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## Good at listening operationally or good at tests?

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UK CAA PTO 0169



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# Good at listening operationally or good at tests?

# The Comprehension Approach

## The 'standard' listening lesson

### **Pre-listening**

*Establish context*

- Activate schemata
- Create motivation for listening
- Pre-teach critical vocabulary

### **Listening 1**

*Extensive listening*

- *Pre-set* general questions on context & audience
- *Set* general questions on attitudes & relationships
- Review & discuss responses in general terms

### **Listening 2**

*Intensive listening*

- Pre-set detailed questions (possibly listening based tasks)
- Check answers to questions
- Ask further comprehension questions

### **Post listening**

*Optional*

- Possibly set productive skills-based extension work (writing/speaking)
- Give exposition of phonological, grammatical and/or lexical items
- Set language systems development activities

### **Listening 3**

*Final play*

- Possibly using transcript
- Possibly read aloud

# Real-world listening

## Types of listening as determined by listener's goals

### Level of attentional focus

### Assumption of listener & listening objective

#### Shallow

Assumption: discourse may contain some information of interest

- *Skimming to establish general topic area & outline of main ideas*

#### Medium

Assumption: elements of discourse will contain information of interest

- *Focussed scanning to locate specific area/areas of information*

#### Deep

Assumption: majority of discourse contains information of interest

- *Close listening to establish:*
  - *speaker's main points and connections between the them*
  - *relative importance of the points*

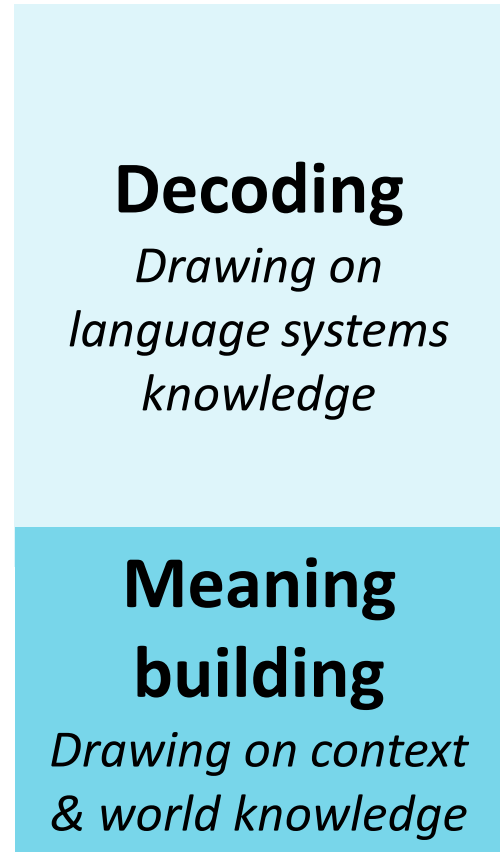
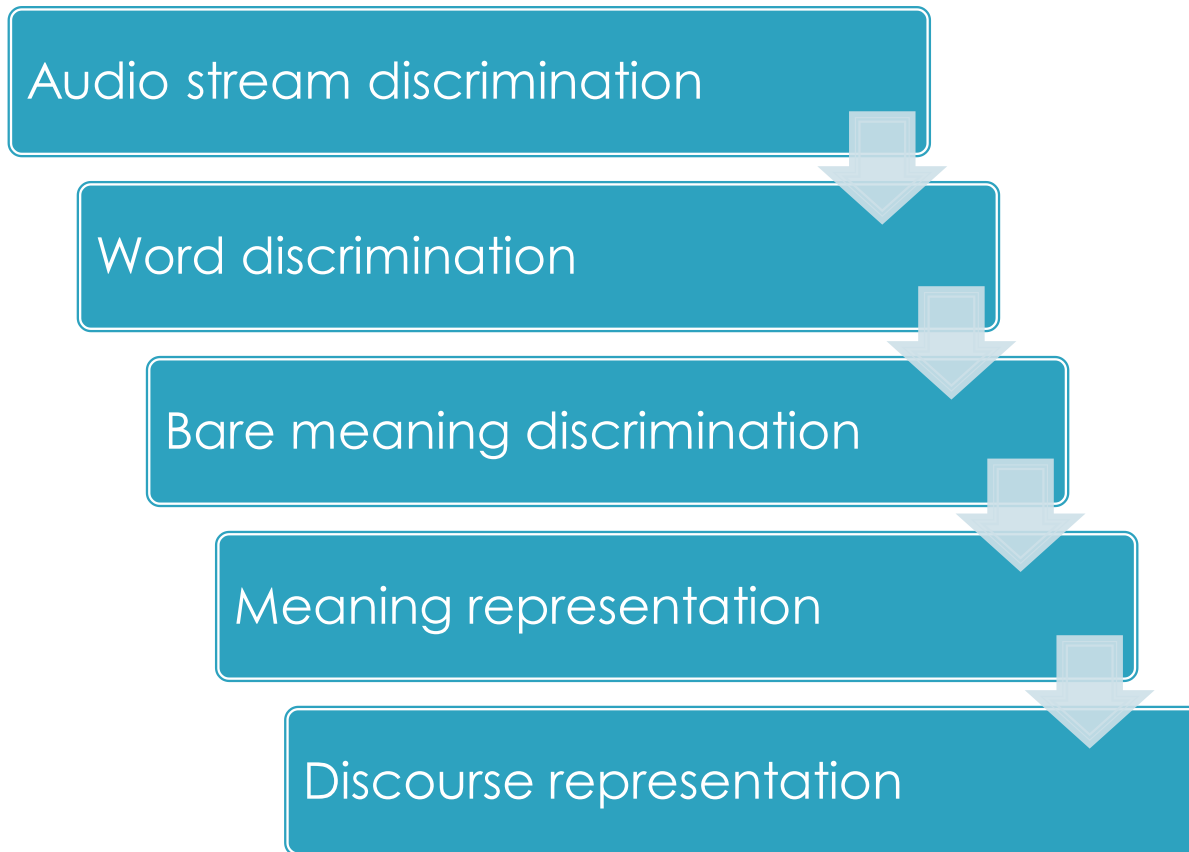
#### Very deep

