

# LISTENING POST

©ISSUE NUMBER TWENTY-ONE APRIL, 1987

## 1987 CONVENTION CREATES MEMORABLE SOUNDS

*Summarized by Carolyn Coakley*

On March 4, 1987, a transformation occurred at the Fairmont Hotel in New Orleans: the special magical sounds of ILA conventioners gently replaced the customary raucous sounds of Mardi Gras revelers. For the next three days, the magical sounds of laughter, concern, enlightenment, genuineness, silence, warmth, responsiveness, interest, and friendliness continued as over 150 convention attendees met, shared, networked, planned, and socialized together. Perhaps most importantly, though, they truly lived the 1987 ILA Convention theme of "Listening in an Age of High Tech - High Touch": they listened together.

Beginning on Wednesday and continuing on Thursday morning, they listened to 21 pre-convention seminar presenters share information on teaching listening from kindergarten through senior high school, providing listening training in business, improving listening in the family environment, and conducting listening research. These presenters illustrated that they can, indeed, help "make the magic" by donating the proceeds of their seminars to the ILA.

On Wednesday evening, early convention arrivers listened to the sounds of both familiar and unfamiliar voices at an informal social gathering. During this event, the magic began for many first-time convention attendees as they became a part of the WE in "We're the ILA."

At the ILA registration table on Thursday morning, "We're the ILA" as well as the remaining lyrics of "Makin' Magic" greeted conventioners who had registered early. This special tape of the ILA song and the wisdom of ILA Hall of Fame member James I. Brown promised to extend the sounds of the convention's aura and purpose long after the final day of the 1987 convention.

At Thursday's luncheon, when the convention officially began, attendees listened to the sounds of welcome from First Vice President and Program Planning Committee Chair Carolyn Coakley, Member-at-Large and Local Arrangements Committee Chair Kittie Watson and Local Arrangements Committee member Marguerite Lyle, and Host Committee Chair Beverly Aweve. Then, they listened to the sounds of awareness as Public Relations Committee member Harry Cook announced that March 5, 1987, had been declared Listening Awareness Day and various convention attendees read proclamations from their states. Finally, they listened to the challenging sounds of President Barker as he presented his presiden-

tial address. They did not, however, see him as he spoke, for Larry developed a case of the flu and was not able to join us until the third day of the Convention. Executive Director Dick Quianthy did a noble job of holding a tape recorder to the microphone, so that Larry's words to us truly reinforced the "high tech" dimension of the Convention theme.

After the luncheon, attendees listened to the high-energy sounds of reconnection as Alan Zimmerman, the creator of the Meet-and-Greet special, served as facilitator of the Second Grand Opening. Also, spouses listened to the warm sounds of welcome from Elaine Mahone, and newcomers listened to the same sounds as they gained a greater understanding of the ILA. Then, suddenly, combined sounds began as attendees listened to some of the nearly one hundred program presenters share teaching and training objectives and materials, learning activities and strategies, promotional methods, professional experiences, and research findings. Following Thursday's program sessions, attendees listened to the sounds of high spirits at the Thursday night reception.

For some attendees, Friday dawned with the sounds of music and feet against pavement as Deborah Hefferin and Michael Gilbert led interested individuals in aerobic exercises and a "fun run" through New Orleans. For other attendees, Friday began with the celebrated sounds of five ILA Hall of Fame members -- James Brown, Ralph Nichols, Manny Steil, Wesley Wiksell, and Andy Wolvin -- with whom they shared a special breakfast hour planned by Dee Steil and Bill Arnold. For still other attendees -- and spouses, the first sounds of Friday were those of program presenters sharing more listening information.

The sounds of program presenters were replaced at noon by the sounds of keynote speaker, Mel Leavitt, known as the "Voice of New Orleans." Then, again, a blend of sounds began as attendees listened to still more program presenters provide still more listening information. On Friday afternoon and evening, convention attendees listened to the unique sounds of New Orleans -- including the rhythm of tap dancers, the sipping of hurricanes at Pat O'Brien's, the jazz of Preservation Hall, and the barkers of Bourbon Street. Encores of "oos" and "yums" echoed through many of New Orleans' finest restaurants as conventioners dined on wonderful seafood specialities.

*(cont. on pg. 2)*



# Awards Presented at Convention

The ILA Awards Committee, chaired by Jane Rhoads, presented four awards at the closing banquet in New Orleans. A Certificate of Appreciation was presented to Helen S. Lepke in recognition of her contribution to the field of listening awareness. As Chair of the 1986 Northeast Conference of Teachers of Foreign Language, Dr. Lepke chose as the conference theme, "Listening, Reading and Writing: Analysis and Application." This topic brought native-language listening to the attention of the 2,600 persons who attended the conference.

