

Listening Styles and the
Listening Practices Feedback Report

Listening Styles
and
the Listening Practices Feedback Report

Philip Emmert, James Madison University
Victoria Emmert, James Madison University
Janice Brandt, Brandt Management Group, Inc.
Kittie W. Watson, Tulane University
Larry L. Barker, Auburn University

Paper Presented at the 15th annual convention of the
International Listening Association, Boston,

Massachusetts, March 3-5, 1994.

It has become a cliché to say that listening is a complex phenomenon. This complexity has been addressed both at the theoretical level (Emmert and Emmert, 1993) and in terms of measurement (Fitch Hauser and Hughes, 1987). Further, major tests of listening have been constructed that assume an underlying multidimensional construct of listening (Bostrom, 1990; Watson and Barker, 1984). This underlying complexity has been evident in various kinds of tests concerned with different aspects of the listening process, including tests of listening ability, tests of tests of others' perceptions of a person's listening ability, willingness to listen, listening style preferences, and factors of listening difficulty.

Two of the measurement procedures, the Listening Practices Feedback Report (LPFR) (Brandt, Brandt, Emmert, and Emmert, 1992) and the Listener Preference Profile (LPP) (Watson, Barker, and Weaver, 1992), are of interest because both of them are based on self-reports of two aspects of listening. Each of these measurement procedures taps into a different perspective on listening.

The Listening Practices Feedback Report

The LPFR is a report based on a twenty-eight item questionnaire concerned with a person's own perceptions of their listening ability and their co-workers perceptions of their listening ability. The LPFR is useful to supervisors, especially, to determine if their perceptions are consistent with the perceptions of their associates. The LPFR has been demonstrated to be multidimensional, with the associates' perceptions based on three factors and the self-perceptions of respondents based on six primary factors (Emmert, Emmert, and Brandt, 1992).

Associates' perceptions of respondents. The three factors of associates' perceptions are appropriateness, professionalism, and supportiveness, which accounted for 59% of the variance. The central dimension, or factor, that accounts for most of the meaning underlying associates' responses on the LPFR is the perception that the listener has engaged in appropriate listening behaviors and is not performing those behaviors which may threaten the speaker's role: not monopolizing the discussion conversation by talking rather than listening, not becoming emotional or defensive in a difficult situation, not interrupting, not changing the topic before it has closure or agreement, not responding with emotion packed words or phrases, taking time and patience when listening, listening with an open mind, free from personal bias, and not being critical of the speaker's delivery, appearance, grammar, vocabulary, etc.

The second listening construct underlying the associates responses to the respondent is a business/professional dimension: prepare or become informed when necessary, following-up with prompt, correct action when there is agreement, taking notes when appropriate, asking relevant questions for clarification, holding distractions to a minimum when in a discussion or meeting, and paraphrasing another's comments to ensure understanding.

The third dimension reflects the associates' perception that the other person is open and supportive: smiling, acknowledging a clever remark, listening with sincerity as opposed to a false-going-through-the-motion attitude, and asking others to speak louder or clearer when the situation call for it.

Respondents' self perceptions. Six factors emerged in the factor analysis of respondents' own ratings on the LPFR and accounted for 50% of the variance. The first factor indicates that the listener has behaved with appropriateness: not changing the topic before it has closure or agreement, giving the speaker full attention rather than being preoccupied with other concerns, and maintaining an appropriate degree of eye contact.

The second factor represents respondents' perceptions that they demonstrate emotional avoidance: not becoming emotional or defensive in a difficult situation, and not responding with emotion packed words or phrases.

The third dimension relates to the respondents' perception that they demonstrate effective memory/recall: accurately relaying messages to third parties, accurately recalling other's comments later, and correctly anticipating where the discussion is going. The second and third factor are positively correlated suggesting that respondents perceive responding emotionally reduces information reception. In fact this factor is positively associated with all of the five other factors.

The fourth factor is the respondents' perception that they demonstrate an empathic nonjudgmental attitude: trying to place themselves in another's position and to understand that person's concerns, and listening with sincerity as opposed to a false-going-through-the-motion attitude.

