Listen To This!

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.\(^1\) 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.\(^2\)

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%.\(^3\)

- 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.\(^4\)

- 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.\(^5\)
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.  
  
- Listening is not required at most universities.

- Students who take a basic communication course spend less than 7% of class and text time on listening.

- 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.

- 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.

- “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.

- 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.

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1 Carver, Johnson & Friedman, 1970.
3 Stauffen, Frost & Rybold, 1983.
5 Ibid.
6 Coakley & Wolvin, 1990.
8 Janusik, 2002.
9 Ibid.
10 University of Missouri, 2009.
11 Ibid.
12 Ralph G. Nichols, Are We Listening, 1970.