

the prelistening phase will stand out especially clearly from the rest of the speech stream, providing listeners a pleasant shock of recognition.

Working with a few content words, learners can use top-down processing to fill the gaps and guess the general meaning of the text. Comprehension of every function word and grammatical marker is really not necessary when the goal is to find the gist.

It should be clear from this description of global listening that comprehension at the beginning stage is not total, but neither does comprehension depend on understanding every word. Students on the first day of class can understand some words of the story through use of these techniques. They will not remember the words or be able to use them, but they will quite likely recognize the words when they hear them again in a familiar context. At the least, they have been exposed to three to five minutes of the new language with its own distinctive sound system, intonation patterns, pause system, and word order. Comprehension theorists like Nida point out that during this time, a great deal of active processing has been going on just under the students' level of conscious awareness.

Selective Listening Techniques. The other half of the listening plan is to bring some of the new contrasts and patterns into conscious awareness through selective listening exercises. Nida's suggested progression began with intonation, followed with sounds, and built to words, phrases, and grammar points. Listening goals for beginners are listed below, with exercise types to promote them.

The classification of exercises as bottom-up or top-down does not indicate that only one kind of cognitive activity can occur during each exercise, but rather that some exercises foster predominantly bottom-up responses, and some exercises promote predominantly top-down activity. An exercise is classified as bottom-up if focus is on form and the exercise deals with one of the structural systems of English. Alternatively, this designation may indicate selection of specific dis-

crete items from the listening text, such as listening for details. An exercise is classified as top-down if the focus is on meaning and the listener uses global listening strategies. Alternatively, this designation may indicate a reliance on extralinguistic skills which the learner brings to the listening task.

All listening is to some degree interactive, due to the nature of the processing mechanism. An exercise is classified as interactive if the listeners must use information gained by processing at one level to check the accuracy of their processing on another level.

Exercise Types for Beginning-Level Listeners

Bottom-Up Processing Goals and Exercise Types

Goal: Discriminating Between Intonation Contours in Sentences

- Listen to a sequence of sentence patterns with either rising or falling intonation. Place a check in column 1 (rising) or column 2 (falling), depending on the pattern you hear (Abraham & Mackey, 1986, p. 29).

Goal: Discriminating Between Phonemes

- Listen to pairs of words. Some pairs differ in their final consonant (stay/steak), and some pairs are the same (laid/laid). Circle the word "same" or "different," depending on what you hear (Hagen, 1988, p. 2).

Goal: Selective Listening for Morphological Endings

- Listen to a series of sentences. Circle "yes" if the verb has an -ed ending, and circle "no" if it does not (Hagen, p. 77).
- Listen to a series of sentences. On your answer sheet are three verb forms. Circle the verb form that is contained in the sentence that you hear (Hagen, p. 78).

Goal: Selecting Details from the Text (Word Recognition)

- Match a word that you hear with its picture (Boyd & Boyd, 1982, p. 27).

- Listen to a weather report. Look at a list of words and circle the words that you hear (Abraham & Mackey, p. 111).
- Listen to a sentence that contains clock time. Circle the clock time that you hear, among three choices (5:30, 5:45, 6:15) (Abraham & Mackey, p. 124).
- Listen to an advertisement, select out the price of an item, and write the amount on a price tag (Abraham & Mackey, p. 31).
- Listen to a series of recorded telephone messages from an answering machine. Fill in a chart with the following information from each caller: name, number, time, and message (Fassman & Tavares, 1985, p. 21).

Goal: Listening for Normal Sentence Word Order

- Listen to a short dialog and fill in the missing words that have been deleted in a partial transcript (Griffie & Hough, 1986, pp. 86–87).

Top-Down Processing Goals and Exercise Types

Goal: Discriminating Between Emotional Reactions

- Listen to a sequence of utterances. Place a check in the column which describes the emotional reaction that you hear: interested, happy, surprised, or unhappy (Abraham & Mackey, p. 102).

Goal: Getting the Gist of a Sentence

- Listen to a sentence describing a picture and select the correct picture (Huizenga, 1987, pp. 30–31).

Goal: Recognize the Topic

- Listen to a dialog and decide where the conversation occurred. Circle the correct location among three multiple choice items (Abraham & Mackey, pp. 46–47).
- Listen to a conversation and look at a number of greeting cards that are pictured. Decide which of the greeting cards was sent.

Write the greeting under the appropriate card (Fassman & Tavares, p. 18).

