SATEFL
The Scottish Association for the
Teaching of English as a Foreign Language

Lost in Transcription
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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

# Abstract

Students' transcriptions of listening texts are a rich source of information, revealing the listening processes each individual has used to understand what has been said. In this workshop, we'll look at various examples of 'mishearings' and identify possible causes. Finally, we'll exchange ideas on how such insights could help us develop students' listening skills.

**http://hancockmcdonald.com/talks**

Hancock McDonald

# Lost in Transcription :

## Insights from students' ~~mishearings~~ plausible/alternative hearings

## Outline

The Expert Listener: Ability and Agility

Listening in the Classroom

Dictation, Transcription & Data

Analysis & Discussion

The Way Forwards?

# The Expert Listener: Ability and agility

# Expert listener ability: deafness and mush

## What did the speaker say?

**You're listening to today**

**Mush**: 'A technical term for the messy areas of the sound substance where it is difficult to determine where words begin and end, or indeed whether they have occurred at all'. (Cauldwell, 2018)

# Expert listener agility as evidenced by The Two Ronnies: Pismronunciation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJ0nFQgRApY

Good evening. I'm s**qu**eaking to you tonight, once again, as the chairman of the **l**oyal society for the prevention of **pismro**nunciation, a society formed for people who can't say their wor**m**s correctly. I myself often use the wrong wor**m**s and that is why I was e**r**ected ch**ar**m**in**g of the society.

Firstly, let me try and put you in the p**un**cture regarding our m**u**mb**l**ers. **P**each and every **p**lum of them have di**cky** **fea**lty in conversing with the people they meet in everyday l**oa**f.

The Two Ronnies: Pismronunciation

# Expert listener speaker agility?

## Ronnie Barker

I'm squeaking

the loyal society

worms

I was erected charming

put you in the puncture

our mumbles

peach and every plum

dicky fealty

everyday loaf

## youtube

(automatic transcription of an interview of John Field by Shaun Sweeney, courtesy of Richard Cauldwell)

Two sets of sub skills = two receptors
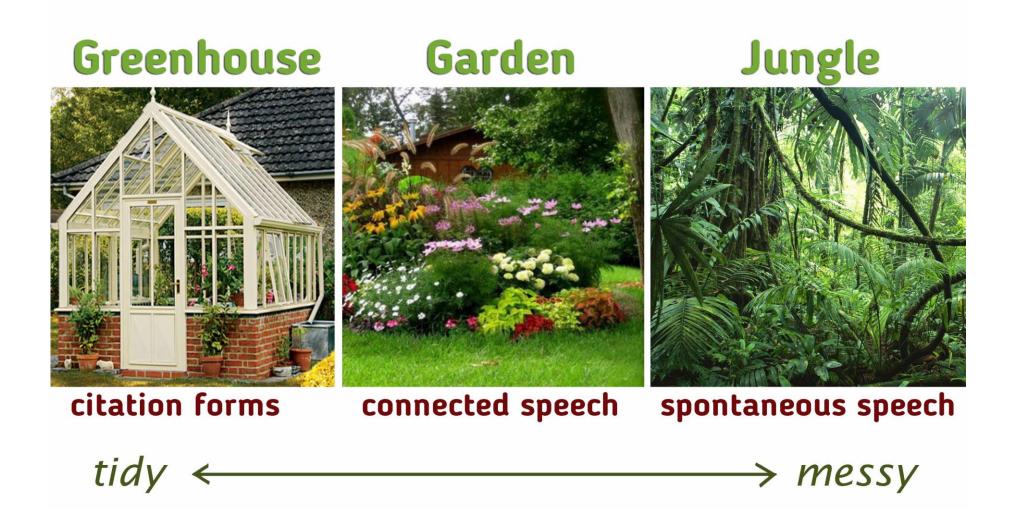
European Framework = don't you be a framework

