is no longer possible for a man, then death has begun.” Conversely, we could then justifiably say that until we become capable of getting something unknown to talk to us we have not yet begun to live and interact. (p. 122)

Fiumara then looks at listening from the point of view of someone who has decided to stop living in the state of benumbment discussed earlier and truly start to listen to others and the surrounding dialogue. She describes such an experience – like an overwhelming storm – as transformative. Fiumara (1990) writes that when a person listens:

A transforming relation is set alight, a germinal contact with the word, giddily different from dependence upon the sterile din of words in those whose transmission we are ensured immobility and isolation. This cognitive dedication to the word of the other demands a philosophical methodology that involves the

person entirely, since it demands a kind of inner abnegation. With this inner renunciation the individual can only hold a dialogue with himself. (p. 125)

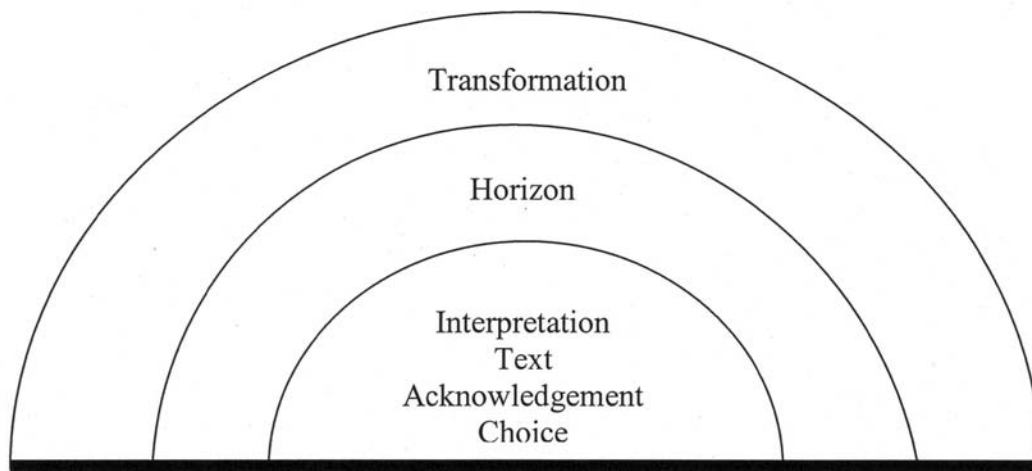
To experience listening, then, from Fiumara's perspective, one must undergo a transformation from someone who only listens for information relevant to his or her own interests to someone who truly wants to engage the other so as to learn and move forward in life and make connections to the world. Looking at these passages one clearly sees that Fiumara believes in listening for the sake of listening. One should listen simply to experience the thrill of hearing the voice of another human being and the possibility of learning from what that person has to say. Not surprisingly, none of the listening models examined in chapter three creates a space even for the possibility of such an experience; nor can any of them take into account any of ideas about how one's choice to listen has its roots in one's biases and tradition. Given these limitations, one can ask: what would a model of the listening process look like that allows for a person's transformation as a result of listening and takes into that each person has to make a choice to listen and that, according to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, this choice and the interpretation of any message to which a person chooses to listen has its basis in that person's prejudices and tradition? The final section of this dissertation will answer that question by illustrating and explaining a model of the listening process based on hermeneutics.

5.4 A Hermeneutic Model of the Listening Process

As one begins to frame a hermeneutic model of the listening process around the work of Fiumara and Gadamer, one can begin by picturing the connections between their ideas as a series of concentric circles. In the spirit of the hermeneutic circle, a hermeneutical process of listening does not represent a linear method that a person can

only follow effectively one way or, if followed exactly, will always produce a desired result; it represents a holistic system based on a series of causes and effects in which the altering of one part of system affects the whole system. The model as conceived takes into account Gadamer's notions of tradition and bias, his understanding of interpretation, and Fiumara's metaphor of listening as a transformative experience. This dissertation argues that a hermeneutical model of the listening process would like the following:

Illustration 5.1 A Hermeneutic Model of the Listening Process



As one begins to look at the various elements of this model, one notice that this model starts with the issue of making the choice to listen; Gadamer's work suggests that what one chooses to *listen for* – as well as what one ultimately *listens to* and the meaning one interprets from a given text or message – will fall within the horizon of one's tradition and community. Thus, the second circle represents the horizon within which one makes the choice to listen, as well the horizon within which one makes one's interpretation of a given text or message. Before making an interpretation of a text, one must have a gestalt understanding of the text itself and then acknowledge the biases one brings to that text.

Interpretation in the hermeneutical model of listening

Looking more in depth at each of these elements, one can recall the discussion that the choice to listen does not have a measurable performance component to it; one could argue the same holds true for the acknowledgment of the tradition that forms the basis of that choice. The acknowledgment of one's biases does not have to involve a public measurable performance or action but simply a self-reflective understanding of what Gadamer might call one's own situatedness. However, this dissertation would argue that within the metaphor of interpretation one sees some similarity between this model and the models of the listening process discussed in chapter three, although some important differences exist between the two, which a later section will detail. At this point, however, one should understand that, according to Gadamer, one cannot get outside of one's interpretation; therefore, the choice of what to *listen for* has its basis in one's interpretation of his/her tradition, the choice of what to *listen to* or interpret has its basis in one's gestalt interpretation of that text; thus, while the interpretation process as listed on the hermeneutical model focuses on the question of what meaning one has gleaned from a specific text, one must realize that, interpretation occurs throughout the entire listening process as understood in this dissertation.

