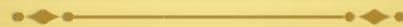


The Listener as Speaker: Implications for Teaching Listening



Henry D. Schlinger, Jr.
California State University, Los Angeles

The Listener as Speaker: Implications for Teaching Listening



- ✦ Part I — What is Listening?
 - ✦ Traditional approach
 - ✦ Problems with the traditional approach
 - ✦ Hearing vs. Listening
 - ✦ Behavioral approach
 - ✦ What is listening?
 - ✦ The difference between the behavior of the listener and listening
 - ✦ Listening and learning, remembering, and understanding

What is Listening?



What is Listening?



Traditional Approaches

- ✦ Students spend 20 percent of all school related hours **just listening**. If television watching and one-half of conversations are included, students spend approximately 50 percent of their waking hours **just listening**.
- ✦ Listening is following and understanding the sound---it is hearing with a purpose. Good listening is built on three basic skills: attitude, attention, and adjustment. . . Listening is the absorption of the meanings of words and sentences by the brain. Listening leads to the understanding of facts and ideas.

Traditional Approaches

- ✦ Hearing is a physiological process, whereas listening is a cognitive process.
- ✦ Listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages.
- ✦ An active activity that involves receiving, deciphering, and perceiving a message with intent to respond.
- ✦ Ethel Glenn (1989) in the Journal of the International Listening Association lists fifty different ways of describing listening . . . most often included in the definition of listening were: perception, attention, interpretation, response, and spoken and visual cues.

Traditional Approaches

- ✦ (1) Listening can be learned,(2) listening is an active process, involving mind and body, with verbal and nonverbal processes working together, and (3) listening allows us to be receptive to the needs, concerns, and information of others, as well as the environment around us.
- ✦ Listening is comprised of seven essential components: (1) volition, (2) focused attention, (3) perception,(4) interpretation, (5) remembering, (6) response, and (7) the human element.

Summary of Traditional Approaches

- ✦ Students spend 50 percent of their waking hours just listening.
- ✦ Listening is
 - ✦ following and understanding the sound---it is hearing with a purpose
 - ✦ the absorption of the meanings of words and sentences by the brain
 - ✦ the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages
 - ✦ an active activity that involves receiving, deciphering, and perceiving a message with intent to respond
 - ✦ an active process, involving mind and body, with verbal and nonverbal processes working together
 - ✦ comprised of seven essential components: (1) volition, (2) focused attention, (3) perception,(4) interpretation, (5) remembering, (6) response, and (7) the human element.

Expressive vs. Receptive Language

- ✦ “Receptive language skills, **the ability to take in language and understand**, include being able to follow directions, understand a story, and understand figurative language.”
- ✦ “Expressive language skills encompass the many ways of conveying a message. Expressive language skills include learning the **forms** of language, such as verb forms, plural endings, and how to use pronouns, as well as the **content** of language, which leads to an event being related clearly and appropriately. It also includes the **function** of language, which can vary based upon listeners.” (Northwestern University, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders)

Problems with Receptive vs. Expressive Distinction

- ✦ Assumes that “certain basic linguistic processes were common to both speaker and listener” (Skinner, 1957, p. 33)

Common processes are suggested when language is said to arouse in the mind of the listener "ideas present in the mind of the speaker," or when communication is regarded as successful only if an expression has "the same meaning for both speaker and listener” (Skinner, 1957, p. 34)

- ✦ To “have language” or “to acquire language”

Problems with Traditional Approaches

- ✦ Listening as action
 - ✦ No action is specified
 - ✦ E.g., following, understanding, receiving, constructing, deciphering, interpreting
 - ✦ What behaviors can be observed (and measured)?
 - ✦ No help in teaching listening
- ✦ Language as a noun (e.g., to have or acquire language)
 - ✦ Reification
 - ✦ Circular reasoning
 - ✦ No explanation

Hearing vs. Listening

Hearing

Listening?



Hearing vs. Listening

Hearing
and
Listening



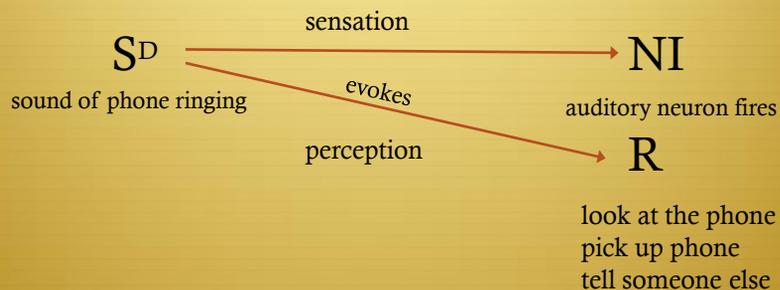
Hearing vs. Listening



Hearing vs. Listening

- ✦ Hearing is a form of sensation and listening is a form of perception
- ✦ Sensation vs. Perception
 - ✦ Sensation – stimuli (energy changes) that stimulate sensory receptors.
 - ✦ Transduction – converting energy changes into neural impulses
 - ✦ Perception –
 - ✦ Traditional – how we (or the brain) interpret sensation
 - ✦ Behavioral – stimuli (energy changes) that evoke behavior
 - ✦ Behavior under stimulus control

