

# Aspects of Receiving Information: The Relationship between Listening Preferences, Communication Apprehension, Receiver Apprehension, and Communicator Style.

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*This study investigated connections between listening preferences and patterns of communicator style and apprehension. An initial discriminant analysis was conducted to test whether six categories of listening styles are systematically discriminated by communicator style, communication apprehension, and receiver apprehension. There was one significant discriminant function, whose interpretation was somewhat questionable. Subsequently, a canonical correlation was conducted to test if four interval level listening preferences are systematically related to communicator style, communication apprehension, and receiver apprehension. The results were highly significant and identified three patterns of association between the set of listening preferences and the set of communicator style and apprehension variables.*

- 1. High people-orientation in listening is systematically associated with lower receiver apprehension and dyadic communication apprehension and with a more relationally oriented communication style that attends to and affirms the other person.*
- 2. The combination of high content- and action-orientations is associated with a precise and attentive style of arguing the issues that leaves a strong impression on other people.*
- 3. The configuration of high time- and action-orientations along with a lack of content-orientation is associated with higher receiver apprehension but lower dyadic communication apprehension, and also with a dramatic, animated and forceful style that asserts one's goals/concerns and tends to dominate the other person.*

**Key Words:** Listening Preference, Listening Style, Communicator Style, Communication Apprehension, Receiver Apprehension

Communication scholars have recently placed added emphasis on the need to research individual differences in listening (Barker & Watson, 2000; Imhof, 2001; Kiewitz & Weaver, 1997; Watson, Barker, & Weaver, 1992; Weaver, Richendoller, & Kirtley, 1995; Weaver, Watson, & Barker, 1996). This research has helped the communication field to gain insight on the often-neglected perspective of the receiver (Clark, 1989; Kiewitz & Weaver, 1997). However, testing listening competence by measuring how much information an individual can retain after listening to a text does not allow researchers to discern how an individual's listening style is related to his/her communication style. When choice of style becomes the unit of analysis the focus changes from how much information one can retain to what motivates him or her to listen. The present study examines aspects of receiving information from the perspective of individual listening concerns. The researchers hope to discover the relationship between the way one chooses to listen and the way s/he chooses to communicate. Past research involving communicator style, communication apprehension, and receiver apprehension have shown that these variables are good indicators of a person's general predisposition toward communicating. Using these variables, the researchers will attempt to provide further insight into the relationship between how a person listens and communicates.

### Listening Preferences

The way in which an individual chooses to listen should be naturally associated with his or her communicative style. The cares and concerns that a listener manifests in his/her characteristic listening style should be vitally connected to the cares and concerns evident in that person's choices as a speaker. For instance, when one chooses to listen for empathic reasons his or her communication patterns are more likely to be supportive and open (Barker & Watson, 2000). When someone listens in this way the sender often feels important as a person and positive about the interaction. Similarly, a listener concerned with

issues of content would be more likely to be precise and focused in his/her utterances. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to investigate whether a person's characteristic listening style is systematically related to that person's characteristic communicator style.

### *Listening Styles Profile*

The Listening Styles Profile (LSP-16; Watson, Barker, & Weaver, 1995) has served as the major research instrument for measuring a person's listening style. This sixteen-item self-report scale allows respondents to characterize their preferences, concerns and emphases while listening to other people. In a factor analysis of these sixteen items, Watson, Barker and Weaver (1995) reported a four factor solution identifying four sets of listening concerns that are oriented about people, action, content, and time. Respondents who score in the upper tertile for one of these four orientations are identified then as having the corresponding characteristic listening style: people-oriented, action-oriented, content-oriented, and time-oriented.

People-oriented listeners have a tendency to be concerned about the "emotional states" of others (Watson et al., 1995, p. 5). Listeners who operate under this style usually try to find common ground among interacting communicators while remaining nonjudgmental. These individuals are usually characterized as caring and understanding and are often sought out for emotional support. Therefore, this style is often labeled as relationally oriented.

