Addressing the increasing importance of listening skills in the business world, this annotated bibliography contains 22 items from the ERIC database from 1979 to 1988. The sources cited in the first section of the bibliography are primarily concerned with teaching techniques and strategies for teachers of secondary and higher education business classes, although a few sources are meant for students, and some references are for teaching materials, skills assessment instruments, and learning modules. The second section presents citations of recent research on such topics as the current state of comprehension training in business courses, barriers to effective communication, and strategies used to improve listening skills in business communication settings. (SR)
Listening Skills in Business

by Michael Shermis

The importance of listening skills to the business world has greatly increased as corporations place more emphasis on good communication skills. This increased emphasis has occurred because of changes in corporate structure and philosophy, the high proportion of work time spent communicating, and the costs of ineffective communication in business. Listening instruction has been added to formal training programs being offered by several corporations, to the curriculum in elementary and secondary education, and to courses at the university level. The ERIC database provides a number of sources which may be used for listening instruction in Business English and Business Communication.

The sources cited in the first section of this bibliography are primarily concerned with techniques and strategies for teachers of secondary and higher education business classes, although there are a few sources meant for students. References are also provided for teaching materials, skills assessment instruments, and learning modules. The second section presents citations of recent research on such topics as the current state of comprehension training in business courses, barriers to effective communication, and strategies used to improve listening skills in business communication settings.

Abstracts for some of the articles cited here have been abbreviated to conform to the FACT Bib format. The ED numbers for sources included in Resources in Education have been included to enable the user to go directly to microfiche collections, to order from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS), or to go to RIE for the full abstract on those sources not available through EDRS. The citations to journals are from the Current Index to Journals in Education, and these articles can be acquired most economically from library collections or through interlibrary loans. Reprint services are also available from University Microfilms International (UMI) and from the Original Article Tearsheet Service (OATS) of the Institute for Scientific Information.

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Teaching Techniques and Strategies


Reviews the relative importance of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and argues that the average adult does not listen efficiently. Presents the AIM (Attention, Inter 3st, Motivation) Technique for improving listening skills.

Brownell, Judi. “A Model for Listening Instruction: Management Applications,” Bulletin of the Aso-
Summarizes several representative listening texts and current approaches to listening. Suggests a definition of listening that provides educators with a comprehensive framework for organizing listening instruction.

Burgenbauch, Susan; Cooney, Joe. Regional Occupational Program (ROP) Office Occupations Entry Standards Assessment. San Mateo County Office of Education, Redwood City, CA, 1979. 15 p. [ED 237 817]

Provides a skills assessment instrument to determine if a student has the basic mathematics, reading, writing, and listening skills that are prerequisites for training for office occupations.


Consists of materials for use in teaching a course in business English for high school students. Addresses the following topics in individual units: the fundamentals of communication, listening skills, oral communications, telephone communications, information resources, reading and vocabulary, the mechanics of writing, grammar and usage, business reports, business letters and memos, and employment procedures.

Communications. Listen, Speak, Write, Use. School of Business, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA, 1986. 204 p. [ED 278 870]

An instructional unit intended to help secondary and post-secondary business students develop their communications skills.

Communications Skills I. Reading Skills, Writing Skills, Using a Newspaper. Ohio State Dept. of Education, Div. of Vocational Education, Columbus, OH, 1984. 79 p. [ED 274 873]

This student workbook contains instructional units dealing with developing reading, writing, and listening skills and using a newspaper. The unit on listening skills deals with learning to listen and evaluating listening skills.


Consists of materials for use in helping students enrolled in postsecondary vocational or technical education programs to master technical communications skills. Listening skills (communication obstacles and oral presentations) are addressed in one of the 13 individual units of the guide. Each unit contains some or all of the following components: a unit objective, specific performance objectives, suggested activities for the instructor, a list of references, information sheets, transparency masters, a assignment sheets, a test evaluation instrument, and test answers.


Points out that listening can be taught. Discusses activities and techniques to use, including commercially-produced or teacher-prepared rating instruments, listening teams, student logs, brief encounters, and films.