The fifth dimension is the respondent speaking from the role of listener: paraphrasing other's comments to ensure understanding, and asking the speaker to speak louder or more clearly.

The final factor is the respondents perception that they effectively use business/professional listening: taking notes when appropriate, and preparing or becoming informed when necessary.

The Listening Preference Profile

This multidimensional structure underlying the perception of a person's listening ability is of more than simply theoretical interest, given the multidimensional structure underlying self-reported listening preferences, as measured by the LPP. The LPP includes fourteen items that are descriptive of listening behaviors and preferences, as reported by respondents about themselves. Research by Mahan (1991) and Watson, Barker, and Weaver (1992) confirm the existence of four factors underlying the construct of listening preference. These four factors are people-oriented, content-oriented, action-oriented, and time-oriented, which accounted for 57% of the variance in the Watson, Barker, and Weaver (1992) study.

The people-oriented factor included items that demonstrated caring and concern for others' feelings, identification of the emotional states of others, internalization/adoption of the emotional states of others, or attempting to find areas of common interest.

The content-oriented dimension included items suggesting that a listener tests or evaluates facts and evidence, welcomes complex and challenging information, listens to facts before forming judgments and opinions, or favors listening to technical information.

The action-oriented dimension included items suggesting that a listener jumps ahead and finishes thoughts of speakers, is frustrated by unorganized speakers, focuses on inconsistencies and errors in messages, or shows impatience when speakers ramble.

Finally, the time-oriented factor included items suggesting that a listener lets others know how much time they have to listen or tell others how long they have to meet.

Since each of the measurement procedures focuses on a different aspect of listening, and since the LPP is concerned with listener preferences/styles it seems reasonable to expect that there would be a relationship between a listener's preference and his or her perceptions of their listening behavior. Likewise, and possibly of even greater interest, would be the likely relationship between listener preference/style and the perception of others (associates) of their listening effectiveness. Thus the research question guiding the present study is: what is the relationship between listening preference and both self and other perceptions of a listener's listening effectiveness?

Methods

Subjects were 68 individuals from a major federal government department participating in Brandt Management Listening Training Seminars. There were 12 males and 56 females. Both managers and office staff participated in the

seminars. Some subjects were taking the seminar for the first time while others had participated in a previous seminar. For this study the first respondent and associate ratings on the LPFR's were used for those respondents taking the seminar again. This eliminates the possibility of an interaction between listening orientation, listening practices and training and creates comparable data for all subjects.

Instruments: The LPFR questionnaire was administered prior to the training session and the LPP questionnaire during the training session.

RESULTS

The four LPP orientations were correlated with the LPFR dimensions for self-ratings. The results are reported in Table 1.

Table 1
CORRELATIONS AMONG LPP ORIENTATIONS AND
RESPONDENT SELF-RATINGS ON THE LPFR

Dimensions	LPP Types			
	Action	People	Content	Time
Appropriateness	-.4662**	.1851	.2547	-.4262**
Emotional Avoidance	-.1906	.1559	.2866	-.2086
Memory/Recall	.0195	.1067	.2760	-.0698
Empathic Non-judgmental Attitude	-.2180	.1963	.1648	-.0516
Listener Speaking	.0789	.2960*	.2029	.1465
Business/Professional Listening	.0302	.1276	.3140*	-.0571

N=64 1-tailed Significance: * = .01 ** = .001

The four LPP orientations were correlated with the LPFR dimensions for associate ratings of the respondents. The results are reported in Table 2.