Content-oriented listeners have a tendency to be concerned about the content of a message. They often listen for complex information, and evaluate the content of a message before drawing conclusions. Individuals utilizing this style generally prefer to listen to highly credible sources and often ask questions to gain more information. This listening style is often characterized as unbiased because of the willingness to listen to both sides of an argument (Barker & Watson, 2000).

Action-oriented listeners prefer to focus on needed action in an organized fashion. This type of listener is bothered by disorganization because it deflects action. Action-oriented listeners can come across as overtly critical. Typically, this type of listener may not want to spend much time listening; rather this individual is concerned with the ends rather than the means of a decision. Sometimes labeled as task-oriented,

this listening style contrasts with the people-oriented listening style (Barker & Watson, 2000).

Time-oriented listeners, as the name implies, are overly concerned with time limitations. Specifically, they have a tendency to verbally formulate the amount of time they have to spend in a listening situation. More than the other listening styles, individuals who operate under this style are more likely to interrupt others and give off nonverbal cues that signal disinterest. Such cues include looking at clocks or watches (Barker & Watson, 2000).

Given that many individuals cannot be characterized as having one listening style because they score high on more than one listening orientation, Watson, Barker and Weaver (1995) acknowledge that people often do not operate under just one listening style in general. In fact, Weaver, Richendoller, and Kirtley (1995) report that 40 percent of individuals choose to listen with two or more distinct styles. Imhof (2001) suggests that people may manifest different orientations or concerns when listening in different situations. Therefore, it is probably more appropriate to avoid reducing the four listening orientations down to one predominant listening style. More can be learned if we focus on patterns of variation among these four listening orientations across individuals. A single individual may be concerned with others' emotions and the content of a message at the same time. Consequently, this individual may score high on both people-orientation and content-orientation.

This approach directly parallels the approach taken by Norton (1983) in his work on communicator style. While measuring a person's style on ten dimensions, Norton argued against identifying a person's one predominant style. Instead he stressed that these dimensions of communicator style vary in tandem and that it is more valid to identify common patterns of variation among these dimensions of style. Thus Norton (1983) identified patterns or clusters of styles most likely to be exhibited across individuals. Consequently, this study will try to determine whether there are underlying dimensions that systematically relate listening preferences with patterns of communicator style.

### **Communicator Style**

Communicator style refers to the manner in which an individual conducts him/herself while communicating with others (Norton,

1978, 1983). When someone perceives an individual as friendly, relaxed, or attentive, s/he is describing that individual's communicator style. Norton (1978) originally identified nine dimensions of style that characterize how an individual presents him/herself: dominant, contentious, dramatic, animated, impression leaving, relaxed, attentive, open, and friendly.

A dominant communicator is someone who is likely to be in control of conversations or take control in social situations. These individuals speak regularly and have a tendency to come on strong. The contentious communicator is confrontational. This style is closely related to the dominant style and individuals who operate under this style are quick to oppose people who disagree with them (Norton, 1978).

A dramatic communicator is more likely to exaggerate both the nonverbal features of his or her voice and the content of his or her message in order "to highlight or understate content" (Norton, 1978, p. 100). Characteristics of this style include telling stories and jokes as well as acting out, both verbally and nonverbally, the message they want to convey. Animated communicators, among other things, provide "frequent and sustained eye contact" (p. 100). Linked with the dramatic style, the animated style is characterized by constant gesturing and the use of a multitude of facial expressions in order to fully communicate a desired message. The impression leaving individual is an individual who is remembered after an interaction. This style component ultimately refers to a communicator that "manifests a visible or memorable style of communicating" regardless of whether it is evaluated as positive or negative (Rubin, 1994, p. 134).

A relaxed communicator shows few signs of apprehensiveness and is, in general, poised and not anxious. Individuals who possess this style are generally relaxed even in situations that present added pressure. The friendly communicator "ranges in meaning from simply being unhostile to deep intimacy" (Norton, 1978, p. 101). This type of individual is acutely aware of other people in conversation including their feelings. They tend to be encouraging, open, and attentive as well. The attentive communicator "makes sure that the other person knows that he is being listened to" (p. 100). This type of individual offers direct and precise verbal and nonverbal feedback to interacting partners. The open communicator is extremely conversational and this style is

also related to the friendly and attentive styles. In addition, individuals who operate under this style often reveal personal aspects of their lives even to people that they have just met.