The Research Award, designed to recognize outstanding levels of achievement in research by an ILA member or members, was given to Carolyn Gwynn Coakley and Andrew D. Wolvin. Although both Carolyn and Andy have made many outstanding contributions to the field of listening as co-authors of text books, conference presenters, and as president elect and past president of the ILA, this award is in recognition of their research-based article "Listening in the Native Language" which was published in the 1986 Northeast Conference Reports, the annual journal of the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

The third award, the ILA Special Recognition Award, went to Ethel Glenn, Editor of the **Listening**



**Post.** As editor, she assembles articles, edits them, does the layout, and submits the work ready for the printer. The communication and sharing that ILA members do between conventions depends heavily on the **Listening Post**.

The final presentation, another ILA Special Recognition Award, went to Peter van der Schaft, for his ongoing efforts to bring ILA to the attention of persons in Europe. At his own expense and initiative, Peter designed a special ILA brochure, printed it, and distributed it in Europe. The award expressed the ILA's gratitude for Peter's energy and special efforts.

## A Special Note from Dee

Dear Friends:

*I greatly missed seeing all of you in New Orleans and thank you for your thoughtfulness and concern. To clarify, however, when Manny stated I was "with family," that **should not translate to "she's pregnant"!! I'm only pregnant with thoughts, ideas, and good feelings for ILA.***

*It was indeed a "high" for me to be the recipient of the 1987 President's Award. To be selected from such a special, qualified group is very rewarding. I am elated with the award and thank Larry Barker for his very kind words of praise. It has been a joy and privilege to serve in various capacities in the ILA since its formation. Service comes naturally when one believes in the organization, its purpose, and special members. Thanks to each of you for your support, and I look forward to seeing you in Toronto.*

*With sincere appreciation  
Dee Steil*

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## ILA NOMINATIONS 1988

Although the election for the 1988 ILA officers is eleven months away, the Nominating Committee is already searching for qualified candidates. Throughout the year we will ask you for your thoughtful recommendations. We invite you to carefully review the leadership competencies of our ILA members. Make sure your favorite candidate is nominated! The 1988 ILA Nominating Committee consists of Dr. Lyman K. (Manny) Steil, Chair; Dr. Patricia Anderson; Jay Brandon; Carol DuBois, Marguerite Lyle, and Dr. Bill Arnold, ex officio.

# International Listening Association

## SUMMER CONFERENCE

### “Global Listening: Opening Communication Between Cultures

**JULY 16 & 17, 1987**                      **Toronto, Canada**

The first ILA Conference to be held outside the United States is coming to Toronto, Canada. ILA members world-wide are invited to join us for what promises to be a truly international and intercultural experience! What better host country for this conference's theme than Canada with its history of multiculturalism? What better host city than Toronto (Indian for "meeting place") widely regarded as one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world?

An exciting program is being planned by the Toronto committee - Harold Sharkey and Tim Gilmor. Enjoy exploring the intercultural aspects of listening with your ILA colleagues and friends in the multicultural surroundings of Canada's foremost city.

#### For further information contact:

**THE TORONTO COMMITTEE**  
c/o The Listening Centre  
99 Crowns Lane  
Toronto, Ontario  
Canada M5R 3P4  
(416) 922-1170

### LISTLESS LISTENERS

Just when I've been so passionate,  
So eloquent, so true,  
Explaining to the other guy  
My brilliant points of view,  
How sad to have him interrupt--  
"In other words, you're saying..."  
And give me back the sheer reverse  
Of thoughts I've been conveying!

by Corinne Geeting

### About the Conference

**Registration fee:**  
To be announced.

**Accommodation:**  
Site of the conference is the historic King Edward Hotel in Downtown Toronto. Convention rate is approximately \$65.00 U.S. per night and will apply from July 14th to July 19th for those wishing to come early or stay longer; consider making your visit a family vacation!

**Exchange Rate:**  
(at March 1, 1987)  
U.S. currency goes a long way in Canada.  
\$100.00 U.S. = \$132.00 CDN.

European currency has also risen in value in the last year:

100 FF = \$22.00 CDN  
100 DM = \$74.00 CDN  
100 sterling pounds = \$209.00 CDN  
100 gilder = \$65.00 CDN

**Entry into Canada:**  
U.S. citizens require proof of citizenship (birth certificate or passport). European and Latin American citizens will require a passport.