- Listen to a conversation and decide what the people are talking about. Choose the picture that shows the topic (Abraham & Mackey, pp. 74–75).

Interactive Processing Goals and Exercise Types

Goal: Build a Semantic Network of Word Associations

- Listen to a word and associate all the related words that come to mind (B. H. Foley, 1984, p. 62).

Goal: Recognize a Familiar Word and Relate It to a Category

- Listen to words from a shopping list and match the words to the store that sells it (English Language Center, 1990, pp. 104–106).

Goal: Following Directions

- Listen to a description of a route and trace in on a map (Abraham & Mackey, p. 53).

Profile of the Intermediate-Level Learner

Intermediate-level learners continue to use listening as an important source of language input to increase their vocabulary and structural understanding. Although they have internalized the phonemic system of the language fairly well, they may have little understanding of the complexities of phonological rules which govern fast speech: reductions, elisions, and so forth. They need practice in word recognition and in discriminating fine differences in word order and grammatical form, registers of speaking, and emotional overtones.

Intermediate-level learners have moved beyond the limits of words and phrases; their memory can retain longer phrases and sentences. They can listen to short conversations

Peterson: A Synthesis of Methods for Interactive Listening

or narratives that are one or two paragraphs in length. They are able to get the gist, finding the main idea and some supporting detail (ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, reprinted in Omaggio, 1986). They are ready to practice more discourse level skills: predicting what will happen next, and explaining relations between events and ideas.

Techniques for Global Listening. At the intermediate level, it is no longer necessary to provide learners with simplified codes and modified speech. Indeed, learners need to hear authentic texts with reduced forms, fast speech features, false starts, hesitations, errors, some nonstandard dialects, and a variety of different voices.

There are several definitions of authenticity in materials. Porter and Roberts (1987) state that authentic texts are those "instances of spoken language which were not initiated for the purpose of teaching . . . not intended for non-native learners" (p. 176). In contrast, teacher-made texts are easily identified by their slower pace, limited vocabulary, complete sentences, repetition of target structures, exaggerated intonation, clear enunciation, and lack of background noise—all features that we noted as desirable at the beginning level when comprehension is expected by a simplified code!

The need to introduce authentic material into students' listening repertoire by the end of the beginning level is supported by the fact that most listening in the world outside the classroom does not conform to simplified codes. At every level, students are able to understand much more than they can produce, and that principle also holds for the practice of listening to authentic texts. With some practice, learners can cope quite well with authentic material, given the following features of authentic texts:

1. The background noise, interruptions and overlapping in turn-taking, the nonverbal gestures and tone of voice in authentic speech actually provide clues to understanding the setting, the relationship of the partici-

pants, their motivations and purpose for speaking. Rather than working to complicate the decoding process, these features may actually aid comprehension because they facilitate access to learners' understanding of cultural and formal schemata.

2. Authentic texts are actually more redundant and repetitious than many scripted texts, and so are easier to understand (Ure, 1969).

3. Authentic texts bear an information structure which conforms to their communicative purpose (Porter & Roberts, 1987). The proper use of these texts is to identify the key points of information and to let the rest of the information go. Thus, the learner's task load is actually rather limited. Learners should not be asked to retain every point of information, but only those details which the text was originally constructed to convey.

Refinements in the use of authentic texts are also possible. For learners who are not yet ready to listen to unedited authentic materials, Geddes and White (1978) suggest the use of semiscrpted simulated authentic speech (SSAS.) This is "language produced for a pedagogical purpose, but exhibiting features which have a high probability of occurrence in genuine acts of communication" (p. 137). Finger (1985) works with unedited excerpts from the evening television news, but has developed a framework of linguistic support which includes (1) prelistening exercise, (2) listening to the unedited excerpt, (3) listening to a modified version of the text in which the content is maintained but the language simplified, and (4) a second listening to the original, unedited version.

Techniques for Selective Listening. At the intermediate level, students need a well organized program of selective listening to focus their attention on the systematic features of the language code. At this level, accuracy in discriminating grammatical features is very important. If learners cannot hear certain unstressed endings, articles, inflections, and function words, they are less likely to incorporate them into their grammar.

ical competence. Intermediate-level students who were trained with simplified codes and with clearly pronounced models may not recognize the same words and phrases in normal fast speech.

Finally, the intermediate level is an appropriate time to teach explicitly some strategies of interactive listening: how to use one's knowledge of formal grammar to check the general meaning of a speaker's statement. Listeners can be presented with sentences which vary slightly in structure and wording, and they can be asked to identify whether the meanings are the same or different.