In a later formulation of communicator style, Norton (1983) identified another communicator style variable, labeled precise. This variable was initially used in questioning the effectiveness of a teacher. However, this variable can also be used to describe someone who is in control and is likely to know when people do not understand an aspect of conversation. The precise communicator is extremely meticulous in terms of speaking and listening. This exact nature can be said to enable him or her to focus a message to an audience as well as recognize when that message has not been received as it should be. In sum, these ten dimensions of style characterize how a person tends to communicate across a range of situations.

In addition to assessing these styles of communicating, the Communicator Style Construct (CSC; Norton, 1983) also assesses an individual's communicator image as an evaluation of how well an individual rates his/her communication in comparison to the communication of others. Norton (1983) reported that all of the style components except for animated, contentious, and dramatic are related to communicator image. Consequently, this study also includes communication apprehension and receiver apprehension as indicators of how negative feelings about one's communication abilities lead to systematic preferences in avoiding and/or minimizing communication.

### **Communication and Receiver Apprehension**

McCroskey (1970) originally defined communication apprehension (CA) as "a broadly based anxiety related to oral communication" (p. 270). This initial conceptualization was mainly based on findings in public speaking. In a 1982 article, McCroskey reconceptualized oral CA and concluded that this phenomenon should be viewed on a continuum from purely trait-like to purely state-like. The PRCA-24, in turn, was developed to measure a person's self-reported anxiety in four types of communicative situations, namely the interpersonal, small group, meeting and public speaking settings (McCroskey, Beatty, Kearney, & Plax, 1985). This measure is the most widely used self-report scale of communication apprehension because of its consistent reliability and validity (McCroskey, 1997).

Wheless (1975) claimed that receiver apprehension, defined as “the fear of misinterpreting, inadequately processing, and/or not being able to adjust psychologically to messages sent by others” (p. 263), is distinctly different from communication apprehension experienced when speaking and sending information. Wheless’ measure of receiver apprehension, the Receiver Apprehension Test (RAT), has been tested and is “a valid trait measure of receiver apprehension” (Beatty, Behnke, & Henderson, 1980).

Clearly, it would be expected that communication apprehension and receiver apprehension should relate to stylistic preferences as both speaker and listener. There is some research supporting this assumption. Correlations have shown “the listening style of those individuals exhibiting low communication apprehension includes: (1) a preference for receiving complex and challenging information...and (2) a preference where concern for other’s feelings and emotions appear paramount” (Sargent, Weaver, & Kiewitz, 1997). Roberts and Vinson (1998) report that receiver apprehension among people willing to listen during social interaction is lower than receiver apprehension among those less willing to listen. Some support was found for a significant negative relationship between receiver apprehension and listening ability as measured by the Brown-Carlsen Listening Test (Fitch-Hauser, Barker, & Hughes, 1990). However, Preiss and Wheless (1989) and Preiss, Wheless, and Allen (1990) were reluctant to conclude that receiver apprehension may lead to poorer listening ability. It is more likely that receiver apprehension may only be associated with different patterns of listening orientations that possess varying effectiveness in different situations.

### GOALS OF RESEARCH

Wolvin and Coakley (1994) concluded that an individual’s “attitudes certainly function as the motivators or predispositions for the individual listener” (p. 159). Since we know that individuals differ with respect to listening styles preference (Kiewitz & Weaver, 1997) we need to question how these preferences are related to preferences about communication behavior. Specifically, this study posits that the way a person communicates in terms of communication apprehension, receiver apprehension, and communicator style should relate systematically to that person’s preferences for listening.



H1: Listening preferences will be systematically discriminated by communicator style, communication apprehension, and receiver apprehension.

H2: Listening preferences will be systematically related to communicator style, communication apprehension, and receiver apprehension.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

During the spring and summer of 2002, undergraduate students (N = 301) enrolled in communication courses at a large southeastern university filled out a variety of self-report communication scales. The majority of the participants were enrolled in an introductory speech communication course required of most majors across the university. The remaining participants were enrolled in upper level communication courses. Students were allowed to participate only once in this study. All participants received extra-credit for their participation in this study. All data collected were anonymous.

