

Teaching Listening

From Comprehension to Acquisition

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Common listening problems

- Speakers speak too fast.
- Listeners listen word for word.
- Listeners lack cultural or background knowledge.
- Speakers use too many unfamiliar words.
- Listening takes too much effort and concentration.



Common listening problems

- Recordings are not always clear and are difficult to follow.
- Speakers accents are unfamiliar.
- Tasks are too difficult.
- Listeners cannot recognize words they know when they hear them.



Characteristics of spoken language that can affect listening

- Usually instantaneous. No chance to listen again.
- Speech rates vary considerably.
 - Radio monologs: 160 wpm
 - Conversation: 210 wpm
- Accents vary from native to non-native.



Characteristics of spoken language that can affect listening

- Usually unplanned.
- Often reflects processes of construction.
 - e.g., hesitations, fillers, repeats
- Has a linear structure.
 - hierarchical structure for written discourse (Example)



8 CONVERSATION *Wedding day*

A Listen and practice.

Jill: Your wedding pictures are really beautiful, Emiko.

Emiko: Thank you. Those pictures were taken right after the ceremony.

Jill: Where was the ceremony?

Emiko: At a shrine. When people get married in Japan, they sometimes have the ceremony at a shrine.

Jill: That's interesting. Were there a lot of people there?

Emiko: Well, usually only family members and close friends go to the ceremony. But afterward we had a reception with family and friends.

Jill: So, what are receptions like in Japan?

Emiko: There's a big dinner, and after the food is served, the guests give speeches or sing songs.

Jill: It sounds like fun.

Emiko: It really is. And then, before the guests leave, the bride and groom give them presents.

Jill: The guests get presents?

Emiko: Yes, and the guests give money to the bride and groom.

B Listen to the rest of the conversation. What did the bride and groom give each guest?



Characteristics of spoken language that can affect listening

- Usually unplanned.
- Often reflects processes of construction.
 - e.g., hesitations, fillers, repeats
- Has a linear structure.
 - hierarchical structure for written discourse
- Often context dependent and personal.



Characteristics of spoken language that can affect listening

- May contain many colloquialisms.
- Characterized by reduced forms and blendings.
- Stress-timed rather than syllable-timed rhythm.



Characteristics of spoken language that can affect listening

- Large cars waste gas.
- The weather in Sydney is very humid in the summer.



Difficulty of listening factors

- Listener's linguistic knowledge
- Knowledge of the co-text (what went before it)
- Background knowledge
- Learner's motivation and interest in the topic




Difficulty of listening factors


- Cognitive load of the text
 - topic, text length, text type
- Lexical density
 - ratio of new words to known words
- Task (Example)



7 LISTENING *In the evening*

A  Listen to what Ted, Wanda, and Kim like to do in the evening. Complete the chart.

	Favorite activity	How often?
Ted
Wanda
Kim

B  Listen again. Who is most similar to you – Ted, Wanda, or Kim?



The role of listening

- Goals for teaching listening
 - listening for comprehension
 - listening for language learning



Listening for comprehension

- Purpose for listening:
 - to understand what was said, not how it was said
- Goals for listening:
 - Recognizing and acting on the speaker's intentions
 - Identifying information from a spoken text (Example)



9 LISTENING *Let's order.*

A Listen to Rex and Hannah order in a restaurant. What did each of them order? Fill in their check.

Phil's Diner		No. 399825
<i>Thank You!</i>		Total _____

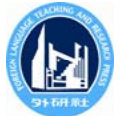


B Listen to the rest of the conversation. Circle the two items that the waiter forgot to bring.




Listening for comprehension


- Listening skills:
 - Listening for details
 - Listening for gist
 - Listening and making inferences
 - Listening selectively
 - Making predictions before listening (Example)



12 LISTENING *A night at the movies*

A  Listen to two critics talk about a new movie. What do they like or not like about it? Rate each item in the chart from 1 to 3.

	Acting	Story	Photography	Special effects
Pauline
Colin

B  Look at the chart in part A. Guess how many stars each critic gave the movie. Then listen to the critics give their ratings.

