

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WATSON-BARKER LISTENING TEST

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Although several dozen listening tests, or tests purporting to test listening skills, have been developed in the past 50 years, listening teachers and scholars are still interested in refining the measurement of listening abilities and developing new instruments for specific levels, interests, and aptitudes. A rather extensive review of the literature concerning the measurement of listening abilities, by the authors of this paper, will appear in the forthcoming edition of COMMUNICATION YEARBOOK, thus the focus of this paper and program will be on one specific measure of listening, not on listening tests in general.

The present test was developed approximately two years ago by the authors, in an attempt to provide a measurement of listening for college students and adults, particularly those in business and industry. This need was felt, in part, because of the lack of useful listening tests that could be used with adults in the communication training setting. A preliminary sample of items was presented at the 1983 ILA Convention in Minneapolis, and the response from convention participants was encouraging. On the basis of feedback from several consultants and trainers, two forms of the test were designed, and Form A was recorded for pilot testing.

During the past year the test has been administered to over 1000 subjects, in four different states. Subjects have included both adult professional groups and student groups.

Although all of the data have not yet been item analyzed and statistically summarized, it appears that face validity for the items are high in most areas, and that scores for the test follow a normal distribution. By June, 1984, the authors plan to develop and record a revised Form A on the basis of feedback from the initial data analysis, then to proceed with similar stages for Form B. When the tests are finally made commercially available, the two parallel forms will allow teachers and trainers to use the test for pre and post listening training assessment. In addition, normative data will be provided for test users, to aid in interpreting the results of the test scores.

The authors welcome feedback and suggestions from all ILA members, and hope that the test will provide aid to teachers and trainers who have a need to assess listening abilities of their clients or students.