### *Procedures*

The respondents were asked to respond to a questionnaire that included all items from the Listening Styles Profile (LSP-16; Watson, Barker, & Weaver, 1995), the Receiver Apprehension Test (RAT; Wheelless, 1975), the Communicator Style Construct (CSC; Norton, 1978, 1983), and the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24; McCroskey, 1997). The questionnaire consisted of 112 items, including the participant's sex, and took an average of thirty minutes to complete.

The data collected were analyzed using SAS for Windows 6.12. Interval level scores were computed for the four LSP-16 listening orientations, namely people-, content-, action- and time-orientations. Following the procedure spelled out in Watson, Barker, and Weaver (1995), a tertile split was computed for each orientation. Individuals in the highest tertile for only one orientation were designated as belonging to that listening style. Individuals in the highest tertile for more than one orientation were designated as multiple styles, and all



others were designated as no style. Consequently, listening style is a nominal level variable with six categories: people-oriented (6.5%), content-oriented (6.8%), action-oriented (4.3%), time-oriented (11.8%), multiple orientations (41.5%), and no orientation (29.1%). Using the data for the Communicator Style Construct, 10 style variables were computed (dominant, dramatic, contentious, animated, impression leaving, relaxed, attentive, open, precise, and friendly) plus a score for communicator image. Four CA subscale scores and a total score for CA were computed from the PRCA-24. Finally a total receiver apprehension score was computer from the RAT.

Two statistical analyses were employed. First, a discriminant analysis was run to assess whether the six listening styles could be differentiated by communicator style, communication apprehension and receiver apprehension. Then a canonical correlation was used to assess the systematic relationships between the four listening preferences and the set of communicator style variables, communication apprehension and receiver apprehension. Alpha was set at .05 in both analyses.

## RESULTS

### *Reliability Estimates*

Internal consistency was estimated for each variable using Cronbach's alpha. Items on the LSP-16 achieved sufficient reliability for people- (.625), content- (.724), action- (.590), and time-oriented listeners (.671). Items on the PRCA-24 achieved excellent reliability for dyadic (.873), group (.893), meeting (.883), public (.905), and total CA (.948). Items on the CSC achieved adequate reliability for all items: Friendly (.712), Impression Leaving (.817), Relaxed (.679), Argumentative (.738), Attentive (.679), Precise (.625), Animated (.608), Dramatic (.684), Open (.732), Dominant (.790), and Communicator Image (.754). The RAT achieved excellent reliability at .887. Therefore all data were considered reliable enough for inclusion in the statistical analyses.

### *Discriminant Analysis*

A discriminant analysis was conducted to determine whether the six listening styles could be differentiated by the set of communicator style variables plus communication apprehension and receiver apprehension. While the overall discriminant result was significant [ $\Lambda = .646$ ,  $F(80, 1352) = 1.604$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ], only one discriminant

function achieved significance [ $F(80, 1352) = 1.604, p < .001, R^2 = .16$ ]. A second discriminant function approached significance [ $F(60, 1099) = 1.28, p = .080, R^2 = .103$ ].

Table 1 summarizes the discriminant structure. All loadings of .3 or greater (shown in bold) were interpreted. The first discriminant function distinguished content-oriented listeners ( $M = .527$ ) and those with multiple listening styles ( $M = .402$ ) from those with no listening preference ( $M = -.547$ ), action-oriented listeners ( $M = -.314$ ) and to a lesser extent the remaining styles: time-oriented listeners ( $M = -.260$ ) and people-oriented listeners ( $M = -.108$ ). The more a person possessed a content-oriented listening style or multiple listening styles the more s/he