You also see it = you assisted

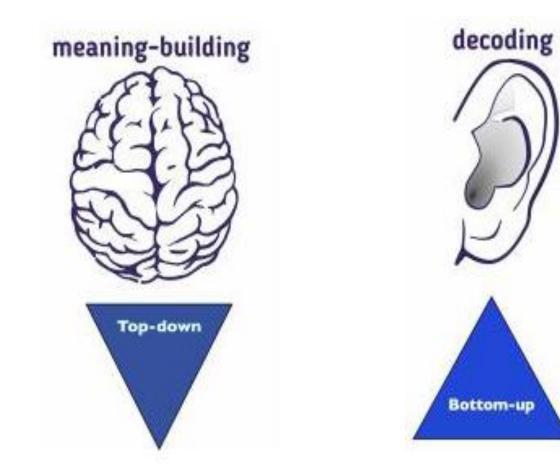Some of them = someone who
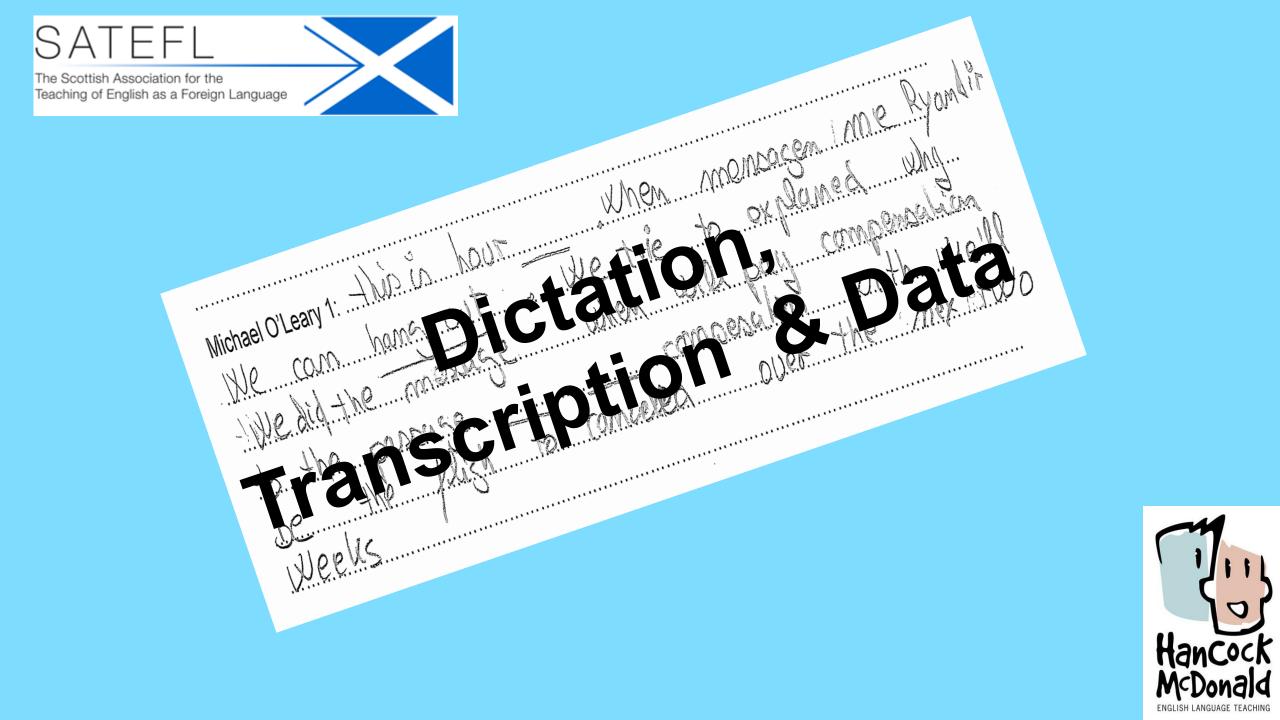
Elided = alighted

# What? – the horticultural metaphor



Greenhouse — citation forms
Garden — connected speech
Jungle — spontaneous speech

tidy ← → messy

*Richard Cauldwell*

# How? - Processes

meaning-building

Top-down

decoding

Bottom-up

# Dictation, Transcription & Data

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Michael O'Leary 1.

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# Known and unknown words

**1** vein ...for... **brain**
Jenny ...for... **journey**

confusing phonemes

**2** diving ...for... **driving**

'missing' a phoneme

**3** cinema ...for... **seminar**

transposing sounds/syllables

**4** quantity ...for... **quantify**
which in ...for... **reaching**

locating possible word candidates

# Lexical segmentation

| said | 'heard' |
|------|---------|
| 1. Gets on well | 1. Get some well |
| 2. A lot smaller than | 2. Lots more than |
| 3. That, in short, is what | 3. That, insure it's was |
| 4. We're not short of | 4. When not sort of |
| 5. From the UK and Norway | 5. From the UK and North Wales |