Assumption: every word of discourse may be relevant and/or significant

- *Listening to check critical facts: 'Is this consistent/congruent?'*
- *Listening to vital instructions: 'Is everything understood clearly?'*

Adapted from: Field, J (2010): *Listening in the Language Classroom* Cambridge, CUP (Table 4.3)

# The stages of the decoding process



Adapted from: Weir, C, Vidakovic, I and Galaczi, E (2013).: *Studies in Language Testing 37: Measured Constructs* Cambridge, CUP

# The stages of the decoding process

/əblækæt/

Match to knowledge of sounds



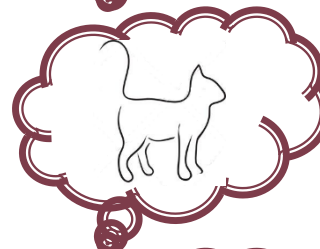
Match to knowledge of words



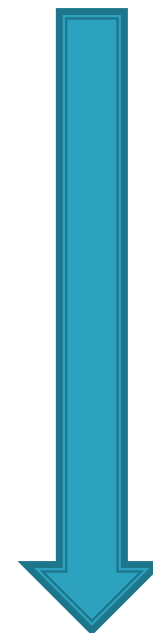
Retrieve word meaning



Parsing – creation of propositional meaning  
*(simple hypothesis formation)*



Acoustic  
signal



Bare  
meaning

Adapted from: Field, J (2010): *Listening in the Language Classroom* Cambridge, CUP

# Micro-listening activities (1)

## What are micro-listening activities?

- *Intensive listening tasks*
- *Componential approach to listening skills development*
- *Focus on process not product*
- *Diagnostic approach*
- *Identify learner problems at specific stages of the listening process*

## Features of micro-listening activities

- *Short listening pieces at the level of sentence*
- *Multiple replays*
- *Minimal teacher intervention*
- *Learner collaboration*
- *Learners respond in manner that shows their level of understanding*

## Goals of micro-listening activities

- *Word recognition*
- *Pattern recognition*
- *Use of knowledge of TL structure to assist in understanding*
- *Development of skills of expectation and inferencing*
- *Consideration of effective listening strategies*



## Micro-listening activities (2)

### Post-listening activities

- *Discussions of where the problems lie*
- *Discussion of how the problems may be overcome*
- *Discussions of nature of L2 listening*

### Learning outcomes of micro-listening activities

- *Effective diagnostic tools*
- *Increased proficiency in the decoding processes*
- *Development of automaticity in the learning process*
- *Increased confidence in the propositional meanings they form*
- *Raised awareness of listening strategies*

### Why the focus on decoding rather than meaning building activities?

- *Decoding: practising a single aspect of the listening process so intensively as to develop the automaticity that characterises skilled listening.*
- *Meaning building: encouraging the learner to transfer processes already well-established in L1 but not employed in the unfamiliar circumstances of listening in a foreign language.*

*Proven effective methods of developing listening in relevant & structured ways*

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With thanks

Further details

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