Table 1. *Discriminant Analysis of Listening Styles*

| Variable                 | Function One | Function Two |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Friendly Style           | .250         | .264         |
| Impression Leaving Style | <b>.350</b>  | -.103        |
| Relaxed Style            | -.062        | -.226        |
| Argumentative Style      | <b>.499</b>  | -.021        |
| Attentive Style          | <b>.608</b>  | .121         |
| Precise Style            | <b>.754</b>  | -.218        |
| Animated Style           | .289         | <b>.530</b>  |
| Dramatic Style           | <b>.479</b>  | .101         |
| Open Style               | .200         | <b>.404</b>  |
| Dominant Style           | <b>.391</b>  | .001         |
| Communicator Image       | .269         | .070         |
| Receiver Apprehension    | -.165        | <b>-.409</b> |
| Group CA                 | -.135        | -.197        |
| Meeting CA               | -.156        | -.052        |
| Dyadic CA                | -.230        | -.204        |
| Public CA                | -.089        | .140         |
| Total CA                 | -.175        | -.078        |

was likely to be precise, attentive, argumentative, dramatic, dominant, and impression leaving. Although nonsignificant, the second discriminant function seemed to be attempting to distinguish people-oriented listeners ( $M = .902$ ) from action-oriented ( $M = -.641$ ), content-oriented ( $M = -.588$ ), and time-oriented listeners ( $M = -.323$ ). The more people-oriented listeners were, the less receiver apprehensive they were and the more animated and open they were in their communicator style.

The discriminant analysis of listening preference was deemed inadequate. Why multiple listening styles should be similar to content-

orientation is not clear precisely because of the loss of information entailed by the multiple style classification. Were most of those classified as multiple listening styles high on content-orientation? If not, which combinations of styles led to the similarity with content-orientation? In addition, the fact that approximately 70% of the respondents were classified as either multiple styles or no style leads to doubt about the validity and stability of the results.

### *Canonical Correlation*

In order to avoid the inadequacies of the discriminant analysis, a canonical correlation was run to determine whether there were any systematic relationships between the set of four interval level listening preferences and the set of style and apprehension variables. The canonical correlation was significant [ $\Lambda = .366$ ,  $F(60, 1103) = 5.405$ ,  $p \leq .0001$ ]. Three canonical variates were found to be highly significant: Variate 1 [ $R^2 = .124$ ,  $F(60, 1103) = 5.405$ ,  $p \leq .0001$ ], Variate 2 [ $R^2 = .114$ ,  $F(42, 840) = 3.829$ ,  $p \leq .0001$ ], and Variate 3 [ $R^2 = .091$ ,  $F(26, 568) = 2.503$ ,  $p \leq .0001$ ]. Across all three canonical variates 38.5% of the variance was shared between the two sets of variables. All canonical weightings over .300 (indicated in bold) were interpreted.

As may be seen in Table 2, the first canonical variate established that the greater the people-orientation in listening, the lower the receiver apprehension, dyadic CA, and group CA were, and the higher the scores were for the friendly, attentive, animated and open styles. The first canonical listening variable accounted for 22.7% of the total variance in the listening orientations. Similarly the first canonical style and apprehension variable accounted for 12.7% of the variance in these variables.

For the second canonical variate, the higher the content and action orientations, the higher were the scores for the precise, attentive, argumentative and impression leaving styles. The second canonical listening variable accounted for 32.4% of the total variance in the listening

Table 2. *Canonical Correlation of Listening Orientations with Style and Apprehension Variables.*

| Variable                 | Variate 1    | Variate 2   | Variate 3    |
|--------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| People-oriented          | <b>.901</b>  | .147        | <b>.399</b>  |
| Content-oriented         | .176         | <b>.882</b> | -.162        |
| Action-oriented          | -.178        | <b>.681</b> | <b>.624</b>  |
| Time-oriented            | -.185        | .187        | <b>.793</b>  |
| Friendly Style           | <b>.640</b>  | -.028       | .088         |
| Impression Leaving Style | .173         | <b>.319</b> | .240         |
| Relaxed Style            | .037         | .015        | .028         |
| Argumentative Style      | -.118        | <b>.477</b> | .278         |
| Attentive Style          | <b>.528</b>  | <b>.539</b> | -.040        |
| Precise Style            | .178         | <b>.893</b> | .111         |
| Animated Style           | <b>.413</b>  | .189        | <b>.518</b>  |
| Dramatic Style           | .134         | .207        | <b>.609</b>  |
| Open Style               | <b>.344</b>  | -.136       | <b>.557</b>  |
| Dominant Style           | .123         | .227        | <b>.488</b>  |
| Receiver Apprehension    | <b>-.688</b> | -.081       | <b>.329</b>  |
| Dyadic CA                | <b>-.410</b> | .068        | <b>-.381</b> |
| Group CA                 | <b>-.331</b> | .029        | .065         |
| Meeting CA               | -.253        | -.029       | -.251        |
| Public CA                | -.079        | -.064       | -.095        |

