



hancockmcdonald

Annie McDonald
anniemcdonald@telefonica.net / annie@hancockmcdonald.com
<http://hancockmcdonald.com>

1. Listening, Learning, Listeners

Listening: text difficulty, decoding & meaning building
Learning: having a go vs. anxiety (level of challenge)

Listener: character traits – ambiguity and risk

2. Examples of activities which focus on context: broaden your repertoire!

A Focus on the topic

World knowledge



Look at the photos. What can you guess about Dan Everett and life in the Amazon? Discuss with a partner.

Situational knowledge

B Reading text

B Focus on the programme

You are going to listen to part of a BBC radio programme called *Excess Baggage*. Read about the programme and write *T* (true), *F* (false) or *DS* (doesn't say) next to the sentences.

- 1 *Excess Baggage* is a holiday programme.
- 2 Dan Everett wasn't working at the university when he first went to visit the Pirahã.
- 3 Dan Everett teaches the Pirahã language.

Excess Baggage is a weekly BBC Radio 4 programme in which people who have spent time travelling are interviewed about the places they have been to and the things they have learnt. In this programme Dan Everett, who now works at Illinois State University in the United States, talks about his experiences with the Pirahã tribe in the Amazon jungle. He has spent much of the past thirty years living with them, studying their language and culture.

C Focus on the speaker(s)

Listen to the beginning of the interview. Who do you find easiest to understand, the interviewer or Dan Everett? Why? Compare with a partner.

Speaker knowledge

D Focus on the audio text

What do you expect to hear on the rest of the programme? Put a tick, question mark or cross next to items 1-5. Add your own ideas and compare and discuss with a partner.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 examples of the Pirahã language | 4 the noise of machines |
| 2 people talking at the same time | 5 <i>your ideas</i> ... |
| 3 someone laughing | |

Setting knowledge

Schematic knowledge

3a. Some activities which focus on content: Decoding

1. Unknown Words

Read and listen to Dan talking about where the Pirahã live. Write the words or parts of the words you hear in the blanks. Compare with a partner.

If you, if you take our all the country _____ of South America, it would be right in the _____ of South America.

Do you understand the words? Can you guess, more or less, what they mean? Discuss.

2. Phrases (to show phonological features of joined up words)

Work with a partner. Look at the map of South America. The Pirahã live in the 'area of detail'. Make sentences to describe where they live using the phrases below. Use your dictionary.

- a. **coun**try **bou**ndaries
- b. in the hear- **to**f Sou- **th**America
- c. the - **y**- Amazon Rainforest

3. Grammar 1

You are going to listen to 7 phrases taken from the audio. You will hear each one three times. There is ONE word which occurs in ALL 7 phrases. What is it? Check your ideas in the audio script.

4. Grammar 2

Look at these phrases. What do you expect to come next? Match 1-4 with a-d. Compare with a partner.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 bring them things like xxxx | a. an adjective |
| 2 planning to go back xxxx | b. a noun |
| 3 they were extremely xxxx | c. examples |
| 4 sounds like xxxx | d. a time word |

3b. Some activities which focus on content: Meaning building

Helping listeners understand...

1. Specific information

Listen to the next part of the interview and complete the answers to questions 1-4. Compare and discuss in groups.

- 1 What does Dan say about travelling in the Amazon jungle?
It's better to travel ...
a overland. b. by plane c. as a group.
- 2 When Dan and his family arrived, how did the Pirahã react? They
a were friendly.
b wanted presents.
c asked him lots of questions.

Audio script

1.

P: What's it like travelling in that part of the world?

D: It can be challenging. It's gotten easier over the years with the advent of float planes or the easier availability of float planes, but, er, it would take us, in the early days, with the family, it was a week to two week boat trip to get in to the tribe, a very difficult situation as it required carrying large amounts of supplies for the family overland through the jungle.

2.

P: You mentioned there that the Pirahã were unusual in that they didn't want any material gifts or input from the outside world. What about human input? Were they ... did they welcome you and your little tribe arriving?

D They were very friendly, surprisingly so. I didn't know what to expect but they were extremely friendly

2 Meaning in context (figurative language)

Listen again and put the phrases in the order you hear them. What do they mean? Find them in the audio script and compare with a partner.

- a. your little tribe b. in the early days c

3 Main points / detail

Listen to the next part of the interview. Put a-c in the order you hear them. Compare with a partner.

- a. The language doesn't have words for numbers or colours.
b. Dan was the first person to translate the Pirahã language.
c. The Pirahã are very happy but primitive.

4 The main point

Work with a partner and guess which option (a-c) completes the short summary of what Dan says about when he visits the tribe. Listen to the final part of the interview and check.

- a he gives them presents and they ask for news from other parts of Brazil
b he gives them presents and the tribe talk about what they've been doing
c they talk about what the tribe's been doing and the tribe want to know about America.

4. Postscript

Listening and Listeners

Ambiguity

Intolerant → ← Tolerant

Decoding

Meaning

Risk

Risk-avoiders → ← Risk-takers

34

5. Useful references & resources

- Anderson, A. and Lynch, T. 1998. *Listening*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Audacity or Wave lab (for editing, boosting volume, slow down text etc.)
- Bloomfield, A et al, What makes listening difficult? Factors affecting second language comprehension, 2010, University of Maryland, <http://www.casl.umd.edu/node/1711>
- Cutler, Anne, 2012, *Native Listening: Language Experience and the Recognition of Spoken Words*. The MIT Press, USA
- Cauldwell, R. 2002. Grasping the nettle: the importance of perception in listening comprehension
http://www.developingteachers.com/articles_tchtraining/perception1_richard.htm
- Field, J. 2008. *Listening in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge University Press
- Field, J. 2000. 'Not waving but drowning: a reply to Tony Ridgway'. *ELT Journal*, 54 / 2: 186-95
<http://www.hancockmcdonald.com> for listening materials, articles and talks including *Authentic Listening Step by Step* and *Pronunciation as a listening skill: understanding authentic English*
- Hancock, M & McDonald, A. 2010. *English Result Upper-intermediate*. Oxford University Press for example listening lessons based on BBC audio material.
- Lynch, T. 2009. *Teaching Second Language Listening* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Oxford, R. 1990. *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*. New York. Newbury House/Harper & Row
- Thorn, Shelia. 2009. Mining Listening Texts *Modern English Teacher*, Vol 18 No.2
- Thorn, Shelia www.thelisteningbusiness.com