**Airlines serving Toronto include:**  
American Airlines  
Eastern Airlines  
U.S. Air  
Aero Mexico  
Air Canada  
All major European airlines

Advance booking can result in greater travel savings. Check rates with your travel agent.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING News & Notes About ILA Members

**CAROLYN WINS AWARD...** As if President Carolyn Coakley had not had enough fame, excitement, and recognition in New Orleans, she returned home to discover that she had received the 1986-87 **Washington Post** Agnes Meyer Outstanding Teacher Award for Prince George's County Public Schools. As the recipient of this award, Carolyn will receive \$2,000 at a **Washington Post** ceremony on May 21, 1987. Our sincerest congratulations, Carolyn -- no one could be more deserving.

### **ILA PROMOTION IN NEW JERSEY**

Marcia Kestenbaum reports that in November the ILA entered an exhibit at the two-day New Jersey Education Association Convention in Atlantic City. Over 1,000 people stopped by the booth to receive handouts, an explanation of the substance and objectives of ILA, and a membership application. A variety of listening materials, donated by various ILA members, was also available for persual, and a list of potential members was gathered through a sign-up for drawings of these materials. Marcia says that most of the people who stopped had never heard of the ILA -- indeed, many did not even seem to know what "listening" meant! Marcia extends thanks to those who helped support this exhibit -- Catherine Gifford, Wayne Bond, and Tom Larkin in the booth, and all of you who sent materials. What a great way to promote our organization, Marcia!

### **RHODE ISLAND COMMISSIONER PUSHES LISTENING...**

Greg Enos sent a clipping with a dateline of Providence, Rhode Island, that tells of the efforts of J. Troy Earhart, state commissioner for elementary and secondary education, to improve literacy and decrease the drop out rate. In his speech to the Board of Regents, he stressed "a foundation in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and mathematics... to help students become literate and productive citizens." We need more like him!!

**MARY STAYS BUSY...** Mary Bozik recently did a workshop for the Bettendorf, Iowa area education agency on therapeutic listening. She has also done an in-service workshop for the Franklin Park, Illinois school district on the teaching of listening, K-8. In addition to the formal presentation, she spent a day consulting with individuals and small groups of teachers. Mary had a brief article in the February, 1987 **English Journal** plugging the necessity of listening instruction. Good PR for ILA and for listening, Mary.

Dear ILA Friends,

*Don't faint -- yes I do still exist and remain relatively normal here in southeastern Minnesota. I have intended to get a letter written to the **Listening Post** for months, but time does fly! I was afraid I would be forced to become a member of the "Verne Shea/ Riva Poor Lost Since Atlanta Members" division if I didn't do something soon!*

*On January 7, 1986, Janis and I had a beautiful red headed baby girl, who has just celebrated her first birthday. Harvey Weiss has dubbed me "Harmony Mother of the Year" as I am staying home full time being a mom. It is fascinating. After 16 years of teaching and/or being a school counselor, it is very rewarding to be staying home listening to the sounds of growth, exploration and learning of my own child.*

*I am busy now preparing for a listening workshop on March 4, in Rochester, Minnesota, the home of the MAYO CLINIC for a group of area principals -- including my husband. That will be very interesting! Over the past 3 years, I have continued to spread the word by doing several listening workshops, as well as counseling in our local high school and directing several community theatre and high school plays.*

*By the time this letter gets printed, I suppose the New Orleans Convention will be history. How I wish I could go. Unfortunately it will be quite some time before I can attend another convention -- unless maybe it is in Minnesota again. How soon will ILA be "coming home" to Minnesota?*

*My best wishes to my friends and colleagues. I do miss seeing you.*

Sincerely,



Nan Johnson-Curiskis  
Founding Member #75

# ***We're Going Back... To SCOTTSDALE Next Year!***

As you know, we were scheduled to hold the 1988 convention in San Francisco and the Local Arrangements Committee worked very hard to select an appropriate hotel for us, and they found a wonderful one. The only problem was that we could not negotiate a contract for room rates which we felt would be acceptable to the membership. To go to San Francisco, we would have had to live with room rates of \$118-138 for a single and \$138-158 for a double. So, while we all wanted to go to San Francisco, the Executive Board made the very difficult decision to move to an alternate site which is more in the price range of the past two conventions.