Contents that authentic listening materials are appropriate and desirable for instruction in English as a second language (ESL) for business purposes for several reasons: they have high interest, leading to enhanced motivation and increased opportunity for learning; they contain many natural redundancies and repetitions that facilitate comprehension; and they are rich in the target culture. Suggests that despite a lack of commercially available materials for business ESL, other sources can be tapped for authentic listening materials, such as tapes of business-related radio and television programs and commercials, teacher-made tapes of interviews or sales talks with local business people, taped university lectures, guest speakers in class, and field trips.


Indicates that skills in listening to and motivating people need to be emphasized more in undergraduate business communication courses.
Presents three theories of motivation—Maslow's hierarchy of needs, McClelland's achievement motive, and Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory—that can introduce students to the systems perspective, an approach suggesting that workers' motivations can only be understood in relationship to their work setting. Suggests that (1) to develop skill in listening, students must develop active feedback techniques (encouraging, restating, reflecting, and summarizing); and (2) by responding to hypothetical examples, students can gain skill in listening and thus in changing people's need for sympathy, fame, power, and prestige into positive motivational factors—desire for empathy, recognition, cooperation, and respect.


Defines interpersonal communication and suggests classroom activities for students in business communication courses to help them (1) assess their own interpersonal skills; (2) observe and interpret nonverbal cues; (3) listen and speak effectively; and (4) provide and interpret feedback.


Advocates the use of a group sales project, an activity which integrates the oral and written communication skills important in the work place, to culminate the business communication course.


Contains two learning modules focusing on basic communication and on speaking and listening skills. Examines the growing emphasis on communication skills in business, emphasizing changes in corporate structure and philosophy, the amount of work time spent communicating, and the costs of ineffective communication in business. Discusses the role of the sender, receiver, message, and environment in the communication process; corporate concerns about this process; and the influences of personal life orientations, perceptions, and expectations, and of position, stereotyping, and individual labels on effective communication.

Examines one- and two-way communication, as well as the speaker's responsibility for creating a climate conducive to effective communication, for being direct, for using specific but simple words and phrases, for requesting feedback, and for listening carefully. It also considers ways of communicating more effectively by adjusting one's attitude, using open-ended questions, and listening; and ways to improve listening habits.


Describes an assignment for students in content-based classes for English as a second language in which they read, listen, discuss, and write about a current topic in the business world.

**Recent Research**


Presents a study in which entry-level employees who recently graduated with business degrees were surveyed to discover what forms of communication they used most, which they felt were most important, and what types of communication problems interfered with their work.


Analyzes the current state of comprehension training in business courses. Presents the theoretical perspectives by which the basis of noncomprehension can be understood, such as message reception constrained by ambiguity, by egocentrism, and by relational considerations. Determines that the best theoretical underpinning to comprehension of problematic messages is the information-processing approach to human interaction, which makes use of schemata.

Conducts a survey to assess the importance of listening and the deficiency in that skill and to identify existing listening training programs for future study. Finds that (1) sending messages was perceived as more important than receiving them (however, listening, a receptive skill, was considered more important than reading and speaking); (2) receptive skills were more important in the oral medium, while expressive skills were more important in the written mode; and (3) overall, the oral medium was more important. Suggests that improving listening skills deserves special attention from both trainers and communication educators.


Presents a study conducted to determine which barriers to effective communication are perceived as most serious by business communication students and to test for differences in the seriousness of the communication barriers based on various student characteristics.


Compares strategies used to improve listening skills in business communication settings. Finds that (1) both class discussion and high incentive increased scores on a listening test; (2) students exposed to a lecture plus a videotape asked more questions than the other students; and (3) the quality of the student summaries was higher and notes were taken more frequently by students exposed to a lecture than by students not exposed to it.


Presents an experiment on student scores on listening tests which increased as a result of a 45-minute class discussion on listening skills and a high-incentive condition: telling students that if they did not score well on the test, a written report on listening would be required.


States that listening skills are the most used and least taught of the communication skills. Discusses (1) the addition of listening and speaking to much of the curriculum after the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed; (2) how the number of universities offering separate listening courses has increased in response to demands from the business and professional community; and (3) how several corporations, realizing the importance of effective listening, have provided formal training programs in listening. Cites purposes of effective listening and factors critical to one's listening ability.