Exercise Types for Intermediate-Level Listeners

Bottom-Up Processing Goals and Exercise Types

Goal: Recognizing Fast Speech Forms

- Unstressed function words. Listen to a series of sentences that contain unstressed function words. Circle your choice among three words on the answer sheet—for example: "up," "a," "of" (Hagen, p. 10).

Goal: Finding the Stressed Syllable

- Listen to words of two (or three) syllables. Mark them for word stress and predict the pronunciation of the unstressed syllable (Hagen, p. 4).

Goal: Recognizing Words with Reduced Syllables

- Read a list of polysyllabic words and predict which syllabic vowel will be dropped. Listen to the words read in fast speech and confirm your prediction (Hagen, p. 6).

Goal: Recognize Words as They Are Linked in Speech Stream

- Listen to a series of short sentences with consonant vowel linking between words. Mark the linkages on your answer sheet (Hagen, p. 13).

Goal: Recognizing Pertinent Details in the Speech Stream

- Listen to a short dialog between a boss and a secretary regarding changes in the daily schedule. Use an appointment calendar. Cross out appointments that are being changed and write in new ones (Schechter, 1984, p. 36).
- Listen to announcements of airline arrivals and departures. With a model of an airline information board in front of you, fill in the flight numbers, destinations, gate numbers, and departure times (Tansev & Blatchford, p. 33).
- Listen to a series of short dialogs. Before listening, read the questions that apply to the dialogs. While listening, find the answers to questions about prices, places, names, and numbers. Example: "Where are the shoppers? How much is whole wheat bread?" (Tansev & Blatchford, 1987, p. 40).
- Listen to a short telephone conversation between a customer and a service station manager. Fill in a chart which lists the car repairs that must be done. Check the part of the car that needs repair, the reason, and the approximate cost (Schechter, p. 26).

Top-Down Processing Goals and Exercise Types

Goal: Analyze Discourse Structure to Suggest Effective Listening Strategies

- Listen to six radio commercials with attention to the use of music, repetition of key words, and number of speakers. Talk about the effect these techniques have on the listeners (Fassman & Tavares, p. 4).

Goal: Listen to Identify the Speaker or the Topic

- Listen to a series of radio commercials. On your answer sheet, choose among four types of sponsors or products and identify the picture which goes with the commercial (Fassman & Tavares, p. 4).

Goal: Listen to Evaluate Themes and Motives

- Listen to a series of radio commercials. On your answer sheet are listed four possible motives which the companies use to appeal to their customers. Circle all the motives which you feel each commercial promotes: escape from reality, family security, snob appeal, sex appeal (Fassman & Tavares, p. 5).

Goal: Finding Main Ideas and Supporting Details

- Listen to a short conversation between two friends. On your answer sheet are scenes from television programs. Find and write the name of the program and the channel. Decide which speaker watched the program (Schechter, p. 22).

Goal: Making Inferences

- Listen to a series of sentences, which may be either statements or questions. After each sentence, answer inferential questions, such as: Where might the speaker be? How might the speaker be feeling? What might the speaker be referring to? (Hagen, p. 18).
- Listen to a series of sentences. After each sentence, suggest a possible context for the sentence (place, situation, time, participants) (Hagen, p. 19).

Goal: Discriminating Between Registers of Speech and Tones of Voice

- Listen to a series of sentences. On your answer sheet, mark whether the sentence is polite or impolite (Tansey & Blatchford, p. 57).

Interactive Processing Goals and Exercise Types

Goal: Recognize Missing Grammar Markers in Colloquial Speech

- Listen to a series of short questions in which the auxiliary verb and subject have been

deleted. Use grammatical knowledge to fill in the missing words: ("Have you) got some extra?" (Hagen, p. 9).

- Listen to a series of questions with reduced verb auxiliary and subject, and identify the missing verb (does it/is it) by checking the form of the main verb. Example: "Zit arrive o come with anything else? 'Zit arriving o time?" (Hagen, pp. 14–15).

Goal: Use Knowledge of Reduced Forms to Clarify the Meaning of an Utterance

- Listen to a short sentence containing a reduced form. Decide what the sentence means. On your answer sheet, read the alternatives and choose the alternative that is the best paraphrase of the sentence you heard. Example: You hear, "You can't happy with that." You read: "(a) Why can you be happy? (b) That will make you happy. (c) I don't think you are happy" (Hagen, p. 69).