We chose to return to the Doubletree Inn in Scottsdale for two main reasons. The first is that rooms will be less than ninety dollars single or double. The second reason is that we know that the Doubletree Inn is a very good facility for our convention.

Those of us who attended the 1984 Convention at the Doubletree will have the opportunity to revisit favorite restaurants and relive the breathtaking views of nature in and around the Scottsdale/Phoenix area. And, those of us who missed the first Scottsdale convention have a new treat in store for them. Look for additional information in the next issue of the **LISTENING POST**.

We want to express a special thank you to Dorothy Carver and Margaret Sciaroni for all of their time and effort in working with the hotels in San Francisco. And, we welcome Karen Valentine as she begins her task of being the local arrangements chairperson for the Scottsdale convention.

## **Call For Program Proposals For THE NINTH ANNUAL CONVENTION SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA — March 9-12, 1988**

The members of the Program Planning Committee of the ILA invite all members to submit program proposals for the Ninth Annual ILA Convention. We urge you to submit details on programs you would like to present or develop. We also encourage you to suggest names of others (members or non-members) who you are confident would be effective program presenters, featured speakers, short course leaders, etc. Additionally, we solicit your suggestions concerning possible program topics and program formats as well as a possible convention theme for the 1988 ILA Convention. Finally, we request that you volunteer to serve as chair-person of a program session (a program session proposed either by you or by someone else.)

Hopefully by the time you are reading this, you will have received in the mail a copy of the form that Bill

Arnold has designed for us in submissions for programs and papers. This form should clarify the process. But whether you submit on an official form or in writing, please send all of your ideas to:

**Dr. William Arnold**  
First Vice President, ILA  
Department of Communication  
Arizona State University  
Tempe, AZ 85287

If you have suggestions for other persons or topics to be considered for workshops, panels, short courses, research sessions, etc., please make them in a detailed letter. Make all proposals as detailed as you can at this time.

The Committee has asked that all suggestions and proposals be in by **July 15, 1988**. This is earlier than in the past, to give the Committee more time to contact participants, organize the program, and get the copy to the printer.

Remember -- send your ideas to Bill -- on the official form or in letter form. But send proposals and suggestions. We cannot have a Convention without the help of all our members. Remember the deadline: **July 15, 1988**.

### **Noted Therapist Dies**

Manny Steil sent a clipping about the death of psychologist Carl Rogers, who succumbed to a heart attack following surgery in early February. All of us owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Rogers for his non-directive therapy that is at the heart of empathic and therapeutic listening.

# President Promises to be — PRODUCTIVE —



*Carolyn  
Coakley*

At the Saturday night banquet in New Orleans, I announced that I would not be a "paper" ILA President -- a president whose involvement includes little more than having her name on official ILA papers. I'm confident that those of you who know me know that I have never been a "paper" ILA member or ILA chair or ILA First Vice President. And, to repeat, I will not be a "paper" ILA President in 1987-88. Rather, I will be PRODUCTIVE. However, I will need each of you to assist me -- assist me by sharing my goals as well as by sharing my determination and commitment to being PRODUCTIVE.

By being **PRODUCTIVE**, we--together-- can achieve these goals:

**P = PRIORITIES,**

**PUBLIC RELATIONS, PROMOTIONS:**

- ✓ Establish ILA priorities and implement the top priorities.
- ✓ Make the improving of public relations a top priority for our association
- ✓ Promote effective listening throughout the world

**R = RECOGNITION, RESPONSIVENESS,**

**RESEARCH:**

- ✓ Establish ways to recognize more individual members who have contributed to the furthering of the purpose of ILA and to the strengthening of the association
- ✓ Cultivate members who are more responsive to and accountable for the ILA
- ✓ Encourage more listening research

**O = ORGANIZATION, OPENNESS,**

**ORIGINALITY:**

- ✓ Clarify and formalize tasks of committees and task forces, duties of officers, ILA procedures, and other areas of need
- ✓ Be more available to meet the needs of ILA members and the public
- ✓ Introduce innovative ways to improve public relations, increase funding, enlarge membership, and advance other needs

**D = DEVELOPMENT, DISCIPLINE, DIRECTION:**

- ✓ Grow in number, strength, knowledge, income, significance
- ✓ Strengthen our listening discipline by seeking funding for more research, writing listening articles and books with recognized substance, establishing an ILA Mastery in

Learning Project, and engaging in other academically-related pursuits

- ✓ Entrust more members with opportunities to provide leadership within the association