Table 2
CORRELATIONS AMONG LPP ORIENTATIONS AND
ASSOCIATE RATINGS OF RESPONDENTS ON THE LPFR

Dimensions	LPP Types			
	Action	People	Content	Time
Appropriateness	-.1552	.1733	.1199	.1513
Professionalism	.0300	.0981	.1152	.0930
Supportiveness	.2963*	.0555	.0665	.1369

N=64 1-tailed Significance: * = .01 ** = .001

The four LPP orientations were split above and below the median to form groups scoring high and low on the four orientations. A gender by LPP orientation MANOVA was then performed on the LPFR respondent dimensions. The multivariate test for the action orientation on the LPP was significant ($F=2.18$, $df=6$, 6.60 , $p=.059$). The significant univariate results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3
UNIVARIATE RESULTS FOR RESPONDENT DIMENSIONS
ON THE LPFR FOR THE ACTION ORIENTATION ON THE LPP

Factor	Mean		F	p<
	High	Low		
Appropriateness	10.97	12.51	10.69	.002
Emotional Avoidance	10.15	11.42	6.34	.014
Memory/Recall	11.18	11.31	.00	.991
Empathic Non-judgmental Attitude	7.23	8.03	2.12	.150
Listener Speaking	6.52	6.23	.00	1.000
Business/Professional Listening	7.75	7.83	.01	.921

In addition, gender by LPP orientation MANOVA's were performed on the LPFR associate dimensions. The multivariate test for gender for the time orientation was significant ($F=3.06$, $df=3$, 63 , $p=.035$). The significant univariate results are reported in Table 4.

Table 4
UNIVARIATE RESULTS FOR ASSOCIATE DIMENSIONS
ON THE LPFR FOR THE TIME ORIENTATION ON THE LPP

Factor	Mean		F	p<
	Males	Females		
Appropriateness	31.76	33.02	1.49	.227
Professionalism	21.95	23.63	6.74	.012
Supportiveness	10.56	11.32	6.86	.011

The multivariate test for gender for the content orientation was significant ($F=3.86$, $df=3$, 65 , $p=.013$). The significant univariate results are reported in Table 5.

Table 5
UNIVARIATE RESULTS FOR ASSOCIATE DIMENSIONS
ON THE LPFR FOR THE CONTENT ORIENTATION ON THE LPP

Factor	Mean		F	p<
	Males	Females		
Appropriateness	31.76	32.67	1.10	.297
Professionalism	21.95	23.49	7.02	.010
Supportiveness	10.56	11.29	9.36	.003

The multivariate test for gender for the people orientation was significant ($F=2.71$, $df=3$, 65 , $p=.052$). The significant univariate results are reported in Table 6.

Table 6

UNIVARIATE RESULTS FOR ASSOCIATE DIMENSIONS
ON THE LPFR FOR THE PEOPLE ORIENTATION ON THE LPP

Factor	Mean		F	p<
	Males	Females		
Appropriateness	31.76	32.67	.54	.466
Professionalism	21.95	23.49	4.61	.035
Supportiveness	10.56	11.29	6.69	.012

Discussion

The strong negative correlation between both an action orientation and a time orientation and respondents' self-descriptions on the appropriateness dimension of effective listening practices suggests that those with stronger action and time orientations describe themselves as having more difficulty permitting a proper topic closure and agreement before changing the topic, giving the speaker their full attention and not being preoccupied with other concerns and maintaining an appropriate degree of eye contact when speaking and listening. Individuals high in action orientation perceive themselves significantly more negatively than those lower in action orientation on this dimension.

Individuals high in action orientation also perceive themselves as significantly lower on the emotional avoidance dimension than individuals low in action orientation. They rate themselves as less likely to avoid becoming emotional or defensive when a difficult situation is encountered and more likely to respond in an emotional manner using trigger words and phrases and cliches which cause people to tune-

out/turn-off. They also tend to rate themselves as being less likely to place themselves in another's position, understanding the other's concerns and feelings, and to listen with sincerity and not a false/go-through the motions attitude.

The positive correlation between a people orientation and respondents' self-descriptions on the listener speaking dimension of effective listening practices suggests that individuals with a stronger people orientation describe themselves as responding to a greater extent with paraphrases to ensure understanding and asking the other to speak louder/clearer when the situation call for it.

The positive correlation between a content orientation and respondents' self-descriptions on the business/professional dimension of effective listening practices suggests that individuals with a stronger people orientation describe themselves as responding more likely to take notes when appropriate and prepare or become informed when such knowledge or preparation is necessary.

