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LISTENING : A REPORT

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by

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ABSTRACT

The concept of listening has been examined and the reasons for an emergence of interest have been reported.

Commentaries and relevant research have been presented in relation to listening tests, relationships to listening, listening skills, processing auditory information, and teaching listening. Implications from these discussions were considered in relation to teaching practices and further research.

Particular attention has been drawn to the lack of integration within the field and weak theoretical base for much of the research.

Discussion has highlighted an over concern of researchers in relating listening and reading to the neglect of establishing relationships between listening and speaking.

The narrow perspective reflected in tests of listening has been criticised. Suggestions have been offered to widen the perspective of listening to incorporate common communication events and their personal, contextual and linguistic features.

It was considered that there has been insufficient proof of the long term effects of instruction in listening, and that the learning conditions and consequent programmes were not sufficiently well specified and developed to offer clear guidelines to practising teachers.

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INTRODUCTION:

Teachers in New Zealand have been somewhat surprised, in recent years, at the suggestion that listening was one of the language arts and could be taught. The issuing of a listening comprehension test by the N.Z.C.E.R. in 1970 increased the momentum and confusion amongst teachers and has led to some re-thinking of language programmes in classrooms and Teachers' Colleges. To date there has been very little guidance given to teachers in assisting them to develop listening programmes or identify listening weaknesses. It is perhaps difficult to relate identifying the rustle of paper under a desk with the format of listening comprehension tests and a television performance by a well known politician; yet these are all listening situations. In an environment conscious world both noise pollution and communication have become major themes, yet teaching practices do not yet reflect a major concern with listening.

This assumed confusion observed among teachers is a reasonable reflection of the activities of researchers in the field. It is the purpose of this report to draw attention to research difficulties in this growing field and to this end there has been a comprehensive survey of related literature. Some directions for future research are given together with a few practical suggestions that emerge from the content of the report.

PERSPECTIVE:

The initial interest in listening occurred when Rankin (1926) presented his findings of the amount of 'communication time' spent in listening. He found that his adult sample divided their time as 30 per cent speaking, 16 per cent reading, 9 per cent writing and 45 per cent listening. Bird (1953) surveyed college students and reported time spent as 25 per cent speaking, 15 per cent reading, 18 per cent writing and 42 per cent listening. How listening and taking notes were separated is not clear. Wilt (1950) examined classroom time of primary children of all grades and estimated that they were listening for 57 per cent of the time. Markgraf (1957) estimated high school students' listening time to be 46 per cent, and of this time 66 per cent was spent listening to teachers. These somewhat gross observations have been sufficient to confirm the intuitive guess that people listen more than they speak, and do both more than read or write.

A somewhat different approach was employed by Flanders (1965)* in comparing Standard 4 New Zealand pupils with Minnesota children in elementary and high schools. He found that of the time allocated to talking a New Zealand teacher used 83 per cent, a Minnesota elementary teacher 59 per cent, and a Minnesota high school teacher 62 per cent.

Another approach aimed at establishing the importance of listening has been for investigators to comment on the efficiency of listeners in terms of the total comprehension of a spoken passage.

"Students listening to lectures have been found to comprehend half or less than half the basic matter" (Wilkinson & Stratta, 1972, p.3).

In discussing some explanations for this lack of comprehension Wilkinson & Stratta raise several key concepts involved in listening - attention, background experience, the nature of the material to be listened to, the active participation of the listener, the listening context, and retention of the material. These points are included in the following discussion.

*Figures first published National Education, 1 June, 1960.

"Of course some lectures are so long, so indescribably boring, so unrelated to the listener's frame of reference, that it is necessary in sheer self defence to turn away into daydreams of money, sex or power. But the passive role required of the listener is also to blame. It seems that one of the situations in which we listen best is when we have to do something immediately with the information we receive. For instance we may have to remember it and act upon it, as in following out sheer directions. Or we may have to reply to it, as in a conversation. To keep saying 'You what' or 'I didn't er quite er understand' on such an occasion smacks of idiocy. Our attention is limited, it comes in bursts, not continually: in conversation it is constantly stimulated. In listening to longer utterances the attention holds longer for say narrative than exposition. This has implications for teaching by lecture. Certainly one should be able to follow a continuous exposition for a reasonable period from a lecturer or teacher immediately present, or on radio or television. We are not arguing for the abolition of all lectures; only for the abolition of long, bad lectures." (ibid, p.3).

