



***The 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 that were applicable to a work setting
- 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*<sup>™</sup> represented current models of listening attitude. When little evidence was found to support this instrument's "LISTEN" model, a decision was made to develop a new measuring tool.

A more thorough review of literature was then conducted and resulted in findings related to both of the development purposes identified above. Although several research scales had been developed, they had not produced psychometrically satisfactory results. It was also discovered that studies supported either a four- 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*, 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 72 individuals representing a variety of ages, backgrounds, and employment. Results were analyzed to determine which items best measured each scale via reliability analysis. From this analysis, 10 to 12 items were selected for each scale which demonstrated adequate to strong item-total correlations.

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 existed among the item sets, and Appreciative Listening was identified as a meaningfully different construct from Empathic Listening.

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

## **Beta Test**

Four additional items were developed to create 12-item scales for each listening factor. These were administered and scored on the same four-point Likert scale that is used in the present instrument.

The beta test instrument was completed by 171 respondents. Because results from alpha and beta tests were eventually merged, characteristics of both samples are described in Table 1 (minus those who were 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
<u>Geographic Location</u>			Caucasian	221	94.4
Pacific	31	13.2%	Hispanic	1	.4
Central	180	76.9	Native American	2	.9
Northeast	6	2.6	Other	4	1.7
Southeast	15	6.4	<u>Employment</u>		
<u>Industry</u>			Secretarial/Clerical	50	21.4%
Finance/Ins.	1	.4%	Technical/Mechanical	19	8.1
Public Administration	12	5.1	Professional	62	26.5
Services (Bus., Ed., Hlth.)	104	44.5	Supervisory	8	3.4
Wholesale/Retail Trade	24	10.3	Middle/Upper Mgmt.	33	14.1
Transport./Communication	34	13.2	Sales	19	8.1
Other	59	26.5	Warehouse/Labor	0	0
<u>Age</u>			Other	39	16.7
18–29	87	37.2%	<u>Level of Education</u>		
30–39	60	25.6	High School	29	12.4%
40–49	55	23.5	Post-secondary	70	29.9
50–59	29	12.4	College graduate	103	44.0
60 and older	2	.9	Graduate or professional degree	31	13.2

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.

Because the inter-scale correlations are significantly lower than the corresponding scales' reliability coefficients, there is evidence that the listening model in this instrument is justified and that listening can be measured along five different dimensions. Results are shown in Table 2.

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

	Discerning	Comprehensive	Evaluative	Appreciative	Empathic
Discerning	<b>.69</b>				
Comprehensive	.19	<b>.82</b>			
Evaluative	.06	.37	<b>.64</b>		
Appreciative	.29	.00	.03	<b>.67</b>	
Empathic	.42	.47	.07	.30	<b>.72</b>

Reliabilities are shown in bold face along the diagonal of Table 2. 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 Empathic, Discerning, and Comprehensive listening scales are modest — i.e., the scales overlap only 18 to 22 percent — their magnitude is nonetheless interesting. The relationships help explain the components of Empathic listening. One cannot listen empathically without listening, in part, to discern and comprehend what the person is saying. This position was also found in our review of the literature.

## Summary

In summary, the *Personal Listening Profile*<sup>®</sup> was designed to help individuals identify their most natural listening approaches used when communicating. The five-factor model of listening, evident from the literature review, was empirically supported by the research reported here.