

## Listen To This!

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### *Mind the Gap!*

The average person **talks** at a rate of about **125-175** words per minute, while we can **listen** at the rate of up to **450** words per minute.<sup>1</sup> Because of the difference between speaking speed and thought speed, we have a **75%** time differential with which to encourage our minds to wander.

### *What's in a word?*

**Spoken words** account for only about **30-35%** of transmitted meaning. The rest is transmitted through **nonverbal communication** that can only be detected through **visual and auditory listening**.<sup>2</sup>

### *How much do we remember?*

- On average, viewers who had just watched the evening news could only **recall 17.2%** of the content. Even when given cues, recall never exceeded **25%**.<sup>3</sup>
- When presented with a series of unrelated sentences and asked to **remember** the last word of each sentence, people can remember **on average 2.8 items**.<sup>4</sup>
- In a dynamic, conversational listening task people were asked to **remember** a series of related questions and **respond** to them. The average person could remember and respond to **only 2.9 items**.<sup>5</sup>

## *Listening and Education*

- Even though most of us spend the majority of our day **listening**, it is the communication activity that receives the **least instruction**.<sup>6</sup>
- Listening is **not required** at most universities.<sup>7</sup>
- Students who take a basic communication course spend less than **7%** of class and text time on **listening**.<sup>8</sup>
- There is often a surprisingly **low correlation** between one's scores on **reading tests** and the same person's scores on **listening tests**.
- Immediately after listening to a ten-minute oral presentation, the average listener has heard, understood, and retained **50%** of what was said. Within 48 hours, **half of that was lost**. In other words, we often comprehend **only one fourth of what we hear**. Yet students are expected to acquire **85%** of their knowledge by **listening**.<sup>9</sup>
- Many of us spend **70-80%** of our waking hours in some form of **communication**. Of that time, we spend about 9% writing, 16% reading, 30% speaking, and **45% listening**.<sup>10</sup>
- "If we define the good listener as one giving **full attention** to the speaker, the **first-grade children** are the best of all." A researcher found that by high school only **28%** of the average class were listening.<sup>11</sup>
- Prior to 3200BC, when writing was first used by cultures such as Sumerians and Egyptians, **listening** to people speak and repeating the message was the **only way to communicate knowledge**.

<sup>1</sup> Carver, Johnson & Friedman, 1970.

<sup>2</sup> Birdwhistell, 1970.

<sup>3</sup> Stauffer, Frost & Rybold, 1983.

<sup>4</sup> Janusik, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Coakley & Wolvin, 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Wacker & Hawkins, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Janusik, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> University of Missouri, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ralph G. Nichols, *Are We Listening*, 1970.