



*Personal Listening Profile*<sup>®</sup>  
Research Report

The *Personal Listening Profile*<sup>®</sup> Research Report  
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## The *Personal Listening Profile*<sup>®</sup>

### Development Steps

**Survey of published literature.** Published sources on listening were examined for two purposes:

- To see whether good measurements already existed, which were applicable to a work setting, and;
- To see how listening had been defined and measured to date by people doing research in this field.

A preliminary review of literature was conducted by Inscape Publishing to determine whether the 1982 Attitudinal Listening Profile represented current models of listening attitude. When little evidence in support of this instrument's "LISTEN" model was found, a decision was made to proceed with development of a new measuring tool.

A more thorough review of literature was then conducted, resulting in findings related to both development purposes identified above. It was found that, while several research scales had been developed, they had not produced psychometrically satisfactory results so far. It was also discovered that studies supported either a four-factor or five-factor model of the listening process. The International Listening Association provided a core of useful information for development of a new instrument.

After reviewing the individual research findings, material in the *Journal of the International Listening Association*, (Wolvin & Coakley, 1993), and findings obtained from the initial Inscape Publishing review, the five-factor model was selected as the theoretical basis for a new listening instrument. Each of the factors was defined, and lists of descriptive phrases from the literature were attached to them.

### Item Development

Factor definitions and lists of descriptors were reviewed by five persons familiar with the concept and experienced in facilitating the development of listening attitudes and skills (i.e., content experts). Each person provided a list of potential items for trial. These were screened for their apparent relevance to each factor, understandability, reading level, and variety. An alpha version of the instrument was developed for research purposes containing 111 items intended to measure the five listening factors.

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This initial, alpha test version of the new listening profile was administered to seventy-two individuals representing a variety of ages, backgrounds, and employment. Results were analyzed to determine via reliability analysis which items best measured each scale. From this analysis, ten to twelve items were selected for each scale which demonstrated adequate to strong item-total correlations.

Uncorrected *alpha* reliabilities for scales consisting of the selected item subset ranged from .68 to .86 (average  $r_{XX'} = .77$ ).

When these scales were intercorrelated, the coefficients ranged from -.26 to .37, showing significant differentiation between scales.

This evidence provided strong support for a five-factor model and for the use of selected items to measure theoretical factors. Further support for the model was obtained in supplementary analyses, as follows.

## **Examination of the Model**

All 111 items were submitted to factor analysis and to configural analysis in two and three dimensions. Factor analysis revealed four factors, with theoretical factors labeled Empathic Listening and Appreciative Listening combined. Configural analysis, using a multidimensional scaling program (MDS), produced a result similar to factor analysis in two dimensions.

However, the three-dimensional MDS solution revealed separate spatial positions for most items measuring Empathic Listening and Appreciative Listening, by placing them along contrasting poles of a third dimension.

Therefore, a nonlinear relationship exists among the item sets, and Appreciative Listening is identified as a meaningfully different construct from Empathic Listening.

The MDS analysis contrasts Evaluative Listening with Empathic Listening and Discerning Listening with Comprehensive Listening. It also contrasts Evaluative Listening with Appreciative Listening. The independence of each set of items and the construct it measures is confirmed by scale intercorrelations reported above.

## **Beta Test**

Four additional items were developed, to create twelve-item scales for each listening factor. These were administered and scored on the same four-point Likert scale as is used in the present instrument.

171 respondents completed the beta test instrument. Because results from alpha and beta tests were eventually merged, characteristics of both samples are described in Table 1 (minus those for whom there was missing data).

