



# Assessing Listening

## -8<sup>th</sup> Lecture-

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# The importance of listening

**Listening plays an integral part of communicating and is essential in personal and professional life. Effective listening helps to:**

- **build strong relationships,**
- **improves problem-solving capabilities,**
- **increases productivity,**
- **boosts confidence, and**
- **avoids miscommunications.**

# Types of listening

1. **Intensive L.:** perception of language components (phonemes, words, intonation, discourse markers, etc.).
2. **Responsive L.:** listening to short stretch of language to make an equally short response.
3. **Selective L.:** processing stretches of discourse such as short monologues for several minutes.
4. **Extensive:** listening to develop & top-down, global understanding of spoken language (making inferences of a gist or main idea).

# Micro & Macroskills of listening

- **Microskills:** attending to the smaller bits and chunks of language, in more of a bottom-up process.
- **Macroskills:** focusing on the larger elements involved in a top-down approach to a listening task.

# Microskills objectives

1. Discriminate among the **distinctive sounds** of English
2. Retain **chunks** of language of different lengths in short-term memory
3. Recognize English **stress** patterns, words in stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure, intonation contours, and their roles in signaling information
4. Recognize **reduced forms** of words
5. Distinguish **word boundaries**, recognize a core of words, and interpret word order patterns and their significance
6. Process speech at **different rates** of delivery
7. Process speech containing **pauses**, errors, corrections, and other performance variables
8. Recognize grammatical **word classes** (e.g., nouns, verbs), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization), patterns, rules, and elliptical forms
9. Detect sentence **constituents** and distinguish between major and minor constituents
10. Recognize that a particular **meaning** may be expressed in different grammatical forms
11. Recognize **cohesive devices** in spoken discourse

# Macroskills objectives

1. Recognize the **communicative functions** of utterances according to situations, participants, and goals.
2. Infer **situations, participants, and goals** using real-world knowledge.
3. From events and ideas described, **predict outcomes**, infer links and connections between events, deduce causes and effects, and detect such relations as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification.
4. Distinguish between **literal and implied meanings**
5. Use facial, kinesic, and **body language**, and other nonverbal clues, to decipher meanings.
6. Develop and use a battery of **listening strategies**, such as detecting key words, guessing the meaning of words from context, appealing for help, and signaling comprehension or lack thereof.

# What makes listening difficult?

1. **Clustering:** phrases, clauses, constituents.
2. **Redundancy:** repetitions, rephrasing, elaborations, etc.
3. **Reduced forms**
4. **Performance variables:** hesitations, false starts, pauses, etc.
5. **Colloquial language:** idioms, slang, reduced forms, etc.
6. **Discourse markers:** “my first point,” “secondly,” “nevertheless,” etc.
7. **Rate of delivery:** speed of delivery
8. **Stress, rhythm, and intonation:** prosodic elements
9. **Interaction:** interactive flow of language from listening to speaking to listening, and so on

# Designing Assessment Tasks

# First: Intensive Listening

## 1) Recognizing Phonological and Morphological Elements

*Phonemic pair, consonants*

**Test-takers hear:** He's from California.

**Test-takers read:** A. He's from California.  
B. She's from California.

*Phonemic pair, vowels*

**Test-takers hear:** Is he living?

**Test-takers read:** A. Is he leaving?  
B. Is he living?

*Morphological pair, -ed ending*

**Test-takers hear:** I missed you very much.

**Test-takers read:** A. I missed you very much.  
B. I miss you very much.

*Stress pattern in can't*

**Test-takers hear:** My girlfriend can't go to the party.

**Test-takers read:** A. My girlfriend can't go to the party.  
B. My girlfriend can go to the party.

*Stress pattern in can't*

**Test-takers hear:** My girlfriend can't go to the party.

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# First: Intensive Listening

## 2) Paraphrase Recognition

### *Sentence paraphrase*

**Test-takers hear:** Hello, my name's Keiko. I come from Japan.

- Test-takers read:**
- A. Keiko is comfortable in Japan.
  - B. Keiko wants to come to Japan.
  - C. Keiko is Japanese.
  - D. Keiko likes Japan.