A major factorial study usually quoted in the literature that identifies listening as a separate factor was undertaken in a thorough investigation by Spearritt (1962).

"A battery of 34 tests was prepared comprising nine experimental tests of listening comprehension, all of which were either specially constructed or modified for the investigation. They included a number of reading comprehension tests presented in listening form, a modified version of the S.T.B.P. Listening Comprehension test, a test designed to measure comprehension of the poorly organized spontaneous speech which is characteristic of many conversational situations, and three tests based on short talks of about six or seven minutes." (Spearritt, 1962, pp.89-91).

Other tests were given together with an assessment of attainments. A definite listening comprehension factor, was identified in the first order domain, but there was some relationship on test performances to tests of inductive reasoning, verbal comprehension and certain types of memory tests.

With this information as background it is productive to look at teachers and language textbooks to see if the time taken up by listening is matched in importance by authors.

Wilt (1950) found that only 16 per cent of teachers ranked listening as the most important language art, while many registered surprise at the mention of listening and the possibility of teaching listening. An examination of 54 language textbooks from grades 3 to 6 was undertaken by Brown, K.L. (1967). He found that speech and listening had the least amount of space, and that of the content of listening sections, teaching listening directly ranked highest in allotted space.

The call to elevate the status of listening has been repeated with growing impetus in the last 20 years, Brown, J.I. (1949), Dixon, (1964), Duker, (1969), Wilkinson, (1970), Devine, (1967), Taylor, (1964), Landry, (1969), Burns, (1961). In general the writers quote studies of the time spent listening and take the view that (a) there is a separate ability named listening, (b) people listen inefficiently, (c) listening ability can be improved by teaching, (d) listening ability can be tested, and (e) there are a set of listening skills comparable to those of reading.

Language textbooks write of four areas of concern - speaking and writing as expressive language areas, and reading and listening as receptive language areas. Of the four, listening has had the least attention, probably because the other three areas more easily produce measurable behaviour. Listening has not been entirely forgotten, but in research it tends to be strongly linked with reading. While one accepts a degree of relationship among the language areas, linking listening to reading has often confused the examination of listening as a separate area with its own characteristics. In addition listening is the only language area where confirmation that listening has occurred depends on a written, spoken, or reading response, or a combination of these. Non-verbal responses can also confirm listening, but this area has not been a particular concern of researchers to date. Because listening has been checked predominantly by reference to the other language areas, a separate identity for the construct listening may be called into question.

Reviewers and educators concerned about listening are continually optimistic that measurement tools and teaching practices will be refined sufficiently to counter this argument.

The increasing emphasis on listening in the last twenty-five years has produced a mass of research articles, reviews on the literature, and tests of listening, but little organisation of the information available into theory. It is not the function of this report to develop a theory of listening, but to comment on the field as it presently stands. The emergence of a theory of listening is in part dependent on the development of a general theory of language. Herriot (1970) states that "there is no systematised formulation of a theory of verbal behaviour as a whole. On the contrary, theory has grown around areas of research which each generate their particular problems. As a result, separate bodies of theory have grown up which try to accommodate to and assimilate new findings within particular areas. These efforts at accommodation and assimilation appear to be in the main unsuccessful." (ibid, p.158).

Russell (1964) lists as implications of past research findings: (1) A theory of listening is needed. Research is required to explore further the nature and development of listening abilities and to apply these findings to structure and sequence in the language arts; (2) Analytical studies should be made of listening situations and ingenious tests should be devised to improve current scattered measures; (3) Teaching methods and materials should be developed; (4) The problem of interrelationships between listening and other verbal skills should be investigated further; (5) Early attention should be given to listening ability in the school; and (6) The findings of a number of research studies should be analyzed and collated in order to assemble useful ways of teaching and testing listening.