# Phrases

**When I was at university // I used to be a <u>night owl</u> // I would do all my homework // until 3 or 4 in the morning // I only needed // 3 or 4 hour sleep a night // in those days**

night hour

night hours
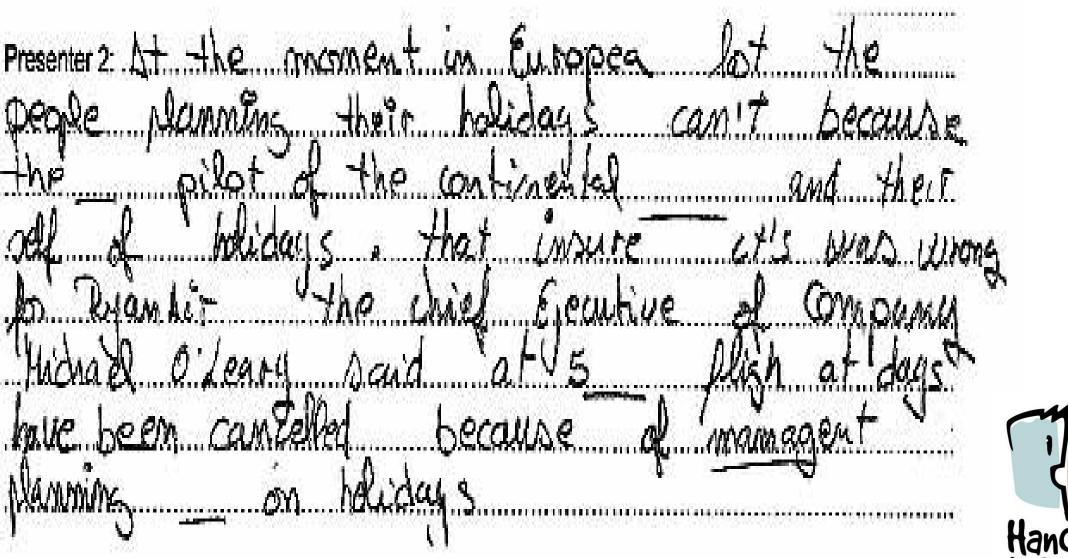
next hour

nice student

nice house

# Content and function words

**forty years of songs**

1. four years a song        songs -> song    of -> a
2. forty year songs                    of -> Ø
3. for years of songs        forty - > for

**Analysis & Discussion**

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# Analysis

Presenter 2: At the moment in Europea lot the people planning their holidays can't because the ___ pilot of the continental ___ and their self of holidays. that insure ___ it's was wrong for Ryanair the chief Executive of Company Michael O'Leary said at 5 ___ pligh at dogs have been cancelled because of managent planning ___ on holidays

# Analysis

Presenter 2: At the moment in Europea lot the people planning their holidays can't because the pilot of the continental and their self of holidays. that insure it's was wrong for Ryanhir the chief Executive of company Michael O'Leary said at 5 flight at days have been cancelled because of managent planning on holidays
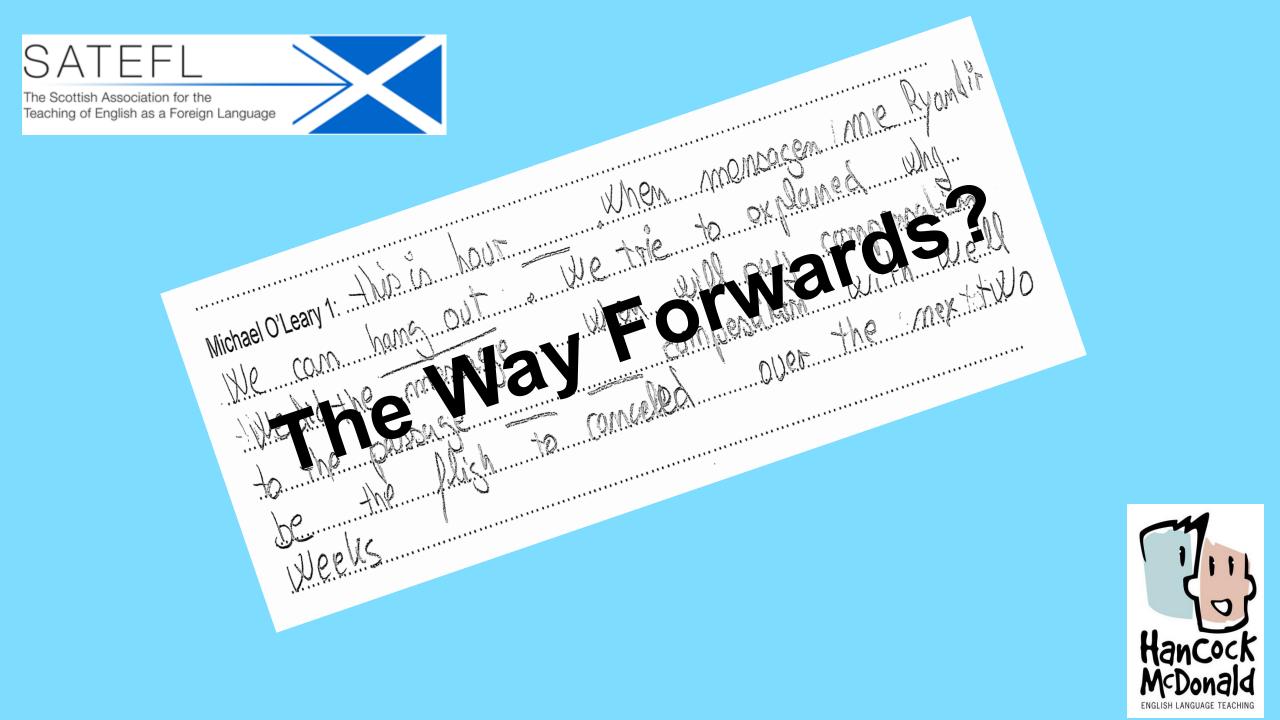
At the moment in Europe, lots of people planning to go on holiday can't because pilots at one of the continent's largest budget airlines are themselves going on holiday. That, in short, is what's gone wrong for RyanAir. The chief executive of the company, Michael O'Leary, said up to 50 flights a day are being cancelled because of management errors in planning pilot's holidays.