### *Dialogue paraphrase*

**Test-takers hear:** **Man:** Hi, Maria, my name's George.

**Woman:** Nice to meet you, George. Are you American?

**Man:** No, I'm Canadian.

- Test-takers read:**
- A. George lives in the United States.
  - B. George is American.
  - C. George comes from Canada.
  - D. Maria is Canadian.

## Second: Responsive Listening

*Appropriate response to a question*

**Test-takers hear:** How much time did you take to do your homework?

- Test-takers read:**
- A. In about an hour.
  - B. About an hour.
  - C. About \$10.
  - D. Yes, I did.

*Open-ended response to a question*

**Test-takers hear:** How much time did you take to do your homework?

**Test-takers write or speak:** \_\_\_\_\_.

# Third: Selective Listening

## 1) Listening Cloze (*cloze dictations or partial dictations*)

**Cloze test:** consists of a passage in which every nth word (typically every seventh word) is deleted and the test-taker is asked to supply an appropriate word.

**Weakness:** It may turn into reading cloze where students can supply the missing words without listening. (solution: test certain information like numbers)

### Test-takers hear:

Ladies and gentlemen, I now have some connecting gate information for those of you making connections to other flights out of San Francisco.

**Test-takers hear the following sentences as they read them, then they write the missing words or phrases in the blanks.**

Flight seven-oh-six to Portland will depart from gate seventy-three at nine-thirty P.M.

Flight ten-forty-five to Reno will depart at nine-fifty P.M. from gate seventeen.

Flight four-forty to Monterey will depart at nine-thirty-five P.M. from gate sixty.

Flight sixteen-oh-three to Sacramento will depart from gate nineteen.

# Third: Selective Listening

## 2) Information transfer

Processed information must be transferred to a visual representation, such as labeling a diagram, identifying an element in a picture, completing a form, or showing routes on a map.

## 3) Sentence Repetition:

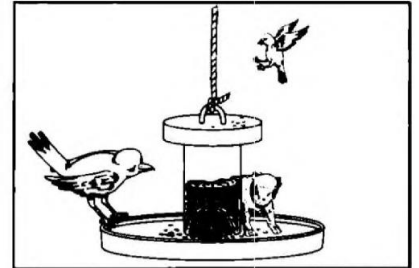
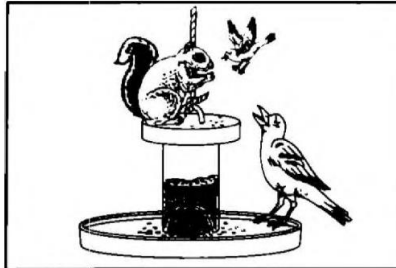
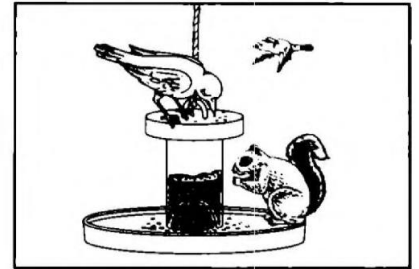
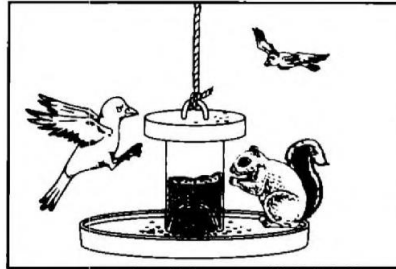
repeating a sentence or a partial sentence

*Information transfer: multiple-picture-cued selection*

**Test-takers hear:**

Choose the correct picture. In my backyard, I have a bird feeder. Yesterday, two birds and a squirrel were fighting for the last few seeds in the bird feeder. The squirrel was on top of the bird feeder while the larger bird sat at the bottom of the feeder screeching at the squirrel. The smaller bird was flying around the squirrel, trying to scare it away.

**Test-takers see:**



## Fourth: Extensive Listening

Some important questions about designing assessments at this level emerge:

1. **Can listening performance be distinguished from cognitive processing** factors such as memory, associations, storage, and recall?
2. As assessment procedures become more communicative, does the task take into account **test-takers' ability to use grammatical expectancies**, lexical collocations, semantic interpretations, and pragmatic competence?
3. Are **test tasks** themselves correspondingly **content valid and authentic**—that is, do they mirror real-world language and context?
4. As assessment **tasks** become more **open-ended**, they more closely **resemble pedagogical tasks**, which leads one to ask, “What is the difference between assessment tasks and teaching tasks?” The answer is scoring: the former imply specified scoring procedures, whereas the latter do not.