Next, one might notice that this model does not have a specific place for response; one should remember that in her reconsideration of *logos*, Fiumara tries to deemphasize the prevalence of telling and critical questioning in western philosophy and civilization; for her, then, the issue of response may not seem necessary: one chooses to listen simply for the thrill of listening. However, both Fiumara and Gadamer recognize the importance of questioning in the hermeneutical process; so, on this issue, one can say that, unlike in

models examined in chapter three, this model views response not as a stimulus that continues the process so much as an opportunity to ensure that one has interpreted a message adequately and communication has occurred; this opportunity may not always present itself and does not represent a necessary part of a hermeneutical listening process in general or the interpretation process under discussion more specifically. Once one has interpreted a text within a given horizon, one has the chance to have a transformative experience as Fiumara described it; such an experience would result from choosing to listen to the text, the message of the other; thus, one would literally broaden one's horizon within which they could interpret another text or message. At this point, one can move into a more detailed discussion about the differences between this hermeneutic model and the behaviorist models discussed in chapter three of this dissertation.

Similarity, difference, and discussion between hermeneutics and empiricism

As mentioned earlier, the circle of the hermeneutical listening process referred to as interpretation share some similarities with the behaviorist models. It encompasses the necessary performance component of the process. While the acknowledgement of bias and the choice to listen do not have measurable components to them, one can measure, to some extent, the accuracy and effectiveness of one's interpretation. For Gadamer, an interpreter measures the accuracy or validity of an interpretation against the horizons of possible interpretation offered by the interpreter's tradition. For the behaviorists, one measures the effectiveness of one's listening skills with tests of recall and various other empirical methods. While the behaviorist models may break the act of listening or interpretation up into several smaller processes, the question they seek to answer when they test effectiveness, from the point of view of this dissertation, ultimately becomes

how accurately one has interpreted the message. Thus, interpretation within the hermeneutical process of listening takes into account, at least in some way, the questions of effectiveness and the performance of the skills that concern the scholars referenced in chapter three; however, by looking at those skills as related to interpretation rather than perception, the hermeneutical model of listening by-passes the senses – particularly the sense of hearing – in so much as one cannot fault his or her senses for faulty interpretation or listening. The fact that the hermeneutic view of listening favors interpretation while the behaviorist view favors perception represents the main distinction between the hermeneutical and behaviorist models of the listening process. Yet, despite these differences, this dissertation maintains that, through furthering discussion and increased listening, the two approaches can co-exist within the field of listening. For an example of how empiricism and hermeneutics can both make contributions in a particular field primarily invested in empiricism one can turn to the field of psychology.

When looking for examples of how empiricism and hermeneutics can both contribute to the advancement of a field, one can turn to the field of psychology. The field of psychology represents one area of the social sciences in which hermeneutics and empiricism have come to coexist. The previously mentioned book, *Hermeneutics and Psychological Theory: Interpretive Perspectives on Personality, Psychotherapy, and Psychopathology*, aims at examining some of the connections already made between empiricism and hermeneutics within this field. Donald Meichenbaum (1988), in an essay for this collection called “What Happens When the ‘Brute Data’ of Psychological Inquiry Are Meanings: Nurturing a Dialogue between Hermeneutics and Empiricism,” writes: “There is fundamentally nothing incompatible between a hermeneutic approach and an

empirical approach to psychological investigation. In fact, a productive dialogue between the two approaches that would benefit each could be established” (p. 116). Hopefully scholars within the field of listening can come to share such a tolerable view.

5.5 Conclusion and Summary

After introducing a new model into the field, one might find it helpful to examine the implications of a hermeneutical process of listening in the classroom; to do this, one can begin by thinking about how an instructor would provide some way for students to get their heads around a process full of such otherness. First of all, students easily point out a distinction between hearing and listening; they say listening involves concentration and paying attention while hearing does not; they associate paying attention with some kind of choice or selection; building upon this understanding leads one easily to the notion of making a choice to listen. Students often cite many obstacles to listening related to, in behaviorist terms, their ability to perceive or attend to a message; these include external noise, tiredness, disinterest, and distraction. From the perspective of the hermeneutical model, however, these primarily physical obstacles do not have any place in or any impact on the process; thus, a teacher must encourage students to look beyond those physical dimensions to why someone may actually choose not to listen to another person. At this point, students can start to examine how their own prejudices, biases, and traditions and think about how those may impact their decisions about listening.

Developing the skills necessary for hermeneutical listening, then, does not mean learning how to discriminate between sounds or how to remember what one has heard. Instead, to listen effectively according to the hermeneutic model, one needs to develop the self-awareness to recognize and admit one’s biases enough to recognize something different

and new and perhaps have the courage to let that newness and otherness transform oneself. The implication of this approach in the classroom – and this has application to the social-science laboratory as well – becomes that, while a teacher or researcher can test whether a student or subject has retained certain information from a lecture or presentation and this will give the teacher or researcher a measure of how effectively the student or subject has listened according to the behaviorist model, one cannot test whether a person has the self-knowledge necessary for hermeneutical listening. The fact that one cannot test how effectively one listens according to the hermeneutical model may dissuade some from using it; however, this dissertation argues that one does not need to choose one perspective over the other; both can coexist with the field of listening and both offer valid interpretations of complex process of listening.

To summarize this chapter, then, one can say that it has looked in detail at the ideas of tradition and prejudice within the framework of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and then connected them to the process of listening using the work of Fiumara; it then offered a hermeneutical model of the listening process to take into account these ideas. To summarize this project in whole, one can say that it has attempted to contribute to the ongoing conversation about listening and the listening process by outlining an alternative theoretical basis upon which to set the listening process. After examining the current research in the field of listening in general and specifically about the idea of listening as process, this dissertation saw that behaviorism represents the main voice in that conversation; to further the conversation, it wished to add the voice of Gadamer and philosophical hermeneutics and the work of Fiumara in the hopes of presenting an alternative model of the listening process not based on behaviorist ideas.

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