

This paper was given in Dec 1996
at a conference on Listening
at the American Univ in
Cairo.

To: ~~██████████~~
Center for Adult and Continuing Education
The American University of Cairo

Egypt
Cairo

FAX: ~~██████████~~

Dear ~~██████████~~,

I seem to remember that your copy date is
end of January for contributions to the Dec 1996
Conference papers.

What follows is an account of my
plenary on HARMONIOUS LISTENING.

Yours sincerely,


Mario Rinvoluceri

HARMONIOUS LISTENING

by Mario Rinvoluceri, Pilgrims, UK.

The intellectual framework I am proposing this afternoon
comes from the thinking of Howard Gardner, as put forward
in his book Frames of Mind (1). Gardner started his work
in educational psychology as a disciple of Piaget, for
whom there were two major types of intelligence: the
logical-mathematical and the linguistic.
Gradually it became clear to Gardner that the Piagetian
view of human intelligence was over-restrictive and
excluded some of its most striking manifestations.
In Frames of Mind Gardner proposes seven main
intelligences, the Piagetian two and five more.

Here they are:

The Linguistic Intelligence.

It is to be assumed that many of us in this hall are
strong in this intelligence. It is this intelligence that
readily notices that each of the utterances below
has two readings:

" Can I have a taxi for five, please ? "

" BABIES USED TO SNEAK DRUGS INTO PRISON "

(The first sentence is either to do with the number of people or with the time. In the second the "s" in the word "used" can be voiced or voiceless!)

The linguistic intelligence focuses on form and, among other things, loves ambiguity.

The Logical Mathematical Intelligence

If I asked you to find out how many combinations of three fingers you could find on one hand this would invite you to think logically-mathematically. You might ask me a number of checking questions like:

" Are you thinking of a five finger hand (with the thumb included as a finger) ? "

" In your definition of the problem, is ' forefinger, middle finger, ring finger ' the same combination as ' middle finger, ring finger, forefinger ' ?

If I asked you to figure this problem out some of you would use your fingers in searching for the solution, some would use pen and paper and some would apply a simple formula. Many people would be using their logical-mathematical intelligence. Some would certainly give up!

The Musical Intelligence

When my daughter was 10 I asked her to put new words to a tune she kept humming at the time. Lola sang her new song (a feminised version of " A Miller had Three Sons ") with verve and assurance. The tune was well in control of the new words. My daughter was using her musical intelligence.

The Spatial Intelligence

Imagine you are sitting at the desk where you prepare your classes; focus on an object you can see from that position. Now imagine how this same object would look seen from a different angle, say a view from behind it and below it. Mentally try and draw the object from this new angle.

The activity above invites you to go into your spatial intelligence, the one that car mechanics, architects and engineers work a lot in.

The Kinaesthetic Intelligence

Think of those superb Arab horsemen who "speak" to their horses through their posture and their knees, think of a person doing a faultless "katta" in Karate and you are right in the kinaesthetic or "movement" intelligence. Imagine a Western person using chopsticks for the

first time and you see how their muscular intelligence is trying to overcome the initial clumsiness.

The Intra-personal Intelligence

If you are able to go for a long, solitary walk and have your head humming with absorbing thoughts then it would seem you have a strong intra-personal intelligence. This intelligence covers the whole area of internal monologue and dialogue.

The Inter-personal Intelligence

When doctors are accused of not dealing with patients as human beings, they seem to show a lack of inter-personal intelligence. Perhaps the acme of this intelligence is the mother's intuitive, harmonious understanding of her baby and its needs.

When students revise for tests some of them prefer to work in huddles and test each other (inter-personal) while others like to revise alone (intra-personal). I have a friend who could only manage to get her head round history before an exam when doing figures of eight on a bike with the history book on the handlebars! Was she using kinaesthetic intelligence or did she simply have to somehow satisfy her need for movement to be able to focus mentally ?

(Recently Howard Gardner has suggested that there may be two more intelligences, a spiritual one and one in which man is in close harmony with Nature. He suggests that this was a way in which native Americans were and are highly intelligent.)

Now that we have overviewed the theory of multiple intelligences it is time to see what bearing all this has on L2 listening.

