

Helping Students Become More Effective Listeners



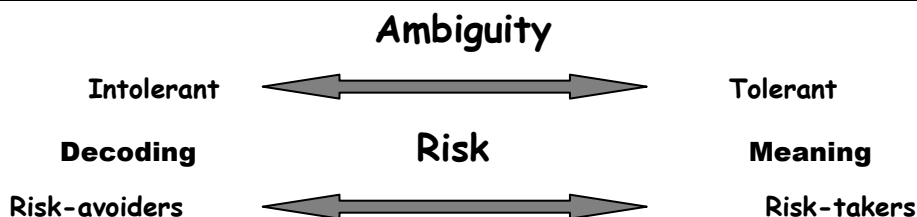
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1. Listening and Listeners



2. Focus on Context: Activate different types of background knowledge

A Focus on the topic



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

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 on 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 easier to understand, the interviewer or Dan Everett? Why? Compare with a partner.

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
- 2 people talking at the same time
- 3 someone laughing
- 4 the noise of machines
- 5 *your ideas* ...

3a. Focus on Content: Decoding

Help listeners decode

- i. words and (approximate) word meaning
- ii. phrases
- iii. grammar

3b. Focus on Content: Meaning building

Help listeners understand...

i. 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.

3 How did the Pirahã react to Dan learning their language? They

- a thought he was silly.
b were surprised he understood them
c thought it was interesting.

4 What travelling experiences had Dan had before he went to the Amazon? He'd travelled

- a from Southern California to Mexico.
b a lot in Southern California.
c around Mexico.

Work closely with the audio-script to weight-up difficulty-level

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**

ii. meaning in context (figurative language use)

iii. main points and detail

iv. the main point

v. inference

4. 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.)

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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

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