Hearing vs. Listening



Hearing vs. Listening

- ✦ Sensation without perception (i.e., sensing without behaving)
- ✦ Perceiving (i.e., behaving) without sensing
 - ✦ Imagining
 - ✦ Seeing someone
 - ✦ Hearing someone
 - ✦ Dreaming

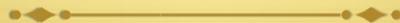
Hearing vs. Listening

- ✦ Environment
 - ✦ Traditional view
 - ✦ Behavioral view
 - ✦ All stimuli that affect behavior at a given time.
 - ✦ Implications
 - ✦ Environment is inside and outside
 - ✦ Environment is always changing
 - ✦ Environment is never the same for two individuals

Break!



Summary



- ✦ What is listening?
 - ✦ Traditional approaches
 - ✦ Receiving, constructing, deciphering, perceiving, etc.
 - ✦ Expressive vs. receptive language
 - ✦ Problems with traditional approaches
 - ✦ Hearing vs. Listening
 - ✦ Sensation vs. perception
 - ✦ Environment

The Behavioral Approach

✦ Behaving as a listener

... the listener (and the reader as well) is reacting to verbal stimuli—the end-products of the behavior here analyzed—and we are naturally interested in the fate of such stimuli. On the one hand they evoke responses of glands and smooth muscles, mediated by the autonomic nervous system, especially emotional reactions. These exemplify classical conditioned reflexes. On the other hand verbal stimuli control much of the complex skeletal behavior with which the individual operates upon his environment. (Skinner, 1957, p. 34)

✦ E.g. “There’s a snake!”

✦ Listening

... in many important instances the listener is also behaving at the same time as a speaker. (Skinner 1957, p. 34).

The Behavioral Approach

✦ Listening

*In accounting for the total verbal episode . . . , we must consider that the listener does more than simply provide an audience for, reinforce, or respond to the speaker’s verbal behavior in nonverbal ways . . . In other words, **the listener also behaves verbally** when he or she is said to be listening.*

*Because much of listening is covert, it is easy to believe that the listener really does passively receive and process information from the speaker. In a behavioral account, however, a listener is not the passive receptacle implied by such expressions as receptive language; a listener is constantly active, **behaving verbally** with respect to other speakers as well as to him- or herself as a speaker. (Schlinger, 2008, p. 149)*

What is “Listening”?

- ✦ What behaviors can or do we observe when we say that someone is “listening”? (Schlinger, 2008)
- ✦ Because the behaviors involved in listening are typically automatic and covert, it is almost impossible to do more than guess about their nature.
- ✦ Interpretation in science and behavior analysis

What is “Listening”?

- ✦ Examples
 - ✦ Remembering names, directions, etc.
- ✦ Traditional (cognitive) explanation
 - ✦ The information contained in the name or directions is decoded and mapped onto a stored mental lexicon of meaning.
- ✦ Such an account is not helpful because it is
 - ✦ Not parsimonious because we must assume (i.e., infer) the existence of structures (mental lexicon) and processes (decoding and mapping) . . . based solely on the presence or absence the observed behavior
 - ✦ Not directly observable or testable

What is “Listening”?

- ✦ What is someone *doing* when she is said to be “listening”?
- ✦ What is someone *doing* when she is said to not be “listening”?
 - ✦ The individual is engaging in (subvocal) verbal behavior.
 - ✦ In other words, talking to herself about what the speaker is talking about.
 - ✦ We need to identify the verbal operants that are involved in “listening.”

What is “Listening”?

- ✦ Verbal Operants
 - ✦ Mand—response form reinforced by a characteristic consequence and under the control of motivating operations
 - ✦ Tact—response form under the control of nonverbal stimuli (objects or properties of objects)
 - ✦ Echoic—response form under the control of an auditory verbal stimulus with formal similarity and point-to-point correspondence
 - ✦ Intraverbal—response form controlled by a verbal stimulus with no point-to-point correspondence

What is "Listening"?



What is "Listening"?



What is “Listening”?

- ✦ The role of echoic behavior in listening
 - ✦ When we are said to “listen” or “pay attention,” we are at least echoing.
 - ✦ Examples
 - ✦ Remembering a name
 - ✦ Following directions
 - ✦ Echoing converts a verbal stimulus into a verbal response
- ✦ The importance of echoic behavior in language learning

What is “Listening”?