In reviewing research Devine (1967) similarly comments that "research in listening has been extensive, though generally atomistic, unco-ordinated, and repetitive", (ibid p.152).

He re-affirms many points made by Russell that more studies are needed of (a) critical listening, (b) the relationship between specific listening and reading abilities, (c) ways of exploiting possible relationships for teaching purposes, (d) teaching techniques and materials, (e) personality factors which may influence listening, (f) ways in which listening instruction affects behaviour, and (g) measuring devices in listening. Furthermore he sees a productive area emerging by examining listening research in relation to linguistic research in terms of regional dialects, cultural-social levels, syntax, and transformational grammar. Devine concludes his review with the comment that "recent studies have contributed much toward an evolving theory of listening, but many questions remain unanswered. Indeed, certain significant questions about listening may still remain to be asked." (ibid p.157). With the general lack of precision of listening research a closer assimilation towards psycholinguistics may produce a set of questions for which answers may be forthcoming.

LISTENING AS A CONSTRUCT:

If the term "reading" did not exist the literature would refer to "comprehending seen words", "looking with understanding at written language", and the like. Similar unprecise locutions for listening are likely to be "comprehending heard words" and "inclining the ears cognitively."

A distinction is drawn by some authorities between listening to linguistic material and to other sounds. The term "auding" was proposed for the former process, (D.Brown, 1954), but this suggestion has not been widely accepted.

Taylor (1964) presented a model which separated listening from auding and hearing even though the total act of receiving auditory communication is referred to as listening. For Taylor hearing is the process by which speech sounds in the form of sound waves are received and modified by the ear. Listening refers to the process of becoming aware of sound sequences through auditory analysis, mental reorganisation, and/or association of meaning. Auding refers to the process by which the continuous flow of words is translated into meaning by indexing, making comparisons, noting sequence, forming sensory impressions, and appreciating. Discreteness is not intended by the model as he suggests that these factors act in combination for any listening act (ibid. p.6). The lack of precision in terminology continues as the ideas are developed. There is a heavy reliance on what it is suggested occurs in reading. In addition there is the assumption of an isomorphic relationship between what needs to occur logically from the stimulus input and what occurs internally with the processing of information. This model, apart from minor variations, tends to be the one employed by American researchers.

Workers at the Oracy Research Unit at Birmingham University work from a situational model which includes the behaviour and intentions of the Addressor and Addressee together with linguistic and non-linguistic features of how communication occurs. They attempt to answer the questions: who, what, whom, how, why, and on what occasion, in order to identify various aspects of communication.

There is a close link with oral expression rather than reading in this approach. A general plea is made for less literary testing and teaching and more analysis of 'live' listening or communication situations, (Wilkinson, 1971). This approach is further elaborated throughout this report.

The usual semantic argument, from which there is no great increase in the clarification of terms used, is typified as follows:

"An important distinction must be drawn between hearing and listening. Just as seeing is essential to, but not the same as reading, so hearing is a pre-requisite of listening but not an equivalent. Listening and reading both involve comprehension, interpretation and evaluation, which hearing and seeing do not. A generally accepted factor in reading readiness is auditory discrimination. This is skill in hearing, not in listening. Studies of auditory discrimination, important as they are, must not, therefore, be confused with studies of listening." (Duker, 1965, p.321).

The general agreement that does exist about listening presents the gaining of meaning from spoken verbal material as the central issue. Consequently the term listening comprehension is usually preferred because it is easily understood and parallels reading comprehension. With the close similarity of reading and listening tests this emphasis on the cognitive levels of functioning is understandable, but it may be questioned for its validity. If one accepts that the processing of spoken verbal stimuli begins when the ear transmits impulses, then more factors that affect listening may need to be taken into account than those nominally labelled cognitive. Indeed there is a mass of research under the guise of listening that is predominantly concerned with auditory perception suggesting confusion of definition among the researchers. The standardised listening tests available certainly reflect a cognitive emphasis yet the research has demonstrated a greater diversity of interest.

