

Understanding the Spoken English Word

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OUTLINE

- **Warmer – transcription activity**
- **Listening: processes and techniques**
- **The sound substance**
- **Non-expert listener challenges**
- **Activities to develop decoding skills**
- **Conclusions**

Warmer - transcription activity

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Context



budgie tear line



budgie tear line

Background

- RyanAir
- Michael O'Leary
- September 2017
- The BBC
- Business Daily
- Passengers and holidays
- Pilots and holidays

What went wrong at RyanAir?

Situation – in September, thousands of RyanAir passengers were left stranded.

People who had booked flights as far ahead as Christmas started to worry that their holidays might be affected. The BBC interviewed the boss of RyanAir, Michael O'Leary, and discussed the situation in more detail.



(19th Sept 2017 BBC Business Daily)

Transcription Fragments

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



Rhine Air

transcript

This is our mess up. When we make a mess at RyanAir we come out with our hands up. We try to explain why we made the mess, when we will pay compensation to those passengers who are entitled to compensation, which will be those flights that are cancelled over the next two weeks.

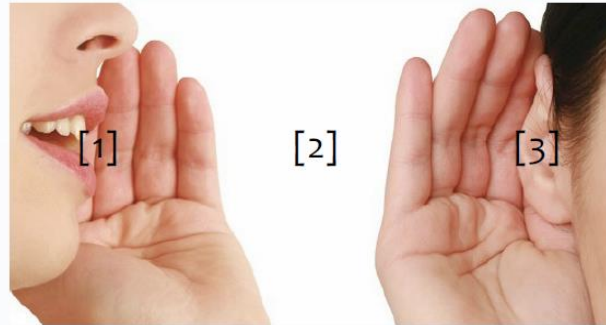
Listening: processes and techniques

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Cauldwell R (2018)

Sound substance



The sound substance is the stream which,

[1] after exiting the mouth of the speaker

[2] travels through the air ...

[3] and arrives at the ear of the listener

“A term used to refer to the spoken language – the **invisible** form of language that **passes by very quickly** and is gone. It is **not available for the listener’s inspection** – it has to be **processed** by the listener **at speeds** which are **beyond his or her control.**” (A Syllabus for Listening p.236)

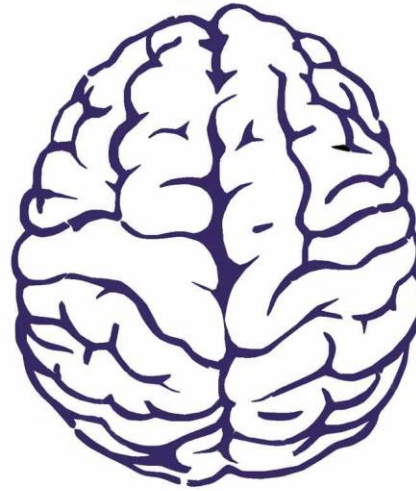
Processes

decoding



Bottom-up

meaning-building

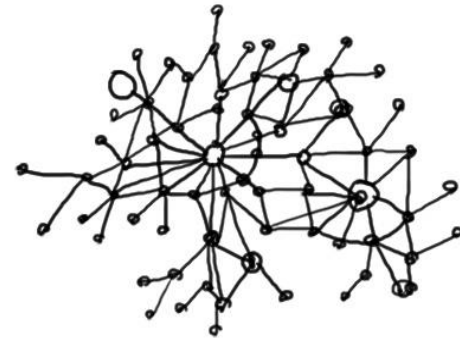


Top-down



Bottom-up Primacy: Potential *Word* Candidates

You hear a word
beginning with
lo-
What images
may be activated?