**U = UNDERSTANDING, USEFULNESS, UNIVERSE:**

- ✓ Serve as models of Dr. Nichols view that "the best way to understand people is to listen to them"
- ✓ Increase others' awareness of ILA's existence so that the ILA can be more serviceable to others
- ✓ Broaden the I in ILA by increasing ILA membership outside of the United States

**C = COMMUNICATION, COMMITMENT, CARING:**

- ✓ Improve communication within the ILA and between the ILA and the public
- ✓ Cultivate stronger commitments to furthering the purpose and fostering the growth of the ILA
- ✓ Maintain the genuine feeling of caring that exists in the ILA

**T = TRADITION, TEAMWORK, TALENT:**

- ✓ Maintain the traditional warmth of the ILA while broadening its membership base
- ✓ Encourage more joint projects with other associations
- ✓ Provide more opportunities for members to develop and share their individual talents through their active involvement in the ILA

**I = INVOLVEMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, IMPACT:**

- ✓ Involve more members on ILA projects, committees, task forces, and other association activities

*(cont. on pg. 8)*

## President Promises to be Productive

(cont. from pg. 7)

- ✓ Implement new projects and activities that will further the goals of the ILA
- ✓ Increase listening's impact in business, education family, media, political arena -- in all aspects of life

### V = VISIBILITY, VITALITY, VISION:

- ✓ Increase ILA's visibility through improved public relations
- ✓ Maintain -- throughout the year -- the vitality displayed at the conventions and conferences
- ✓ Plan -- with keen foresight -- for the future of the ILA

### E = EXPERTISE, ENRICHMENT, ENERGY:

- ✓ Continue to develop our knowledge of listening
- ✓ Enrich others by listening to them
- ✓ Sustain energy to accomplish all of the above goals

**Together, let us be  
PRODUCTIVE  
in 1987-88 as we strive to  
achieve these goals.**

Carolyn Coakley

# GETTING IT BY EAR: Listening in the Training Process

by Philip Bruschi

## PART II

### The Trainer as Listener

Trainers have typically paid little attention to their own role as listener. Usually, discussion within the profession emphasizes such desirables as the style of delivery that best informs and persuades the trainees, the organization of material, and the presentation of that material with confidence and polish -- all of which pertain to one-way communication. Some training objectives may require that you adopt an authoritarian stance and retain complete control over the classroom, but even then you have an obligation to be attentive to the nonverbal signals your audience is sending out. What will be discussed here is your role as a listener in the participative approach to training, which is built around two-way communication between trainer and trainee.

It takes a conscious effort to listen effectively, especially when your mind is occupied with other concerns. You may, in particular, be thinking of how to accomplish your program goals -- but be aware that your good listening is what helps you to achieve those goals. Listed below are a number of specific suggestions.

- Create a friendly, relaxed, and informal atmosphere in which trainees feel at ease and are willing to participate freely.

- Work on establishing an atmosphere that builds trust between you and your students.
- Serve as a model listener. Show a sincere interest in participants' suggestions, ideas, comments, questions, and experiences.
- When participants are discussing problems, listen beyond their words to their feelings.
- As appropriate, use listening feedback techniques -- such as summarizing, restating, and paraphrasing -- to show participants you understand their ideas and feelings.

Be aware of what relationships surface among students, what groups form, who interrupts whom, who follows whom.

- Concentrate on what happens and how it happens rather than on *judging* what is happening.
- Be alert to nonverbal cues. Read the signs, gestures, and facial expressions that indicate whether participants understand what is being said or whether they are tired, hungry, bored, or anxious.
- Observe how much participants really listen to each other and to you as the trainer, and do what is necessary to maximize that amount.
- Listen for and observe what or who

may be blocking participants from learning.

- Help participants distinguish among assessing, assuming, judging, and interpreting in their own listening.
- Allow as many sides of an issue to be brought out as time permits.
- Listen for and note the subjects that come up repeatedly.
- Ask participants for clarification and ask them exploratory questions.
- Be aware of the words participants use and clarify any terms that may have different meanings for different people.

### The Role of the Trainee

It should not be assumed that adult students are aware of the role they must play in their own learning. You should stress to the training participants that, as listeners, they play a vital part in helping themselves and each other learn. It is not enough for *trainers* to be enthusiastic, interesting, knowledgeable in their subject areas, and effective in their presentations. The communication required by anything other than an authoritarian approach to learning must be two-way, and participants must accept responsibility for their role in helping to make that com-

(cont. on page 9)



## Getting It By Ear

(cont. from pg. 8)

munication a success. An essential first step is to ask your students to commit themselves to making the necessary changes in their listening behavior to gain maximum benefit from the program. Emphasize for them the skills, behaviors, and attitudes that they, as training participants, can adopt to improve their own listening and to improve the atmosphere for listening *within the group*. Listed below are some of those factors that foster or inhibit listening and, consequently, learning. Discuss these with your trainees.