## Fourth: Extensive Listening

- 1) **Dictation:** test-takers hear a passage, typically 50 to 100 words, recited three times (in normal speed; then with long pauses while they write down what they hear; and finally at normal speed to check their work and proofread.
  - **Difficulty of dictation:**
    - the length of the word groups, the length of the pauses; the speed at which the text is read; and the complexity of the discourse, grammar, and vocabulary used in the passage.
  - **Scoring criteria (possible errors):**
    - spelling error only, spelling and/or obvious misrepresentation of a word; grammatical or phonological error, skipped word or phrase, permutation of words, additional words not in the original, replacement of a word with an appropriate synonym

# Fourth: Extensive Listening

Dialogue and multiple-choice comprehension items

## 2) Communicative Stimulus-Response Tasks:

The test-taker is presented with a monologue, lecture, or conversation and then is asked to respond to a set of comprehension questions through MC Items which do not mirror communicative tasks, but with some creativity they might be modified to be authentic tasks.

### Test-takers hear:

*Directions:* Now you will hear a conversation between Lynn and her doctor. You will hear the conversation two times. After you hear the conversation the second time, choose the correct answer for questions 1 through 5 below. Mark your answers on the answer sheet provided.

*Doctor:* Good morning, Lynn. What's the problem?

*Lynn:* Well, you see, I have a terrible headache, my nose is running, and I'm really dizzy.

*Doctor:* Okay. Anything else?

*Lynn:* I've been coughing, I think I have a fever, and my stomach aches.

*Doctor:* I see. When did this start?

*Lynn:* Well, let's see, I went to the lake last weekend, and after I returned home I started sneezing.

*Doctor:* Hmm. You must have the flu. You should get lots of rest, drink hot beverages, and stay warm. Do you follow me?

*Lynn:* Well, uh, yeah, but . . . shouldn't I take some medicine?

*Doctor:* Sleep and rest are as good as medicine when you have the flu.

*Lynn:* Okay, thanks, Dr. Brown.

### Test-takers read:

1. What is Lynn's problem?
  - A. She feels horrible.
  - B. She ran too fast at the lake.
  - C. She's been drinking too many hot beverages.

## Fourth: Extensive Listening

### 3) Authentic Listening Tasks:

#### A. Note taking:

- Time consuming (a loss of practicality)
- Subjective (lacks some reliability)
- Authentic (classroom activity)
- The notes are valid form of assessing global listening comprehension.
- The task fulfills the criteria of cognitive demand, communicative language, and authenticity.

#### Example scoring of a lecture note-taking

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**0-15 points (Visual representation):**  
Clear notes, using space on the paper, headers, numbers, etc.

**0-10 points (Accuracy):**  
main ideas of the lectures, important details, important information, etc.

**0-5 point (Symbols and abbreviations)**



## Fourth: Extensive Listening

### 3) Authentic Listening Tasks:

#### B. Editing:

- A written and a spoken stimulus that requires the test-taker to listen for discrepancies (a small number of specific differences must be identified).
- High reliability in scoring.

*Editing a written version of an aural stimulus*

*Test-takers read the written stimulus material (a news report, an e-mail from a friend, notes from a lecture, or an editorial in a newspaper).*

*Test-takers hear a spoken version of the stimulus that deviates, in a finite number of facts or opinions, from the original written form.*

*Test-takers mark the written stimulus by circling any words, phrases, facts, or opinions that show a discrepancy between the two versions.*

## Fourth: Extensive Listening

### 3) Authentic Listening Tasks:

#### C. Interpretive Tasks :

- Test-takers listen to a stimulus (lyrics, poetry, news reports, an experience)
- then they interpret it by answering a few open-ended questions (Like; 'Why was the singer feeling sad?', "What events might have led up to the recitation of this poem?"

#### D. Retelling:

- Test-takers listen to a story or news event and simply retell it, or summarize it, either orally (on an audiotape) or in writing.
- They must identify the gist, main idea, purpose, supporting points, and/or conclusion to show full comprehension.

# References

- **Brown, H. D. & Abeywickrama, P. (2012). Language Assessment: Principles & Classroom Practices. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Pearson Education, USA.**