The main contention of this talk is that the problem of listening in either L1 or L2 is not to be seen purely in terms of the listener's linguistic or logical-mathematical intelligences. It is vital to also focus on the role of the interpersonal intelligence in listening.

Please put down your pens and books. I would like you to stand up and turn to some one near you. First have a short conversation about whatever you like and then make three intelligent guesses about the other person. Tell them what your guesses are and find out if you were correct.

[At this point the voice from loud-speakers goes quiet and the whole hall buzzes with movement, gesture and speech. People are out of "lecture passivity " and into

their own self-expression]

During this conversation you were listening to your partner and trying to use the conversation to get to know the person better. You were using both your linguistic and your interpersonal intelligences.

Maybe the idea of interpersonal intelligence will become clearer if I give you an example of interpersonal stupidity. Relax and listen to this little story:

" This boy was walking down street with a kangaroo.
A policeman came up to them and said to the boy:

' you should take him to the zoo '
' That's a good idea! I will!.'

Next day the policeman saw the boy and the roo going along the street again.

He stopped them and asked:

' Didn't I tell you to take him to the zoo? '

' Well yes,' the boy said, ' I took him to the zoo yesterday- today we've going to see a film ! ' "

This is a marvellous example of pragmatic failure, with the boy happily failing to notice the policeman's speech intention. The boy does nothing to try and see the policeman's point of view, to role-reverse mentally into the policeman's shoes. The joke depends on his interpersonal stupidity.

Central to the problem of L2 listening is whether the person concerned is able to listen in an interpersonally intelligent way. Let me ask you a personal question:
in psychological rather than purely linguistic terms,
how good a listener are you?

To try and answer this question please take down the following dictation, and as you write, mentally answer the questions:

- At age 6, how quiet or noisy was I ?
- at age 15-16 did I spend more time listening or speaking?
- today, in my family, am I good listener or are there others better than me?
- How well do I listen in class to students?
- on the phone, do I talk more or listen more?
- which do I think is more powerful, speaking or listening?

- when I am listening well, what is it, exactly, that I am doing?

[at the end of the dictation people in the audience turn to each other and emerge from their intra-personal thought, to come into their interpersonal intelligences and discuss their answers to the questions above with colleagues sitting near them.]

EMPATHETIC LISTENING

My main claim this afternoon is that you can help your students' 2nd language listening considerably by inviting them to use not just their language intelligence, but also their inter-personal intelligence. If they manage to listen to the 2nd language SPEAKER as well as to her text, then they will understand technically more and the depth of their understanding will be greater. However, empathetic listening is not automatic in most people. It is something your students will need to practise and there are many exercises drawn for counselling listening that could help them.

I want to ask you to do one of these now. Please work with one other person and prepare to listen to them talk about a happy holiday they have had. They will speak for about four minutes.

Your task is to clear your mind and lay aside any presuppositions you have- so if they talk about a holiday on the Red Sea, avoid having your mind flood with your own images of this coast. Listen carefully for clues as to what images the speaker has of this place. Don't superimpose your own.

Prepare to enter the world of the other person and to wonder at what you may find there. Avoid the vulgarity of being happy if you find the other person seems to see and feel things your way.

Listen to the other person without internal comment. Give all your attention to apprehending the text FROM THE SPEAKER'S point of view.

[The hall is filled with talk of past holidays- some people seem to be listening with wrapt attention. Others are clearly still trying to figure out how much my instructions make sense as well as listening to their partner..... Empathetic listening, if you apply it to discourse at home, has far-reaching consequences in terms of civilising some of the interaction patterns within the family.]

If you feel that you want to invite your students into the world of empathetic listening , you will find some very useful exercises in Paul Davis' THE CONFIDENCE BOOK, Pilgrims-Longman, 1990.

If, after this conference, you try the whole-person approach to listening, we at Pilgrims would be very interested to find out how your students reacted since ideas that originate in the Western therapy tradition may well work very differently in Arab lands from the way they do in London, Vienna or Los Angeles.

Please be in touch: Pilgrims/ Orchard Street/Canterbury, UK, by snail mail, or:

[http: // www. pilgrims.co.uk/](http://www.pilgrims.co.uk/)