



Active Empathetic Listening (AEL) through Experiential Learning: The Impact of AEL in Higher Education



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Introduction

- Listening is a combination of cognitive (recall and memory), relational (the link between the person and the information), or behavioral processes.
- Listening skills are critical to building strong interpersonal relationships, enhance team performance, attain strong leadership, increase organizational effectiveness and productivity, and enhance innovation and motivation at workplace.
- Active-Empathetic Listening (AEL) is an “active and emotional” process that involves both parties – the speaker and the listener in the course of their interactions.
- Benefits of AEL have been demonstrated across multiple domains (i.e., psychological and emotional improvement, enhanced medical care and satisfaction, and successful business transactions).
- Listeners demonstrate their skill of AEL through three different stages of the listening process: sensing, processing, and responding.
- It becomes essential for university students to develop higher AEL skills to succeed not only in their future workplace, but also in their interpersonal relationships.

Purpose

- **Purpose:** examine the impact of infusing an active listening module, assignment, and reflection into a university, general education, required communication course on student Active-Empathetic Listening (AEL) ability

Research Question

- Can active listening curriculum increase students' Active Empathetic Listening (AEL) skills?

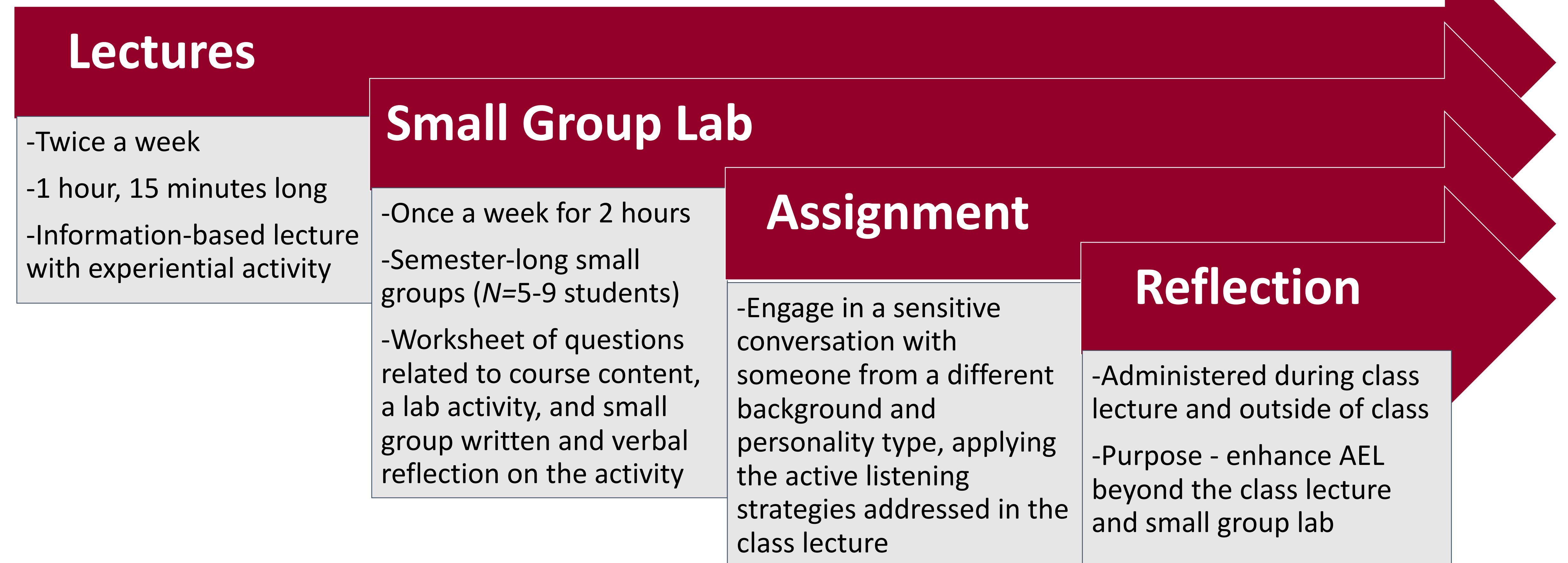


Figure 1. Curriculum Summary

Method

- **Sample:** five hundred and sixty-one (N=561) WSU undergraduate students from Pullman and Vancouver campuses
- **Instrument:** Active-Empathetic Listening Scale (AELS, Bodie 2011)
- **Demographics:** One hundred and thirty-five (n=135) students (24.06% response rate) completed all three time points of assessment:
 - 77.8% = female, 88.9% = Pullman
 - Student race: 14.8% = Asian, 3% = Black or African American, 3.7% = Hispanic or Latino, 72.6% = White, 2% = others, 4.4 % = no response
 - Student major: 43.7 % = Arts & Sciences, 31.1% = Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Science=21% from Business, 12% = Communication, 0.7% = no response.

Questions?

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Results

- Repeated measures of ANOVAs with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction were conducted:
 - Mean scores for the sensing subscale were statistically significantly different ($F(1.89, 253.65) = 5.09, p < 0.05$)
 - Mean scores for the processing and responding subscales significantly differed across time points ($F(1.74, 233.27) = 10.24, p < .05$; $F(1.85, 247.40) = 5.54, p < .05$)

Implications

- Experiential active listening curriculum increased student levels in all three subdomains: sensing, processing and responding.
- Student assignments and reflections gave insights as to how the curriculum can be helpful to students' AEL development
- **Future research:** further exploration into how each component of the active listening curriculum (lecture, lab, assignment, and reflection) contributes to student outcomes