Some Listening Techniques

- We evaluate probabilities arising from the structure of the native vocabulary
- We track information to locate the boundaries between words
- We pay attention to the way that words are pronounced
- We assess prosodic information that spans sequences of sounds ... and carry out

... a ‘formidable range of mental tasks carried out with astonishing speed and accuracy’

Cutler, Anne (2012) *Native Listening*, The MIT Press

The sound substance

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The Horticultural Metaphor

Greenhouse



citation forms

Garden



connected speech

Jungle



spontaneous speech

tidy ←————→ *messy*

Richard Cauldwell

The consequences

Squeezing together of words (eg the dropping of sounds, the lack of clarity around positive and negative etc) = **mush**

The expert listener's ability to understand meanings **deafens** them to the realities/true nature of spontaneous speech ...

Cauldwell, R. (2018) *A Syllabus for Listening - Decoding*

Spoken English: Slips of the Ear



Spaghetti car banana
There's a bathroom on
the right.

Completely sober
We can't be ***ed to
teach ...

Products rip in plastic
I was nice girl

Spaghetti carbonara
There's a bad moon on
the rise.

Complete this over
We can be asked to
teach ...

Products wrapped in plastic
I was a night owl

Non-expert listener challenges

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‘Understanding speech in our native tongue seems **natural** and **effortless** but listening to speech in a **non-native language** is a **different experience**’

Cutler, Anne (2012) *Native Listening*, The MIT Press

Sonia's transcript

Michael O'Leary 1: This is hour. When messagen time RyanAir
We can hang out. We try to explained why
We did the message when will pay compensation
to the passage compensation with we'll
be the flight to canceled over the next two
Weeks

This is ¹ our mess up // When ² we make a mess at
RyanAir // we ³ come out // ⁴ with our hands up // we try
to explain // why we ⁵ made the mess // when we will pay
compensation // ⁶ to those passengers // ⁷ who are entitled
to compensation // which will be those flights ⁸ // that are
cancelled // over the next two weeks.

Degree of comprehension?

This is hour _____ when
mensagem Ryanair we
can hang out We
try to explained why we
did the **message**
when ... will pay
compensation to the
passage _____...
... compensation with
we'll be the fligh to
cancelled over the next
two weeks

This is **our mess up**. When
we make a mess at
RyanAir we **come out with**
our hands up, we try to
explain why we **made** the
mess, when **we** will pay
compensation to **those**
pass**engers who are entitled**
to compensation **which**
will be those flights that
are cancelled over the next
two weeks.



More slips the ear



Sonia

- a long holiday = **on holiday**
- the errors = **the area**
- pilot's holidays = **on holiday**
- that, in short, is what = **that, insure it's was**
- we're not short of = **when not sort of**
- weather disruptions = **weather instructions**

Others

- seminar = **cinema**
- a lot smaller than = **lot more than**
- what the whole = **what the hell**
- a lot smaller than = **lot more than**
- The UK and Norway = **The UK and North Wales**
- Float planes = **flute planes?**

Some L2 problems

- Sounds (consonants, vowels – short / sort; we'll be / will be)
- Sounds/word boundaries (in short > insure)
- Similar-sounding structures/words (we'll be / will be; hour/our)
- Remembering word meaning quickly enough
- Knowing the word (mess)
- Hearing unstressed function words
- Hearing final consonants (I won't go / I want to go)
- Recognising a variation of a known word
- Not hearing not!

Activities to develop decoding skills

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Awareness-raising to *Mush*



Rhine Air

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| 1. we may come S | 1. ___ |
| 2. rye near week | 2. ___ |
| 3. pastures who were tight | 3. ___ |
| 4. doze flight sitter can | 4. ___ |
| 5. the neck's too weak | 5. ___ |



Awareness-raising to *Mush*



Rhine Air

1. we make a mess
2. RyanAir we
3. passengers who were entit(led)
4. those flights that are can(celled)
5. the next two weeks

Explicit work on decoding

Classroom decoding with a B1 group

Olya Sergeeva

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94KG2Kw1jh](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94KG2Kw1jhM)
M

Micro-listening www.tubequizard.com

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type x Grammar for listeners Pronunciation for listeners Vocabulary in context Grammar in context

category x Business Educational Entertainment Film & animation Information Technology News People & society Talks & interviews Music

variety x    



Pronunciation for listeners

Film & animation 14 items 

B1 B2 C1

Word focus: OF. Practice catching expressions that contain 'of'.