Differentiating Characteristics:

Listening appears to have characteristics that differentiate it from the other language areas.

It has already been mentioned that listening as a part of language reception can at present be checked only by reference to the other language abilities.

On most listening occasions the message is only presented once although there can be opportunities to check understanding. The listener has little control over the speed at which the oral message is being delivered. The listening context provides variable additional stimulation, both of a visual and auditory nature, only some of which may be pertinent to the message.

Educational Psychologists have ample behaviour in speaking and writing to be reasonably objective in their research. Increasingly reading behaviours are being systematically measured. Listening behaviours are but poorly represented in objective research except in general terms. With listening, the concern has usually been with describing the internal mediating processing with psychological constructs and matching these with a logical analysis of the characteristics of language.

A further differentiating feature of listening revolves around the learning increments that occur, maturational characteristics and teaching in the language areas. It seems reasonable to suggest that reading, a receptive language ability, and writing, an expressive language ability, do not occur without teaching. Vocalisations and some communication occurs early in life and without teaching, but a common spoken language requires both consistent modelling opportunities and teaching. The maturational requirements for emerging competence in reading and writing are well documented, as they are to a lesser extent for speaking. The maturational characteristics of listening are less clear and the development of listening ability is poorly documented.

While the mere exposure to many and varied sounds does not ensure adequate listening development, unless a person is deaf, listening seems unavoidable (Oakland, 1971). Although the level of understanding involved will of course vary considerably. Auditory information will be received and internally processed, and, without teaching, learning increments will occur.

If researchers adopted a developmental approach, the shift of emphasis towards identifying obstacles to listening development and performance may be profitable.

A further feature of receptive language emerges in relation to spoken language. Although children can initiate spoken language, there are times that they appear to say things with little understanding. In general children are able to understand what is said to them much better than they can express what they understand to others.

These differentiating characteristics emerge as a consequence of various approaches to listening. These approaches are reported elsewhere (Lundsteen, 1971). Some clarity and integration is lost when writers develop ideas in one direction. For example, classifying listening with reading as a receptive language ability neglects the relationships between listening, speaking and general motor activity. While the isolation of differentiating characteristics supports the idea of a separate listening construct, research designs and teaching practices are more integrative. Attempts at separating and isolating behaviours and processes have often failed to account for the functional autonomy of the whole organism.

An Integrative Framework:

To some extent the difficulties of conceptualizing listening can be overcome by offering sequential levels of listening as explanation which require increasingly complex abilities. Wilt (1964) presents the following sequence:

1. auditory perception of non-language sounds
2. auditory perception and discrimination of isolated single language sounds
3. understanding of words and concepts, and building of a listening vocabulary
4. understanding sentences and other linguistic elements of language
5. auditory memory
6. auditing or listening comprehension:
 - (a) following directions
 - (b) understanding a sequence of events through listening
 - (c) recalling details
 - (d) getting the main idea
 - (e) making inferences and drawing conclusions
 - (f) critical listening

The above sequence, apart from showing some resemblance to developmental aspects of language and intelligence, appears to be the usual basis on which teaching suggestions by American researchers are made.

Lundsteen (1971) in an effort to classify the ambiguity attached to the label listening, presents the concept in the light of the usual approaches to definition: (1) comparative, (2) ostensive, (3) classificational, (4) structural, (5) operational.

- (1) The comparative approach discusses what listening is like. This approach highlights the relationships of listening to the other language areas - reading, speaking and writing.
- (2) The ostensive approach discusses and lists the attributes of listening and their interaction.
- (3) The approach by classification combines the comparative and attribute approaches to place listening within a classification scheme, thus further highlighting the relationships of listening to other subclasses of communication.
- (4) A structural approach attempts to identify the parts of listening:
 - (a) previous knowledge (antecedent conditions), (b) material to be listened to (stimulus), (c) physiological activity of the listener, (d) attention or concentration, (e) highly conscious intellectual activity at the time of listening and beyond listening.