### Behavior That Contributes to Listening Success:

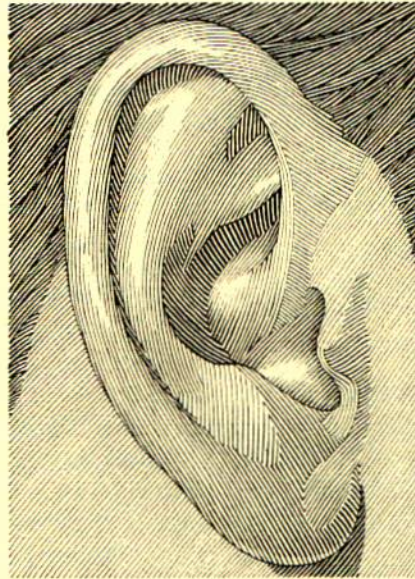
- Listening actively, not passively, with eyes, ears, and mind. Asking for explanation and clarification.
- Resisting mental and physical distractions.
- Concentrating and being attentive.
- Being open to new ideas and concepts.
- Making an effort to separate fact from opinion.
- Showing verbally and nonverbally that you are motivated to listen and learn, and that you assume others are as well.

### Behavior That Inhibits Listening

- Displaying a "teach me if you can" or know-it-all attitude.
- Constantly interrupting others or cutting them off.
- Dismissing a subject by declaring that it is uninteresting or irrelevant to your needs.
- Being insensitive to others.
- Jumping to conclusions or being quick to judge others.
- Clinging to your need to be right.
- Becoming upset or overly emotional about some point, topic, or word.
- Talking excessively.

There are several different methods, formal and informal, that you can use to introduce participants to their role in listening. You may wish merely to make them aware of the factors that enhance or inhibit good listening by discussing these factors and asking for the students' cooperation.

A more formal approach is to have participants make a contract with themselves



and the trainer, or with other participants, to practice the listening skills, behaviors, and attitudes they need to make the training successful (see *Figure 1* for part of a sample contract). Participants can be asked to pair off (in sort of a "buddy system") to share their commitment or contract and to hold each other accountable for carrying it out for the duration of the training.

In this system, each participant is asked to fill out a contract individually, assessing him- or herself on the factors mentioned above by describing, in writing, an awareness of the problems and a commitment to change. Throughout the training, each partner has the obligation to let the other know when the contract is not being fulfilled. This need not be an elaborate exercise. Contracts can be as general or as specific as you wish and can range from one to a dozen objectives, but they are most appropriate for training programs of some duration.

Steil, Barker, and Watson state in their book, *Effective Listening: Key to Your Success* (Addison-Wesley, Reading, Massachusetts, 1983), that typically as much as 66% of classroom time is devoted to listening. In other words, training program participants receive over half of their information through listening. That in itself is reason enough to make sure that the listening in your training room is as good as it can be.

An understanding of how the suggestions and skills discussed in this article can assist the trainer in structuring a positive listening environment for learning can only ensure that both trainer and trainees achieve new levels of success in training. DT

FIGURE 1

### A Listening Contract for Training Sample Excerpts

This is a commitment to myself  
(listening participant) and to

(listening reviewer or "buddy") to make changes in my listening behavior as outlined below, beginning immediately and continuing for the duration of this training event.

#### Awareness of the Problem

1. I tend to have a closed mind when it comes to discussing certain issues about my management style.
2. I tend to interrupt others or cut them off before giving them a chance to finish their thoughts.

#### Desire to Change

1. I would like to be more open-minded about my management style and to receive feedback from others in class.
2. I would like to wait until others finish their last sentence or thought before coming in with my point of view.

#### Statement of Listening Objective

1. At least once per training session, I will request feedback from other participants concerning some aspect of my management style.
2. At least three times per day, both in and away from the training session, I will practice listening techniques designed to enhance my self-discipline.

#### Plan for Review of Progress

Listening reviewer will review listening participant's progress at least twice during the training program.

(signed) Listening Participant

(signed) Listening Reviewer

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# “Oh, Mandy!”