orientations. Similarly the second canonical style and apprehension variable accounted for 10.6% of the variance in these variables.

For the third canonical variate, the higher the time-, action- and (to a lesser extent) people-orientations, the lower the dyadic CA was, the higher the receiver apprehension was and the higher the scores were for the dramatic, open, animated and dominant styles. The third canonical listening variable accounted for 30.0% of the total variance in the listening orientations. Similarly the third canonical style and apprehension variable accounted for 11.2% of the variance in these variables.

Thus, the three canonical listening variables accounted for a total of 85.2% of the variance in the four listening orientations. In

contrast, the three canonical style and apprehension variables accounted for only 34.4% of the variance in the set of communicator style and apprehension variables.

## DISCUSSION

### *Discriminant Analysis*

The first major conclusion derives from the comparison of the two statistical analyses. It seems more productive to investigate the relationship of listening preferences and communicator styles and apprehension using four interval level listening orientations rather than using one nominal level categorization of primary listening style. The loss of information involved in identifying one listening style is rather substantial because approximately 70% of the respondents in this study were grouped into the two ad hoc categories of multiple styles or no style. Because of the inherent variability involved in these two categories, considerable statistical noise was introduced into the discriminant analysis. Because these two categories were unspecified in any theoretically detailed sense, the one significant function obtained in the discriminant analysis was difficult to interpret. This function essentially distinguished the content-oriented and multiple style listeners from those with no listening style, an action-orientation and to a lesser extent a time-orientation and a people-orientation. The content-oriented and multiple style listeners are distinguished from the other styles by being more precise, attentive, argumentative, dramatic, dominant, and impression leaving. These two styles of listeners seem to focus on content with precision and confidence and subsequently are able to manifest their grasp of content in focused argumentation that is both precise in the treatment of details and forceful in terms of emphasis and flair. They wind up being dominant and leaving a strong impression on others.

While the pattern of communicator style for this discriminant function seems fairly clear, it is not clear why the content-oriented and multiple style listeners should be grouped together as having this communicator style. In this regard, it should be noted that two of the three strongest group centroids for this function were for multiple listening styles (with the second strongest positive centroid) and no listening style (with the strongest negative centroid). These centroids make it clear that the two ad hoc categories of multiple styles and

no style are not empirically nondescript because their centroids were not clustered around zero on this function as would be expected. Second, it is difficult to make sense of precisely what listening style is being discriminated by the communicator style noted above. The most parsimonious interpretation would assume that the multiple listeners were high on content-orientation in addition to being high on one or more other listening orientations. Then this function would be discriminating those with high content-orientation from those with low content-orientation regardless of the other listening orientations. However, such an interpretation has shifted from a focus on listening preferences to a focus on one listening orientation cutting across numerous styles. Therefore, it would seem advisable to use a canonical correlation to focus on variations in listening orientations that are directly associated with variations in the communicator style and apprehension variables.

One additional point should be noted about the results of the discriminant function. One of the strongest theoretical expectations was for people-oriented listeners to be differentiated from other styles of listeners. The second discriminant function seemed to distinguish the people-oriented listeners from action-oriented, content-oriented and time-oriented listeners. The people-oriented listeners were more animated and open in communicator style and less receiver apprehensive than the other three pure listening styles. However, this discriminant function was nonsignificant, quite possibly because of the additional variability introduced into the analysis by the two ad hoc categories.

### *Canonical Correlation*

The canonical correlation between the set of four listening orientations and the set of style and apprehension variables was highly significant. It also proved to be quite discerning insofar as there were three highly significant canonical variates. In effect this analysis identified three different patterns of association between the two sets of variables. Each pattern consists of a different way in which listening orientation is associated with communicator style.