This approach usually concludes that there appear to be levels of intellectual activity and levels of purposes while listening. These levels go beyond listening for simple sounds, syntax, and semantics of a phrase, sentence, or paragraph to complete units of discourse.
- (5) The operational approach attempts to describe what happens when listeners listen. Lundsteen presents a flow chart as a tentative framework to describe what a listener does as he moves from verbal sound to meaning to intellectual activity, leading hopefully and ultimately to creative ...

problem solving. There are three main parts to her model: responding and organizing, getting meaning, and thinking beyond listening.

The ten suggested steps are labelled: (1) hear, (2) hold in memory, (3) attend, (4) form images, (5) search store, (6) compare, (7) test cues, (8) recode, (9) get meaning, and (10) intellectualize. The parts and steps overlap in many cases.

This final approach closely follows the neuro-physiological activity described elsewhere in this report by Berry (1969).

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF LISTENING:

It appears from the above discussion that agreement on a suitable definition is far from assured. The dismissal of the perceptual basis of listening is not credible when the initial stages of processing and gaining meaning are usually considered pre-requisites for activating higher mental processes.

Concentrating on higher mental processes often confuses listening with other constructs of general intelligence and general verbal ability.

If listening has value as a construct it must be able to accommodate to and provide procedures for the specific identification of a listener's weaknesses as well as indicate a sequence of learning that follows from such an identification.

The value of the listening construct to education will improve when it is incorporated into a general theory of language, and when the current descriptive approaches incorporate greater explanation and prediction. At the present time there is only agreement on a general process definition which refers to the gaining of meaning from spoken language.

TESTING LISTENING ABILITY:

The activities used in testing listening in general appear to vary with the age of the subject. When spoken language has been achieved children tend to be tested for ability to discriminate auditory input, re-call number series, and follow verbal directions. When reading and writing skills have been achieved children tend to be tested on their ability to indicate a level of competence in skills similar to those of reading, based on a distinction between receptive and reflective listening:

receptive skills: skills primarily associated with accuracy in listening:

- "(a) ability to keep related details in mind
- (b) ability to observe a single detail
- (c) ability to remember a series of details
- (d) ability to follow oral directions

reflective skills:

- (a) ability to use contextual clues
 - (b) ability to recognize organizational elements
 - (c) ability to select main ideas as opposed to subordinate ideas and details
 - (d) ability to recognize the relationship between main ideas and subordinate ideas that support them
 - (e) ability to draw justifiable inferences."
- (Wilkinson, 1970, p.141).

With adolescents these reading type skills are included along with other skills involving critical appraisal, such as separating fact from opinion, evaluating arguments and propoganda, and detecting a speaker's purpose.

It should be noted that no research on young children has been found in the literature under the title of listening. Some information could be extrapolated from learning theorists, but researchers on listening have yet to grapple with the receptive abilities of normal children who have not reached a competent level of expressive language development.

Researchers in listening have paid little attention to developing systematic relationships of listening with other areas of development - intellectual, physical, social, emotional. Although there often appear to be underlying ...

assumptions in the research, reflecting a particular viewpoint on intellectual development for instance, there is little explicit research on a developmental basis that relates listening to intellectual development and theory. Correlational studies of intelligence and listening tend to be the general level of operation.

There are two widely used tests of Listening Comprehension in the United States, the Brown-Carlson Test (1953) for college students and the Sequential Tests of Educational Progress Listening Test (Educational Testing Service, 1959). Apart from recent work in England subsequent tests of general listening comprehension have tended to be based on similar lines, i.e. written material read aloud and multiple choice responses involving some reading of possible answers. The P.A.T. Listening Comprehension Test published by the N.Z.C.E.R. (1971) is an example of this pattern of test construction. The P.A.T. Listeners Comprehension manual acknowledges that the tests are based on the receptive reflective distinction reported earlier.