Goal: Use Context to Build Listening Expectations

- Read a short want-ad describing job qualifications in the employment section of a newspaper. Brainstorm additional qualifications which would be important for that type of job (Fassman & Tavares, p. 10).

Goal: Listen to Confirm Your Expectations

- Listen to short radio advertisements for jobs that are available. Check the job qualifications against your expectations (Fassman & Tavares, p. 11).

Goal: Use Context to Build Expectations. Use Bottom-Up Processing to Recognize Missing Words. Compare Your Prediction to What You Actually Heard

- Read some telephone messages with missing words. Decide what kinds of information are missing, so you know what to listen for. Listen to the information and fill in the blanks. Finally, discuss with the class the strategies you used for your predictions (Fassman & Tavares, p. 21).

Goal: Use Incomplete Sensory Data and Cultural Background Information to Construct a More Complete Understanding of a Text

- Listen to one side of a telephone conversation. Decide what the topic of the conversation might be, and create a title for it (Tansey & Blatchford, p. 77).
- Listen to the beginning of a conversation between two people and answer questions about the number of participants, their ages, gender, and social roles. Guess the time of day, location, temperature, season, and topic. Choose among some statements to guess what might come next (Lougheed, 1985, p. 1).

Profile of the Advanced-Level Learner

There is evidence that in the learning continuum, somewhere between high intermediate and advanced levels, a qualitative shift occurs in the learner's processing style (Cummins, 1980a). Cummins notes that truly proficient bilingual subjects are able to use their second language skill fully to acquire knowledge: They have cognitive and academic language proficiency (CALP). Advanced students are no longer simply learning to listen, or listening to learn the language. They are listening in the language to learn about the content of other areas. To build toward this level, curriculum and program planners establish courses in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (see Johns in this volume), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and adjunct courses where language support is offered in mainstream content classes (see Snow in this volume).

The descriptions of the advanced listener in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (reprinted in Omaggio, 1986) list the following competencies. Advanced learners can listen to longer texts, such as radio and television programs, and academic lectures. Their vocabulary includes topics in current events, history, and culture; they can deal with a

certain degree of abstraction. Listeners begin to fill in gaps and can make inferences when the text is incomplete or their background knowledge is lacking. However, their understanding of the language remains on a fairly literal plane, so that they may miss jokes, slang, and cultural references.

Many advanced learners are more skilled at reading by this time than they are at listening. This is particularly true of students who have learned their English in a foreign language context and whose training has emphasized grammar, vocabulary, and reading. Such students may comprehend spoken discourse better if they can activate their knowledge first with a related reading selection.

For many international students, the informal tone of lectures and the reductions in normal speech present a major comprehension problem. Listening classes at the advanced level may need to include a systematic program of listening to reduced speech as well as a strategic listening component to distinguish important from unimportant discourse features. A review of stress, pause, pitch, and intonation patterns can serve to unlock mysteries of discourse structure, and point students toward recognition of organizational markers, cohesive devices, and definitions in context. As students learn to identify the important content words through knowledge of sentence stress, they will find that their note-taking skills improve.

A useful technique for helping advanced students make the transition from written to spoken language is suggested by Lebauer (1984): use of lecture transcripts in the initial stages of listening shows students that cohesive devices, discourse markers, and important definitions do appear in the text, and shows students how to recognize these features.

The second language teaching profession has generally come to recognize the value of top-level processing, and the last decade has produced a number of articles that prove the efficacy of schemata use in both lecture listening and reading (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; P. Johnson, 1981, 1982). However,

Eskey (1988) points to the need for continued concern with bottom-up skills, even at advanced levels. What differentiates good readers from poor readers is not really their ability to draw on background knowledge, but their automaticity in decoding (Stanovich, 1980). For listening or reading to fit the interactive model of the skilled native speaker, both top-down and bottom-up processes must be learned.

Peterson (1989) studied the written lecture summaries of native speakers and nonnatives at two proficiency levels to determine which propositions were retained from the lecture: main ideas or low-level information. All three groups recorded the same top-level information, which indicates that less proficient listeners are as likely to use their formal and content schemata in processing lecture text as are proficient listeners. However, every index of completeness of recall within propositions and within the lecture as a whole indicated that the less proficient nonnatives simply were not retaining as much information on the propositional level. Consequently, they also were less skilled at drawing inferences or filling in missing information in the lecture. Without proficient bottom-up skills, the interactive nature of listening is not realized.

The following recommendations for advanced listeners assume an international student population which needs to develop cognitive and academic language proficiency for effective study in English.