The first canonical variate essentially identified how people-orientation is manifested in a common pattern while listening and speaking. First of all, with regard to the various forms of apprehension

measured in this study, high people-orientation is marked by low receiver apprehension. People-oriented listeners are neither afraid nor anxious about listening to other people. Furthermore, there is a distinctive trend evident in how the four situationally defined forms of communication apprehension relate to people-orientation in listening. People-oriented listeners are less apprehensive about dyadic communication and become a little more apprehensive as the context shifts away from the interpersonal setting to group, meeting and finally to the public setting where there is no connection between people-orientation and apprehension about public speaking. People-oriented listeners are more comfortable as the setting moves from less personal to more personal. Thus, people-oriented listeners seem well suited for empathic listening given their low receiver apprehension and low communication apprehension in an interpersonal setting.

With regard to communicator style, the first canonical variate established that high people-orientation is associated with a more friendly, attentive, animated and open pattern of communication. Thus, the strong theoretical expectation that was nonsignificant in the discriminant analysis is confirmed as the strongest pattern of association between listening orientation and communicator style. People-orientation in listening is manifested in a more relationally oriented style of communicating marked by lively verbal and nonverbal indicators of attentive, accepting and open engagement with the other person.

In summary, the first canonical variate has identified a pattern of low apprehension manifested in a people oriented style of attentive listening and affirming responses. Quite possibly lower degrees of receiver and dyadic communication apprehension may facilitate the ability to listen to the other person and to affirm that person in response. This pattern may reflect a basic sense of self-esteem whereby an individual is threatened neither by listening closely to how other people feel and think, nor by accepting and affirming them in one's verbal and nonverbal reactions. If a person has troubles accepting oneself, s/he will also likely have troubles in being accepting of others while listening and talking.

With regard to the second canonical variate, the higher the content and action orientations in listening, the higher were the scores for the precise, attentive, argumentative and impression leaving styles.



Thus individuals with both high content- and action-orientations are likely to attend to content with precision and subsequently are able to argue their case in a manner that leaves strong impressions on others. Substantively, this canonical variate taps into the same pattern of communicator style as the first discriminant function did. However, in contrast to the first discriminant function which associated this communicator style with multiple style listeners as well as content-oriented listeners, this canonical variate is more specific by associating this communicator style with simultaneously having both action- and content-orientations.

The third canonical variate identified a relationship between listening orientation and communicator apprehension. According to this variate, individuals with high time- and action-orientations coupled with no content-orientation are marked by higher receiver apprehension and lower dyadic communication apprehension. In other words, people who are concerned for getting the needed action accomplished in a timely fashion tend to be troubled by listening to the other person in a dyadic setting but not afraid to speak their mind in that same situation. Given that this pattern is based on a canonical correlation, it is impossible to determine which determines which. There are possible influences in both directions. For example, people who are concerned about getting things done in a timely fashion may become apprehensive about listening because they feel that listening will slow down the process. On the other hand, if they have difficulty listening, they may develop an orientation that avoids careful listening and emphasizes focusing on the action needed and staying within the time frame desired. They would tend to listen less carefully and be more apt to speak out in order to achieve their own goals quickly in the interaction.

The third canonical variate also identifies a pattern of communicator style associated with higher time- and action-orientations and no content-orientation. Such people seemed to be characterized by a forceful style that is both animated and dramatic. They are more open in the sense of revealing how they feel and think. The net result is that they tend to dominate others during interaction. Lower canonical loadings for this variate also indicate that this communicator style is not at all associated with being friendly, relaxed, attentive or precise. In summary, this variate seems to establish that listeners who have both high action and time orientations use dramatic, forceful and dominating assertion as

the means to quickly achieving one's goals.

Looking across all three canonical variates, there is only one communicator style variable that did not load on any variate, namely a relaxed style. With loadings of only .037, .015, and .028 respectively, the relaxed style is consistently unrelated to any of the four listening orientations. Why this is the case is far from clear.

In summary, the canonical correlation has identified three patterns whereby the four listening orientations are associated with communicator style and apprehension.