## Testing Listening Skills

By Lynn Moody  
Danville Area Community College

An interesting highlight to my role as an instructor of the Interpersonal Communication course is the presentation of the concepts of perception and listening to classes of students who believe they not only perceive well but also listen well. In order to focus on the students' ability to perceive and to listen, and how these two skills work together, I have devised some memorable class activities which explain not only listening and perception but also the Sesame Street Syndrome as it relates to listening. I come to class, “entertain” my students, and use their feedback to show them how to assess their perception and listening skills.

When the students enter the classroom, a record player is on the desk; the first time its presence is a part of the classroom for the semester. I *listen* carefully as the students enter the classroom, waiting (and hoping) for someone to say, “Oh, good! We're going to *listen* to a record.” I capitalize on that statement later in the class session.

I begin the class by telling the students I am going to play a Barry Manilow record, and I show them the album jacket with Manilow's picture on it. I pick up on some of the nonverbal cues I get about Manilow and their perception of him. To make my point about perception, I ask those who gave me some obvious nonverbal reaction to Manilow if they know him *personally*. Of course, the answer is they do *not* know him personally. My reply then remains simple: “Then, you feel this way about him and, perhaps, even his music because of your *perception* about him!” I use the revelation of perception at this point to review its definition from the text, **Understanding Interpersonal Communication:** “Perception is the process of gathering information and giving it meaning” (Weaver 76). I then ask them if they're *absolutely* sure of the accuracy of the information they have about Manilow and, thus, the accuracy of the meaning they have given the information. I easily make the point then, also, about how self-disclosure and a one-to-one communication situation with Manilow surely must be the best test of the accuracy of their perceptions. I also explain how different perceptions can affect how we listen to each other.

After my introductory remarks on perception, I introduce the chapter on listening by asking the

class to listen to Manilow's song “Mandy.” I choose the song “Mandy” for a variety of reasons which I'll explain later. Putting perception aside a bit, I simply ask the class to *listen* to “Mandy” and tell them that when they're done listening to the song, I'll ask them some questions about Mandy and the guy in the song. I then write the word “Mandy” on one side of the chalkboard, the word “Guy” on the other side of the chalkboard. I tell them they can take notes while they listen, or they don't have to take notes.

As I begin to play the song, I actually observe very few students taking notes. In fact, most of the students lean back in their chairs with looks of nonchalance and complacency in their assigned task of listening. Their nonverbal behavior tells me they believe they don't need to take notes or tally the information in “Mandy” to respond to my questions about the song. They are convinced, it seems, that they will absorb and remember all of the information in “Mandy” and, thus, accurately perceive the information and totally and effectively listen to the song in just one attempt. It is as though they have *no doubt* that they are just NATURALLY ideal perceivers and fantastic listeners.

Perhaps at this point, a look at the lyrics of “Mandy” would explain what the students are then asked to listen to:

*I remember all my life  
Raining down as cold as ice  
Shadows of a man  
A face through a window  
Crying in the night  
The night goes into morning  
Just another day  
Happy people pass my way  
Looking in their eyes  
I see a memory  
I never realized  
How happy you made me  
Oh, Mandy —  
Well you came and you  
gave without taking  
But I sent you away  
Oh, Mandy —  
Well you kissed me and  
stopped me from shaking*

(cont. on pg. 11)

And I need you today  
Oh, Mandy —

I'm standing on the edge of time  
I walked away when love was mine  
Caught up in a world of  
uphill climbing  
The tears are in my eye  
And nothing is arriving  
Oh, Mandy —  
Well you came and you gave  
without taking  
But I sent you away  
Oh, Mandy —  
Well you kissed me and  
stopped me from shaking  
And I need you today  
Oh, Mandy —

Yesterday's a dream  
I face the morning  
Crying on a breeze  
The pain is calling  
Oh, Mandy —  
Well you came and you gave  
without taking  
But I sent you away  
Oh, Mandy —  
Well you kissed me and  
stopped me from shaking  
And I need you today  
Oh, Mandy —  
You came and you gave  
without taking  
But I sent you away  
Oh, Mandy —  
You kissed me and stopped  
me from shaking  
And I need you<sup>2</sup>

When the song ends, I ask them some questions:

1. How do you feel about this guy?
2. How do you feel about Mandy?
3. What kind of day was it?
4. What can you tell me about the rain?
5. Where was the guy when he was responding to his thoughts on Mandy?
6. How long was he there?
7. How did he explain what happened to his relationship with Mandy?
8. Tell me anything else you remember about them.