Exercise Types for Advanced-Level Learners

Bottom-Up Processing Goals and Exercise Types

Goal: Use Features of Sentence Stress and Volume to Identify Important Information for Note Taking

- Listen to a number of sentences and extract the content words, which are read with greater stress. Write the content words as notes (Ruetten, 1986, pp. 78–79).

Goal: Become Aware of Sentence Level Features in Lecture Text

- Listen to a segment of a lecture while reading a transcript of the material. Notice the incomplete sentences, pauses, and verbal fillers (Lebauer, 1984, pp. 7–15).

Goal: Become Aware of Organizational Cues in Lecture Text

- Look at a lecture transcript and circle all the cue words used to enumerate the main points. Then listen to the lecture segment and note the organizational cues (Lebauer, p. 11).

Goal: Become Aware of Lexical and Supersegmental Markers for Definitions

- Read a list of lexical cues that signal a definition; listen to signals of the speaker's intent such as rhetorical questions; listen for special intonation patterns and pause patterns used with appositives (Lebauer, p. 11).
- Listen to short lecture segments which contain new terms and their definitions in context. Use knowledge of lexical and intonational cues to identify the definition of word (Lebauer, p. 55).

Goal: Identify Specific Points of Information

- Read a skeleton outline of a lecture which the main categories are given but specific examples are left blank. Listen to the lecture, and find the information which belongs in the blanks (Ruetten, p. 36).

Top-Down Processing Goals and Exercise Types

Goal: Use the Introduction to the Lecture to Predict Its Focus and Direction

- Listen to the introductory section of a lecture. Then read a number of topics on an answer sheet and choose the topic that expresses what the lecture will discuss (Lebauer, p. 50).

Goal: Use the Lecture Transcript to Preview the Content of the Next Section

- Read a section of a lecture transcript. Stop reading at a juncture point and predict what will come next. Then read on to confirm your prediction (Lebauer, p. 21).

Goal: Find the Main Idea of a Lecture Segment

- Listen to a section of a lecture which describes a statistical trend. While you listen, look at three graphs that show a change over time and select the graph that best illustrates the lecture (Lebauer, p. 48).

Interactive Processing Goals and Exercise Types

Goal: Use Incoming Details to Determine the Accuracy of Predictions about Content

- Listen to the introductory sentences to predict some of the main ideas you expect to hear in the lecture. Then listen to the lecture as it is played. Note whether or not the instructor talks about the points you predicted. If s/he does, note a detail about the point (Aebersold, Kowitz, Schwarte, & Smith, 1985, p. 12).

Goal: Determine the Main Ideas of a Section of a Lecture by Analysis of the Details in That Section

- Listen to a section of a lecture and take notes on the important details. Then relate the details to form an understanding of the main point of that section. Choose from a list of possible controlling ideas (Aebersold, et al., pp. 37–42).

Goal: Make Inferences by Identifying Ideas on the Sentence Level Which Lead to Evaluative Statements

- Listen to a statement and take notes on the important words. Indicate what further meaning can be inferred from the statement. Indicate the words in the original statement that serve to cue the inference (Aebersold, et al., p. 94).

Goal: Use Knowledge of the Text and the Lecture Content to Fill In Missing Information

- Listen to a lecture segment to get the gist. Then listen to a statement from which words have been omitted. Using your knowledge of the text and of the general content, fill in the missing information. Check your understanding by listening to the entire segment (Aebersold et al., p. 109).

Goal: Use Knowledge of the Text and the Lecture Content to Discover the Lecturer's Misstatements and to Supply the Ideas That He Meant to Say

- Listen to a lecture segment that contains an incorrect term. Write the incorrect term and the term which the lecturer should have used. Finally, indicate what clues helped you find the misstatement (Aebersold et al., p. 113).

SUMMARY

ESL/EFL teachers have several responsibilities with respect to the listening skill. First, they must understand the pivotal role that listening plays in the language learning process to utilize listening in ways that facilitate rather than thwart this process. Second, they must understand the complex interactive nature of the listening process and the different kinds of listening that learners must do in order to provide their students with an appropriate variety and range of listening experiences. Finally, teachers must understand how listening skills typically develop in second language learners—and be able to assess the stage of listening at which their students are—so that each student can engage in the most beneficial types of listening activities given his/her level of proficiency.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In a group discussion, recall the stages that you went through when you learned a second language. What elements did you hear first? What elements took a long time to hear? What part did memory play in your listening at each stage?