Good at listening operationally or good at tests?

Simon Cook
LTAS, UK, simon.cook@ealts.com

Howard Alexander
LTAS, UK, howard.alexander@ealts.com

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Presenters: Simon Cook, Howard Alexander, LTAS Ltd, CAA UK PTO 0169
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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shallow</strong></td>
<td>Assumption: discourse may contain some information of interest</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <em>Skimming to establish general topic area &amp; outline of main ideas</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Medium</strong></td>
<td>Assumption: elements of discourse will contain information of interest</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• <em>Focussed scanning to locate specific area/areas of information</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deep</strong></td>
<td>Assumption: majority of discourse contains information of interest</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• <em>Close listening to establish:</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• speaker’s main points and connections between the them</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• relative importance of the points</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Very deep</strong></td>
<td>Assumption: every word of discourse may be relevant and/or significant</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• <em>Listening to check critical facts: ‘Is this consistent/congruent?’</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• <em>Listening to vital instructions: ‘Is everything understood clearly?’</em></td>
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</tbody>
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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/

cat

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
Good at listening operationally or good at tests?

With thanks

Further details

simon.cook@ealts.com

howard.alexander@ealts.com

www.ealts.com