The Brown-Carlson Test was designed in conjunction with the National Council for the Teaching of English and after analysing diagnostic tests of silent reading a battery of five sub-tests was produced:

- (1) immediate recall
- (2) following directions
- (3) recognizing transitions
- (4) recognizing word meanings
- (5) lecture comprehension (the ability to deduce meanings from context, understand the central idea, draw inferences, understand organization, and note the degree of relevance).

Furthermore, it was determined that the Brown-Carlson test was not one of either reading or intelligence. As one author points out the validation of a previously unmeasured skill is difficult, but goes on to say somewhat surprisingly that:

"While the wide and continued use of a test, even over a long period of time, certainly is not a technical way of establishing validity, it may well be that under the circumstances, it is at least somewhat persuasive evidence in favour of validity." (Duker, 1969, p.750).

The Brown-Carlson and the STEP listening comprehension tests have been subjected to criticism from time to time both in terms of basic assumptions and in terms of correlational studies. In a general discussion on listening tests Wilkinson (1970) makes the following points:

"The taxonomy of listening skills drawn up by Brown and Carlson has produced the most useful test. Haberland (1959) contrasts it favourably with two other tests. Many other workers seem to have drawn up listening tests on quite arbitrary criteria, which possibly explains the disparate correlations with other measures. But even the Brown-Carlson test has its critics. Lindquist (1959) draws attention to the fact that there is no convincing evidence that either it, or the STEP listening comprehension test, measures anything different from a silent reading test. Again, the Brown-Carlson taxonomy might seem to introduce a spurious accuracy into the test; the factors which seem to be measured might not be measured at all. And yet again it can be argued that the validity and reliability of the test could be improved," (ibid, p.142).

A study by Anderson and Baldauf (1963) analysed the STEP Listening Test and concluded that estimates for reliability fall below minimal acceptable levels for tests used for individual evaluation. He also suggested that the heavy loadings on verbal comprehension indicated that achievement on the test may be a matter of verbal comprehension and not listening as a distinct ability, and that the test had no general utility in an overall standardized achievement battery.

Devine (1967) makes the point that listening tests appear to be measuring something else than, or in addition to, listening ability. Duff (1967) also questions the validity of listening tests available. He suggests there is a need to gain knowledge of the exact nature of the relationship between listening comprehension, reading comprehension and intelligence so that "it will become easier to eliminate from listening tests items which do little more than reflect skill at reading comprehension, or intelligence," (ibid, p.61).

Haberland (1959) commented that the listening tests in use did not agree closely with one another. Similarly Kelly (1965) investigated the Brown-Carlson and STEP tests of listening...

comprehension and concluded that the construct validity of each was questionable because the two tests failed to correlate significantly higher between themselves than with reading and intelligence tests.

A different approach to assessing listening ability is being developed at the Oracy Research Unit at Birmingham University. Researchers in England have shown little interest in developing studies along the lines of those conducted in the United States. Wilkinson (1970) offers the comment that test batteries in the past have laid great stress on information content, and on difficult verbal problems which in fact have low occurrence in living speech because of its high redundancy levels. One test has been developed by the Oracy Research Unit along linguistic rather than psychological lines (Atkinson and Wilkinson, 1968). It takes as the basis of its material the spoken language -- for instance, spontaneous recorded conversation make up one test, and includes linguistic concepts. The sub-tests are claimed to be measuring different aspects of listening and include tests of content, detail, transitions, word meanings, listening for meaning, register and style. The test material and questions were recorded on tape and subjects had multiple choice answer sheets before them.

Another test currently being developed at the Oracy Research Unit consists of a battery of sub-tests including content, phonology, register, relationship and prediction. All the tests are in the form of real or simulated conversation. Wilkinson (1970) particularly highlights the sub-tests of prediction and relationship. The former is concerned with assessing a person's ability to supply a speaker's utterance from the evidence of what the other person in the conversation says before and after it. The latter test of relationship attempts to discover how far there was understanding of the way language is used to establish relationship and reciprocity between people.