★ poor ★★ fair ★★★ very good ★★★★★ excellent

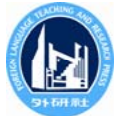
Ratings

- 1 = didn't like it
- 2 = OK
- 3 = liked it very much



Processes in listening for comprehension:

bottom-up
and
top-down



Bottom-up processing

- How the literal meaning of messages is identified
- Data driven
- Sounds – words – sentences – meaning
- Meaning is extracted from the message
- Goal is to identify topics and propositions



Bottom-up processing

The woman/who sat next to me on the plane/on
my flight from Hong Kong/told me/her whole life
story.



Assumptions underlying bottom-up processing

- Sentences are composed of “chunks” or “constituents.”
- Sentences are the packaging surrounding the propositions.
- Chunks are the building blocks of meaning.



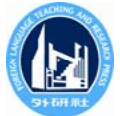
Assumptions underlying bottom-up processing

- Recognizing the correct chunks to arrive at appropriate meaning.
- Lexical and grammatical knowledge, and phonological clues guide listeners to appropriate constituents.
- Once meaning has been identified, the “packaging” is discarded.



Implications for teaching

- Recognizing key words
- Accurate recognition
- Knowledge of vocabulary and syntax



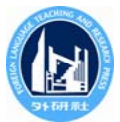
Top-down processing

- How real world knowledge is used in listening comprehension
- Concept or meaning-driven
- From meaning to language
- Makes use of contextual knowledge, schemas and scripts




Contextual knowledge

- Setting
- Participants
- Goals of the participants
- Roles of the participants
- Procedures typically employed
- Expected outcomes (Example)



4 LISTENING *Fair exchange?*

A  Listen to three customers return an item they purchased. What's the problem? Take notes. Then complete the chart.

Item	Problem	Will the store exchange it?	
		Yes	No
1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

B Were the solutions fair? Why or why not?



The role of schema

- Schema:
 - organized and interrelated ideas, concepts, and prior knowledge structures
 - abstract representations of objects, events, and relationships in the real world



The role of schema

- Content schema:
 - general background knowledge related to a topic
 - e.g., earthquake, divorce, breakfast
- Formal schema:
 - knowledge of a particular genre or text type
 - e.g., news report, fairy tale, interview



Implications for teaching

- Word by word listening not needed
- Prediction and guessing key processes
- Message is sampled to confirm expectation
- The basis for normal comprehension
- Employs schemas, scripts, and discourse plans



Recommended lesson structure when teaching listening for comprehension

Pre-listening:

- Set context: Create motivation



Recommended lesson structure when teaching listening for comprehension

While-Listening:

- Extensive listening (followed by questions on context, attitude)
- Pre-set task / Pre-set questions
- Intensive listening
- Checking answers



Recommended lesson structure when teaching listening for comprehension

Post-listening:

- Examining functional language
- Inferring vocabulary meaning



Listening for language learning

- Based on the role of noticing in language learning



Assumptions about the noticing hypothesis

- Key concepts: input, intake, restructuring
- New language is acquired if first noticed in the input.
- A bottom-up approach to listening
- Noticing is facilitated by input at the appropriate level of difficulty.



Assumptions about the noticing hypothesis

- Noticed items become acquired items through practice.
- Acquiring involves restructuring.
- Without restructuring the result is fossilization.
- Activities that “stretch” learners’ language facilitate restructuring or further learning.



Noticing activities

- Returning to the listening texts that served as the basis for comprehension activities
- Using listening texts for language awareness



Noticing activities

Examples of noticing activities:

- Learners identify differences between what they hear and a printed version of the text.
- Complete a cloze version of the text
- Complete sentence stems taken from the text



Noticing activities

Examples of noticing activities:

- Check off from a list expressions that occurred in the text
- Sorting a text from a jumbled version
- Pair dictation



Restructuring Activities

- Oral or written tasks that involve productive use of selected items from the listening text



Restructuring Activities

Examples of restructuring activities:

- Conversational texts - pair reading of the tape scripts
- Written sentence completion tasks - use expressions and other linguistic items from the texts



Restructuring Activities

Examples of restructuring activities:

- Dialog practice
 - based on dialogs that incorporate items from the text
- Role plays
 - Ss use key language from the texts



Two-part strategy

Recommended when there is a connection between listening and speaking skills.

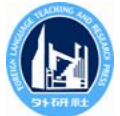
Phase 1: listening as comprehension

Phase 2: listening as language learning



Principles for teaching listening

- Teach rather than test
- Prepare Ss for listening and for the listening text
- Good listeners use appropriate listening strategies
- Teach listening for pleasure and listening to learn
- Listening activities should be purposeful



Thank you



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