- ✦ The role of intraverbal behavior in listening
 - ✦ *We do not merely repeat what we have heard; we use the terms productively, in novel combinations (Palmer, 1998, p. 7).*
- ✦ The verbal stimuli generated by others or by our own (echoic and intraverbal) behavior evoke intraverbal responses.
 - ✦ Examples
 - ✦ Remembering names
 - ✦ Following directions
- ✦ The importance of intraverbal behavior in language learning.

Does Behaving as A Listener Require Listening?

- ✦ Behaving as a listener
 - ✦ Nonverbal responses to verbal stimuli
 - ✦ Conditioned emotional responses
 - ✦ Discriminated responses
- ✦ Listening
 - ✦ Verbal responses to verbal stimuli
 - ✦ Echoic behavior
 - ✦ Intraverbal behavior

The Difference Between Behaving as A Listener and Listening



Behaving as A Listener and Listening Are Functionally The Same

- ✦ Although behaving as a listener and listening are separate repertoires,
- ✦ and listening is more complex than behaving as a listener,
- ✦ behaving as a listener is **functionally** no different than simple listening.

S^D → R → S^R
 "sit down" sits down "thanks!"

S^D → R → S^R
 "sit down" "sit down" "formal similarity!"

Complexities of Listening

- ✦ Instructing the behavior of the listener
- ✦ Listening and remembering
- ✦ Listening and understanding

Instructing the Behavior of the Listener

- ✦ Listening is more complex than behaving as a listener or simple listening (e.g., echoic and intraverbal responding)
- ✦ The listener's verbal and nonverbal behavior are often changed in a more permanent way by the speaker's behavior
 - ✦ The listener's behavior is conditioned!
 - ✦ Examples
 - ✦ Remembering names
 - ✦ My 3 ½ year old

Listening and Remembering

- ✦ Cognitive rehearsal
- ✦ *... make connections or associations between the new information and what we already know and understand ... by integrating the new data into our existing schemas of stored information (Sternberg, 2003, p. 182).*
 - ✦ Remembering a person's name
 - ✦ My 3 ½ year old

Listening and Understanding

- ✦ As another consequence of the fact that the speaker is also a listener, some of the behavior of listening resembles the behavior of speaking, particularly when the listener "understands" what is said.
- ✦ The listener can be said to "understand" a speaker if he simply behaves in an appropriate fashion.
 - ✦ Conditioned emotional response
 - ✦ Discriminated behavior (The listener understands to the extent that he tends to act appropriately.)
 - ✦ Instruction

Listening and Understanding

- ✦ *In a trivial sense "to understand" is "to be able to say the same thing" (Skinner, 1957, p. 277)*
- ✦ We are said to "understand" if we can
 - ✦ Echo what was said
 - ✦ Say the "same thing" with different words (i.e., intraverbal behavior)

Summary

- ✦ The behavioral approach to “listening”
 - ✦ Behaving as a listener vs. “listening”
 - ✦ What is “listening”?
 - ✦ What is someone doing when she is said to be “listening”?
 - ✦ Engaging in (usually subvocal) echoic and intraverbal behavior
 - ✦ Complex listening
 - ✦ Instructing the behavior of the listener
 - ✦ Listening and remembering
 - ✦ Listening and understanding

The Listener as Speaker: Implications for Teaching Listening

- ✦ Part II—Teaching Listening
 - ✦ Listener Behavior
 - ✦ Discriminated Responses
 - ✦ Listening

Teaching Listener Behavior

- ✦ Nonverbal responses to verbal stimuli
 - ✦ Discriminated operants
 - ✦ Looking at, pointing to, picking up, and bringing objects to verbal requests.

Teaching Listener Behavior

S^D -----> R -----> S^R

“Look at the ___”	Looks at the ___	Specific praise
“Where’s the ___?”	Looks at or points to ___	
“Point to the ___”	Points to the ___	
“Bring me the ___”	Brings the ___	
“Put the ___”	Puts the ___	

Teaching Listening

- ✦ Echoic behavior
 - ✦ Why do we echo?
 - ✦ Automatic reinforcement
 - ✦ Social reinforcement
 - ✦ Self-echoic behavior
- ✦ Intraverbal behavior

Teaching Listening

- ✦ Joint Control
 - ✦ When one verbal topography is evoked jointly by two sources of stimulus control.
 - ✦ e.g., “Point to the red square”
 - 1) Echoic “red square” evoked by prior verbal auditory stimulus + self-echoic (“red square,” “red square,” etc.)
 - 2) Tact “red square” evoked by red square.

Summary and Conclusion

- ✦ To teach listening one needs to know what behaviors occur when we use the word.
- ✦ Distinguished between behaving as a listener and “listening”
 - ✦ Behaving as a listener involves discriminated operants controlled by verbal stimuli.
 - ✦ “Listening” involves (subvocal) verbal (i.e., echoic, self-echoic, and intraverbal) behavior

Thank You!

hschlin@calstatela.edu