Grammar for listeners

Talks & interviews 13 items 

A2 B1 B2

Present Continuous Watch the story of how Jill Bolte Taylor realized she was having a stroke and type phrases in Present Continuous.



Grammar for listeners

Talks & interviews 12 items 

B1 B2

Questions. Watch extracts from the performance of 'the greatest pickpocket in the world' and type the questions that he asks the audience.



Grammar for listeners


Film & animation 5 items 

B1 B2

Past Simple. Watch an interview with Amy Adams and type questions in Past Simple.



Grammar for listeners


Film & animation 7 items 

A2 B1 B2

Imperatives. Listen and type verbs in the imperative form.



Grammar for listeners


Film & animation 9 items 

A2 B1

Present simple. Listen and type expressions in Present Simple with frequently used verbs.



Grammar for listeners


Film & animation 5 items 

A2 B1

Future simple. Listen and type future expressions with 'will' and frequently used verbs.



Grammar for listeners

Talks & interviews 15 items 

A2 B1 B2

Past simple (regular and irregular verbs)
Watch the first 2 minutes of David

Dictations and transcripts

Paused dictation
(text / snippets)

‘Now I understand why I don’t understand’

Make listening accessible to inspection

Teaching listening with TED talks

Tough truths about plastic pollution (5 min 18 sec)

https://www.ted.com/talks/dianna_cohen_tough_truths_about_plastic_pollution?language

A possible procedure?

- Video divided into 7 sections, with comp. qs and language input for each section
- Sts watched entire talk (@ reduced speed)
- Presented language, sts read comp qs, watched/listened twice, section by section
- Checked answers, read audio script and discussed language before watching again

Tough truths about plastic pollution

https://www.ted.com/talks/dianna_cohen_tough_truths_about_plastic_pollution?language

5 mins 18 secs - divided into 7 sections

Listening 1: 0.00 – 00.45

Key vocabulary: plastic pollution / coalition / installations / fissure / ephemeral

Chunks: one of the / cut up / for the last / turn into / after about / break down into / just like us

Listening 2: 00.45 – 01.42

Key vocabulary: marine environment / initial reaction / a proposal / decommissioned / gyre

Chunks: learned about / to go out / pick up

More chunks: back up / look at / turn off / concerned about / some of them / kind of / look into it / most of it / turned into / looking at / think about / know a lot about

Students' feedback (14)

Focussing on key words, marking stress before watching part of a video

very useful (11) useful (2) sometimes (1) not useful

Repeating key words before watching part of a video

very useful (7) useful (6) sometimes (1) not useful

Listening to chunks (eg. all over the world) before watching part of a video

very useful (8) useful (4) sometimes (2) not useful

Saying chunks (eg. all over the world) before watching part of a video

very useful (9) useful (5) sometimes not useful

Conclusions

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- Be aware of deafness and listen carefully to / for mush!
- Use your knowledge of the learner's L1 and the audio-script to identify potential problem areas
- Devise pre-listening activities which focus on potential / known problem areas
- Direct attention to chunks
- Use variations on dictation activities to help learners develop sound/word recognition (decoding skills)
- Set time for learners to compare their understanding with the text (audio-script) and discover reasons for listening difficulties ...

Make listening accessible to inspection

Useful resources

- www.tubequizard.com
- <https://eltgeek.wordpress.com> - Olya Sergeeva
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/features/pronunciation/tims-pronunciation-workshop-ep-1>
- <https://youglish.com/search>

Understanding the Spoken English Word

**Thank
you!**
Annie McDonald

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