The framework from which Wilkinson works is discussed in another section of this report. For the present discussion it is worth noting that basing testing on less literary grounds...

appears more likely to have relevance for children and to develop skills that are both situationally specific and of general use. Also Wilkinson's discussion technique in teaching sequences demonstrates an additional bonus in providing opportunities for personal evaluation of prejudices. The acceptance of the affective use of language by Wilkinson can be contrasted with the rather sterile 'intellectualising' of American researchers.

Lundsteen (1971) comments that the paper and pencil type evaluations of listening ability give little or no opportunity for a child to see the genuine consequences of how he listens. "Children need to see direct cause-effect relations that are the products of the quality of listening they do" (ibid. p.81). The real-life situations, Lundsteen feels, are difficult to simulate in paper-pencil tests. Similarly the difficulty of controlling the variables in an interpersonal communication situation are a cause for concern. While Lundsteen accepts important variables exist in the surrounding conditions of an encounter, she questions the suitability of attempting to apply scientific methods to some questions about listening. It should be noted that Wilkinson's work, elaborated elsewhere, goes some way to accommodating real-life situations and the cause and effect relationships involved.

Of particular relevance in relation to assessing children's language are the comments by Stern (1968). She emphasises that the affective variables of impulsivity, motivation and attention are often neglected in the evaluation of children's language.

"At present the state-of-the art in the measurement of listening seems to be best described by these terms: relatively scarce, reasonably reliable, but often confused; lacking in imagination, but becoming more widespread, with a greater range; and attracting increasing interest," (Lundsteen, 1971, p.83).

Test Selection: Summary

Compared to tests in reading there are relatively few tests in listening available. Apart from the N.Z.C.E.R. Progressive and Achievement Test of Listening Comprehension...

previously referred to, the following have been widely used in the United States. New tests being developed in the United Kingdom are also included:

Ammons Full-Range Picture Vocabulary Test. Psychological Specialists. Forms A and B. Preschool to Adult. An individually administered test of receptive language vocabulary.

Brown-Carlson Listening Comprehension Test. Harcourt, Brace & World. Grades 9-13. A test designed for group use to determine ability to understand spoken English. A receptive language test.

Durrell Reading-Listening Series. Harcourt, Brace & World. Primary (grades 1-3.5); intermediate (grades 3.5-6); advanced (grades 7-9). Group tests of listening and reading ability. Permits a comparison of these two language skills.

Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities, Revised. University of Illinois Press. Individually administered test containing twelve subtests of dimensions of mental processes. Scores obtained on subtests can be used for diagnostic purposes, (auditory reception, auditory memory and auditory association subtests).

Northwestern Syntax Screening Test. Northwestern University Press. Ages 3-7. Individually administered test of receptive and expressive syntactic linguistic abilities, (receptive language section).

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. American Guidance Services. Ages 2-8. In individually administered test of receptive language vocabulary.

Van Wageningen Listening Vocabulary Scales. Van Wageningen Psycho-educational Research Laboratories. Grades 2-6. A listening or receptive language test of words, (a portion of the Sequential Tests of Educational Progress).

New tests in England produced under the Schools Council in association with the Oracy Research Unit, University of Birmingham have not been well documented from present resources. They would appear to assess language in an integrative manner. (Wilkinson, 1970).

Using Listening Tests:

A useful summary of the uses to which standardized listening tests are put has been simply stated by Lundsteen (1971, pp.67-68):

1. To assess the range and distribution of listening ability in a particular group so that difficulty of oral material can be adjusted.
2. To assess and predict the listening ability of individual children with respect to language features.
3. To direct placement, instruction and improvement of instruction.
4. To see if the child has learned what he is being taught or needs more of various kinds of instruction.
5. To measure the improvement of listening skill over a period of time.
6. To estimate reading potential.
7. To compare reading and listening skills in order to make the most of the best mode of reception.
8. To give children feedback on the results of their efforts and to give evidence for advising next steps.
9. To test assumptions, proposals and models about listening.