The positive correlation between an action orientation and the supportiveness dimension of associates' ratings of respondents on the LPFR suggests that those with a greater action orientation are perceived by others as being more likely to smile and acknowledge remarks, listen with sincerity and not with a false, go-through-the-motions attitude, and to ask the others to speak louder/clearer when necessary.

A comparison of the respondents' own responses and associates' responses to them suggests that action oriented people are perceived as being more supportive during listening than they perceive themselves.

The gender differences on the associate ratings' for the time, content, and people orientations suggests that associates tend to perceive males and females differently. Specifically, females with stronger time orientation, people orientation, or content orientation are rated more positively on professionalism (preparing and becoming informed when necessary, following up with prompt, correct action that is agreed upon, taking notes when appropriate, asking relevant questions for clarification on points that are misunderstood, keeping distractions and outside interruptions to a minimum when in a meeting, and responding and paraphrasing to ensure understanding) and supportiveness (being more likely to smile and acknowledge remarks, listen with sincerity and not with a false, go-through-the-motions attitude, and to ask the others to speak louder/clearer when necessary). It is interesting that associates did not perceive males and females differently if they had an action orientation.

Conclusion

The results of this study suggest several things about listeners, as well as self-report procedures. First, it is evident that listener preferences/styles as measured by the LPP are associated with consistent perceptions of listening

behavior, as indicated by self-ratings and associates' ratings on the LPFR. It also would appear that the relationships are not what one would expect. For instance, the Action-Oriented on the LPP is not what one would expect to lead to a perception of supportiveness on the LPFR and yet the relationship emerged in the present study. This may suggest one of two things: either the self-report procedure is suspect or it may be that subjects in studies (and possibly people generally) do not know themselves as well as they think. It is also possible that people interacting with others are not very accurate in their assessment of others.

One final conclusion is possible from the present study: there may be some listening preferences/styles that result in a more positive perception by others of our listening behavior. It is entirely possible that, through listening training, what many educators/consultants may be attempting to change is listening preferences. That is, the objective of listening training/education may be to persuade students to adopt a new set of "listening values," which, in turn, will cause them to be perceived as more effective listeners. If this is so, then it would be interesting also to see if, in addition to being perceived as more effective listeners, people actually listen more effectively, depending on which listening preference(s) they have.

REFERENCES

- Bostrom, R.N. (1990). Listening behavior: Measurement and application. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Brandt, R., Brandt, J., Emmert, P., and Emmert, V. (1992, March) The development of the Listening Practices Feedback Report. Paper presented at the International Listening Association convention, Seattle, Washington.
- Emmert, P. and Emmert, V. (1993, November) The multivariate nature of listening. Paper presented at Speech Communication Association convention, Miami Beach, Florida.
- Emmert, P., Emmert, V., & Brandt, J. (1993). An analysis of Male-Female Differences on the Listening Practices Feedback Report. Paper presented at the 14th annual convention of the International Listening Association, Memphis, Tennessee, March 3-6.
- Emmert, V., Emmert, P. & Brandt, J. (1992) An analysis of respondent/average associate differences on the Listening Practices Feedback Report. Paper presented at the 13th annual convention of the International Listening Association, Seattle, Washington, March 4-8.
- Emmert, V., Brandt, J., & Emmert, P. (1993). An analysis of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Differences on the Listening Practices Feedback Report. Paper presented at the 14th annual convention of the International Listening Association, Memphis, Tennessee, March 3-6.

- Emmert, P., Emmert, V., and Brandt, J. (1992, March) An examination of the dimensional structure of the Listening Practices Feedback Report. Paper presented at the International Listening Association convention, Seattle, Washington.
- Fitch Hauser, M. and Hughes, A. (1987) A factor analytic study of four listening tests. Journal of the International Listening Association, 1, 129-147.
- Mahan, S. (1991) A factor analysis of the Listener Style Preference Profile. Auburn University. Unpublished paper.
- Watson, K.W., Barker, L.L., and Weaver, J.B. (1992, March) Development and validation of the Listener Preference Profile. Paper presented at the International Listening Association convention, Seattle, Washington.