I often add other questions from semester to semester by simply reviewing the information in the song prior to class. I put the information

from their responses to the questions on the board. Generally, questions three and four are answered accurately. Someone usually catches "You kissed me and stopped me from shaking." I ask the students for their perception of that information. The meaning the students generally give: she had a calming, comforting effect on him. I generally agree with them and indicate how those words form their perception. Questions five, six, and seven are generally answered in error, or they don't remember the information. In response to statement #8, I often receive information that was never in the song!

To further test their listening skills, I replay the song and ask them to listen again. While the song is playing, I put *all* of the information from the song on the board, entertaining them with quick writing (needed to keep up with the song) and emphasis on repetitive words in the song such as, "I sent you away," by almost running back and forth between both sides of the board as I underline, star\*, and write the information on the "Mandy" and on the "Guy" sides of the chalkboard. Needless to say, the Sesame Street Syndrome is at its peak at this point as the class begins to laugh and respond to the amount of information and my chalkboard movements.

I then return to an earlier statement: "So, do you really think when you came in here to *listen* to the record, you truly *listened*? Why didn't you remember all of this information? Why did some of my questions about the song remain unanswered?"

Class discussion follows on the difference between hearing and listening. I emphasize that the time (length) of the song is just three minutes and fifteen seconds (3:15). If they missed so much information in this amount of time, I ask them to think about the amount of information they could be missing simply by not being careful listeners! I emphasize how much time we spend listening, and I repeat the textbook author, "Most of us take listening for granted, until someone does not listen to us" (Weaver 101). In addition, we discuss how perceptions, physical noise, and psychological noise all affect our listening. We further discuss the relationships between perception and listening, as well.

Our final point of discussion is about the song "Mandy" itself. I point out that, despite the romantic overtones of the song, it was conceived by Manilow in response to the death of his *dog*! Needless to say, there are moans and groans and, "Are you kidding?" all around; the point is made that perception and the perception sieve are affected by what we know - or don't know - prior to our listening (Weaver 77).

As I dismiss them from class, I ask them to think more carefully about their listening skills, especially how they are affected by perception. I ask them if they would have listened to a class session on

(cont. on pg. 12)

listening if I hadn't made the class an entertaining, Sesame Street Syndrome, class. This class presentation gives them food for thought as we approach empathic listening, the effects of feedback, and how to improve their skills in listening and feedback in our next class session. There isn't any doubt in my mind that when they leave class, the students realize the challenges of effective listening, its relation to perception, and we've all had an enjoyable, though draining for me, class session. The point above all else is made: effective listening allows for greatly improved communication (Weaver 99).

## Help the ILA and Yourself

Do you own your own business? Have your own consultancy? Want to advertise your school or university department? Do yourself and the ILA a big favor -- buy an ad in **The Listening Post**. Rates are reasonable (see page 2), and the readership is targeted and focused. Think about it!

## FUTURE CONVENTION SITES

Do you like to plan in advance? Most of us do. So why not build your vacations and spring breaks around future ILA conventions? ILA goes to interesting, exciting cities where you can combine sight seeing with the best convention you will ever attend! Put the following on your calendar:

1988 Scottsdale  
1989 San Antonio  
1990 Atlanta

Meetings are usually the second week in March, although they may be moved a week in order to secure proper hotel and meeting facilities.

### — NOTES —

<sup>1</sup>According to Richard L. Weaver II, in his text, **Understanding Interpersonal Communication**, "The 'Sesame Street Syndrome' is a habit that can affect our listening. It states that we want to be entertained when we listen. We may mentally challenge a speaker: 'Excite me or I won't listen.' If we think ahead of time that the message we're going to hear will be dull, we're not likely to listen well. And, if we expect to be bored, there's a good chance we will be. We generally prefer a lively, entertaining presentation to a straight unembellished delivery."

<sup>2</sup>I have reproduced the lyrics of "Mandy" within this paper by simply writing them as I hear them sung by Manilow in his album, **Barry Manilow Greatest Hits**.

### — WORKS CITED —

English, Scott and Richard Kerr. "Mandy." **Barry Manilow Greatest Hits**. Arista Records, Inc., AZL 8601, 1978.

Weaver, Richard L., II. **Understanding Interpersonal Communication**. 3rd ed. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1984.

## Journal Articles Needed!

Editor Voncile Smith is working hard to make our Journal a reality. You have already received the first edition. In order to make this publication a continued success, she needs high quality articles, based on research or theory building. The following summary may help you decide where to send your materials:

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