Good at listening operationally or good at tests?

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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of attentional focus</th>
<th>Assumption of listener &amp; listening objective</th>
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| 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:*  
    o *speaker’s main points and connections between the them*  
    o *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

Audio stream discrimination
Word discrimination
Bare meaning discrimination
Meaning representation
Discourse representation

Decoding
Drawing on language systems knowledge

Meaning building
Drawing on context & world knowledge

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)

/kæt/

Acoustic signal

cat

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
Good at listening operationally or good at tests?

With thanks

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