1. High people-orientation in listening is systematically associated with lower receiver apprehension and dyadic communication apprehension and with a more relationally oriented communication style that attends to and affirms the other person.
2. The combination of high content- and action-orientations is associated with a precise and attentive style of arguing the issues that leaves a strong impression on other people.
3. The configuration of higher time- and action-orientations along with a lack of content-orientation is associated with higher receiver apprehension but lower dyadic communication apprehension, and also with a dramatic, animated and forceful style that asserts one's goals and concerns and tends to dominate the other person.

Furthermore, these three configurations of listening orientations account for 85% of the variance in the four listening orientations whereas the four pure listening styles were able to classify only 30% of the listeners in this study. Clearly, only one of the four pure listening styles, namely people orientation, appears directly related to any pattern of communicator style and apprehension. In contrast, the other connections to communicator style and apprehension are based on the combination of action-orientation with either content-orientation or time-orientation. There is little indication that pure action-, content- and time-orientations are manifested in any distinctive pattern of communicator style and apprehension.

Given that the only pure listening style that appeared was the people-oriented style, and this style was the strongest canonical variate, this sample seems to reflect a group of individuals who are predisposed to having listening concerns that revolve around a more socially oriented style. If the same study were replicated, for instance,

with military recruits around the same age, different patterns that reflect a less socially-oriented listening style that has developed from exposure to a different environment may emerge. Therefore, the patterns identified in this study may not be stable outside of a sample of southeastern university students. Future research in the area of listening styles should not only replicate this study with a sample more representative of the general adult population but should also incorporate other variables of relevance such as gender role, personality type, verbal aggression, interaction involvement, and communicative competence. It is possible that the pure content-, action-, and time-oriented listening styles may exhibit straightforward associations with some of these variables. However, if these variables are also associated with the combination of action-orientation with either content-orientation or time-orientation, then these three pure listening styles may be suspect. If this pattern does continue, practitioners and professors alike will need to adapt their teaching of listening styles accordingly.

While the results of this study are heuristic in identifying three different ways in which listening orientations are related to communicator style and apprehension, these results need to be subject to one major qualification. Given that the instruments used in this study were self-reported scales, the three above statements must be limited to the respondent's perceptions of their own listening orientations, communicator style and apprehension level. Future studies should not only replicate this study but should also extend the study by incorporating reports of listening and communicator style based on ratings by friends/acquaintances and/or neutral observers. It is possible that the patterns of association noted here may vary considerably when other-reported scales of listening preferences, communicator style and apprehension are incorporated into the study. Consequently, when teaching listening in either the classroom or professional setting it may be necessary to test how others perceive the style of the trainee. This may prove to be a more accurate reflection of how someone actually listens.

The results of this study have implications for listening training in general. The practitioner, whether in the classroom or the boardroom, should recognize that having multiple listening orientations is common. Just as speakers may emphasize several different aspects

of communication in a single message, receivers may also emphasize different aspects of listening simultaneously. Most importantly, the action orientation in listening seems to be conjoined with either the content or time orientations in different ways. While there may be a fairly pure people orientation in listening, it seems to be the interaction among the remaining orientations that is most clearly connected to different styles of communication. Furthermore, there may be considerable flexibility in how we use these different orientations while listening to specific messages in concrete situations. Just as speakers may shift speaking styles to achieve their goals in conversation, listeners may also alter their basic orientations in listening to their conversational partners. It may be better for trainers to help people to identify which listening concerns are most important or applicable to them and how they strategically shift these orientations during interaction.

Ultimately, the investigation of how different listening orientations are related to communicator style and apprehension will have to move into a more interactive context. Communicating with another person face to face is an extremely interactive process insofar as the listening and speaking behavior of one person will impact the listening and speaking behavior of the other person. Consequently, the question of how these various styles of listening/speaking interact with each other is posed. For instance, what happens when a people-oriented individual interacts with a heavily time- and action-oriented individual? What happens when two time- and action-oriented individuals interact? A relatively complete understanding of listening preferences and speaking styles will have to make sense of what typically happens in such interactions.

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