

than it is with listening. Actually, with an easy level of difficulty in material being read and listened to, listening was slightly better than reading. With difficult material, reading was slightly better than listening, probably because we have adjusted ourselves to thinking that important things are in print and that orally it is mostly junk.

QUESTION: What is being done to develop this type of learning by listening in the lower grades?

DR. NICHOLS: The Scott-Foresman Publishers came out 3 years ago with a new approach for grade school children. They call it their language-art series, and it is titled, "Learn to Listen, Speak, and Write." Immediately 150,000 copies of those books were sold and it has been a very good seller for them ever since. I think it is accurate to say that in almost all city school systems, at least, primary teachers know what you are talking about when you talk about learning to listen, and they are doing something with it. More and more materials are becoming available. Standardized tests are now in the market at all grade levels from one clear through adulthood, and training films are available now, many of them, for learning to listen better.

Our hope is that about one-fourth of the language training should be devoted to improved listening. I think it soon will be at grade school levels. This is the place to start, at the first-grade level, because we do not have the bad faults there. The best listeners in America, oddly enough, are the first grade children. I have data that I think is fairly good that indicates that the older we get the worse we get as listeners. It is because we practice our faults, instead of our skills. Early in life we develop a bad habit somewhere, and then we entrench it. The best listeners are the first grade kids. Ninety percent of them, if you make a test of it, know what their teachers are talking about at any given instant. Forty-seven percent of junior high kids know what their teachers are talking about at any given instant. Twenty-eight percent of high school students know what their teachers are talking about.

Before you decide to fire all high school teachers, though, because they are 72 percent inefficient, it seems to me listening training would be the better answer.