**Table 1. Characteristics of Alpha and Beta Test Respondents Combined (N=234)**

| <u>Characteristic</u>      | <u>Number</u> | <u>Percent</u> | <u>Characteristic</u>           | <u>Number</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|----------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <u>Gender</u>              |               |                | <u>Heritage</u>                 |               |                |
| Male                       | 58            | 24.8%          | African-American                | 4             | 1.7%           |
| Female                     | 176           | 75.2           | Asian-Pacific                   | 1             | .4             |
|                            |               |                | Caucasian                       | 221           | 94.4           |
| <u>Geographic Location</u> |               |                | Hispanic                        | 1             | .4             |
| Pacific                    | 31            | 13.2%          | Native American                 | 2             | .9             |
| Central                    | 180           | 76.9           | Other                           | 4             | 1.7            |
| Northeast                  | 6             | 2.6            | <u>Employment</u>               |               |                |
| Southeast                  | 15            | 6.4            | Secretarial/Clerical            | 50            | 21.4%          |
| <u>Industry</u>            |               |                | Technical/Mechanical            | 19            | 8.1            |
| Finance/Ins.               | 1             | .4%            | Professional                    | 62            | 26.5           |
| Public Administration      | 12            | 5.1            | Supervisory                     | 8             | 3.4            |
| Services (Bus, Ed, Hlth)   | 104           | 44.5           | Middle/Upper Mgmt               | 33            | 14.1           |
| Wholesale/Retail Trade     | 24            | 10.3           | Sales                           | 19            | 8.1            |
| Transport./Communication   | 34            | 13.2           | Warehouse/Labor                 | 0             | 0              |
| Other                      | 59            | 26.5           | Other                           | 39            | 16.7           |
| <u>Age</u>                 |               |                | <u>Level of Education</u>       |               |                |
| 18 - 29                    | 87            | 37.2%          | High School                     | 29            | 12.4%          |
| 30 - 39                    | 60            | 25.6           | Post-secondary                  | 70            | 29.9           |
| 40 - 49                    | 55            | 23.5           | College graduate                | 103           | 44.0           |
| 50 - 59                    | 29            | 12.4           | Graduate or professional degree | 31            | 13.2           |
| 60 and older               | 2             | .9             |                                 |               |                |

A comparison of mean responses by gender was obtained for each scale on the *Personal Listening Profile*<sup>®</sup>, to determine whether results were biased by the disproportionate number of females in the test sample.

In each of the five comparisons, differences between means failed to meet the significance level of  $\alpha \leq .05$ , meaning measured differences can be attributed to chance, and there is no significant difference between men and women, in this sample, on any of the scales.

When internal consistency reliabilities were calculated for each scale in the beta test version, results were similar to those obtained on selected item subsets from the alpha test. The arrangement of items on an MDS plot was also similar.

Thus, responses from both alpha and beta tests were merged; and scale reliability and independence (represented by inter-scale correlations) were measured on the combined sample of 243 respondents.

When inter-scale correlations are significantly lower than reliability coefficients, there is evidence that listening as measured in this instrument can be described in five different ways and that the model is justified. Results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Reliabilities and Inter-Scale Correlations (N=243)**

|               | Discerning | Comprehensive | Evaluative | Appreciative | Empathic   |
|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| Discerning    | <b>.82</b> |               |            |              |            |
| Comprehensive | .19        | <b>.90</b>    |            |              |            |
| Evaluative    | .06        | .37           | <b>.78</b> |              |            |
| Appreciative  | .29        | .00           | .03        | <b>.80</b>   |            |
| Empathic      | .42        | .47           | .07        | .30          | <b>.84</b> |

Reliabilities are shown in bold face along the diagonal of Table 2. They represent Cronbach's *alpha* coefficients corrected with the Spearman-Brown formula. Inter-scale Pearson Product Moment correlations are shown in the body of the table (unbolded numbers).

**Relation of Empathic Listening to Discerning and Comprehensive Listening.** While the inter-scale correlations obtained for these three listening scales are modest--i.e., the scales overlap only 18 to 22%--their magnitude is nonetheless interesting. The relationships help explain what empathic listening entails. Apparently one cannot listen empathically without also listening, in part, to discriminate and comprehend what the person is saying. This position is also found in our review of literature (Wolvin & Coakley, 1993).

It is clear that evaluative listening plays no role in empathic listening--i.e., the correlation between Evaluative and Empathic listening is nonsignificant (at  $r_{xy}=.06$ .)

## Summary

In summary, the *Personal Listening Profile*<sup>®</sup> is a highly reliable instrument that can be used with confidence to help individuals identify their most natural listening approaches used when communicating.