# Analysis

Presenter 2: At the moment in Europe a lot the people planning their holidays can't because the pilot of the continental and their self of holidays. that insure it's was wrong for RyanAir the chief Executive of company Michael O'Leary said at ✓5 fligh at days have been cancelled because of managent planning on holidays

At the moment in Europe, **[1]**lots of people planning **[2]**to go on holiday can't because pilots **[3]**at one of the **[4]**continent's largest budget airlines are themselves going on holiday. That, **[5]**in short, is what's gone wrong for RyanAir. The chief executive of **[6]**the company, Michael O'Leary, said **[7]**up to 5**[8]**0 fligh**[9]**ts a day are being cancelled because of **[10]**management errors in planning **[11]**pilot's holidays.

The Way Forwards?

# The problems (1)

## At micro level: Some examples

- Recognising sounds (consonants, vowels – short / sort; we'll be / will be)
- Not identifying word boundaries (in short > insure)
- Confusing similar-sounding structures / words (we'll be / will be; hour/our)
- Not hearing unstressed function words (I want to go > I won't go)
- Not hearing the end of words (-s, -ed, en, etc)
- Not hearing *n't*
- Holding information in the working memory

# The problems (2)

## The cumulative effects

- Not being able to access known words (SWR)
- Not being able to understand some specific information
- Not being able to understand detail
- Not being able to understand the main idea
- Not even being able to get the gist

# Some solutions: approaches

Vary your exploitation of standard-fare classroom listening materials
- Scrutinise transcripts for examples of connected speech, listen/identify focus areas (using your knowledge of the learner's L1)
- Use an audio editing tool to extract areas of interest for attention or model for mini dictation / transcription activities
- Pre-teach / model language at word level, including a focus on pronunciation – number of syllables, stress, susceptibility to change in garden or jungle
- Pre-teach / model phrases; chunks/fixed expressions (If I were you…): idioms – eg a ni –towl; collocation (pay attention to) …..

# Some solutions: activities

Use variations on dictation activities, to help learners develop, for example, sound / word recognition (decoding skills) …

Some usual suspects = same / different; minimal pairs  (A/B); write the word (s) you hear ; rite the phrase you hear ; blankfil …. ; drills and raps ; matching – what a phrase 'sounds like' when spoken vs how it looks when written etc …..

And see *Authentic Listening Resource Pack*, Hancock, M & McDonald, A. (2015), Delta Publishing, for some examples of creative activity types

## http://hancockmcdonald.com

# Some solutions: tools / resources / ideas

- English Micro-Listening Lessons
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAW1-bu5lW0

- https://eltgeek.wordpress.com - Olya Sergeeva

- Classroom decoding with a B1 group, Olya Sergeeva

  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94KG2Kw1jhM

- www.tubequizard.com phonological features

- https://youglish.com/search phrases

- http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/features/pronunciation/tims-pronunciation-workshop-ep-1

- R.Cauldwell's blog https://www.speechinaction.org/listening-cherry

# Enfin …

Generally, use dictation/transcription activities, little and often to nudge students in the direction of automaticity, and to **make listening open to inspection** to help them develop their decoding skills

Allow time for learners to compare their understanding with the audio-script and discover reasons for listening difficulty (discussion, awareness raising, reflection, including pointing out that the difficulty often resides in the text) – the **'Now I understand why I don't understand'** effect

**Enjoy!** Students seem to love these activities, and perceive their value in the development of their listening skills

# Further reading / references

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