

Subject:
Listening Skills

Providers:
Mahdis Babaei
Mohammad Ali Bayatian
Saba Rahimi
Shaghayegh Moradi

Professor:
Mr. Ahghar

Jan 2021



Listening: A good way to learn English

Everyone knows that there are four skills in learning a language, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. They are always related in terms of usage, and speaking is viewed by learners as the most desirable skill in face-to-face communication in the globalization era.

What is the answer to the following questions?



What do you have to do before you can speak?



What does a child learn before he talks?

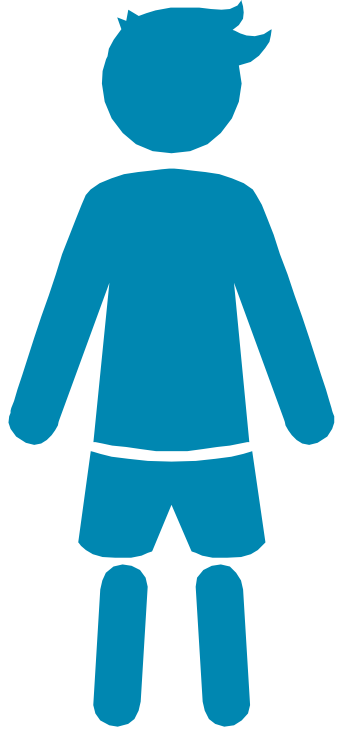


What do we do before chatting?



Listen, of course!





Naturally, children begin listening to their parents when they are babies. They are often greeted, spoken to and admired without any response expected. Though nobody knows if the baby understands the spoken words, the process continues. Children automatically acquire such language over some time, and later on gradually produce it through actual experience. The production may be incomplete at first, but successful at last.

In learning English, listening can help improve speaking considerably. Although it is the first of all skills, it is neither the easiest nor the most meaningless. We need to hear various types of English repeatedly and continuously if we want to communicate properly, meaningfully and naturally.





Why Listening?

It has been claimed that over 50 percent of the time that students spend functioning in a foreign language will be devoted to listening (Nunan, 1998). Despite this, we often take the importance of listening for granted, and it is arguably the least understood and most overlooked of the four skills (L, S, R and W).

In second language learning, several writers and researchers in the early 1980s suggested that listening had a very important role (Winitz, 1981).

Arguments for the importance of Listening and Speaking



One of the strongest arguments for emphasizing listening and delaying speaking is based on a particular view of what it means to learn a language. Some approaches to language teaching have given a lot of importance to speaking. In the very first lesson learners did speaking drills involving repetition and substitution. The lessons involved almost as much speaking as listening, because listening was seen as a way to present models that learners immediately copied. The aim of learning a language was to speak, and language was viewed as a type of behavior.

Nord expresses the importance of listening clearly:

Some people now believe that learning a language is not just learning to talk, but rather that learning a language is building a map of meaning in the mind. These people believe that talking may indicate that the language was learned, but they do not believe that practice in talking is the best way to build up this “cognitive” map in the mind. To do this, they feel, the best method is to practice meaningful listening.

Models of Listening

Listening was traditionally seen as a passive process by which the listener receives information sent by a speaker. More recent models view listening as a much more active and interpretive process in which the message is not fixed but is created in the interactional space between participants. Meanings are shaped by context and constructed by the listener through the act of interpreting meaning rather than receiving it intact (Lynch and Mendelsohn, 2002: 194).



Types of Listening

One-way listening

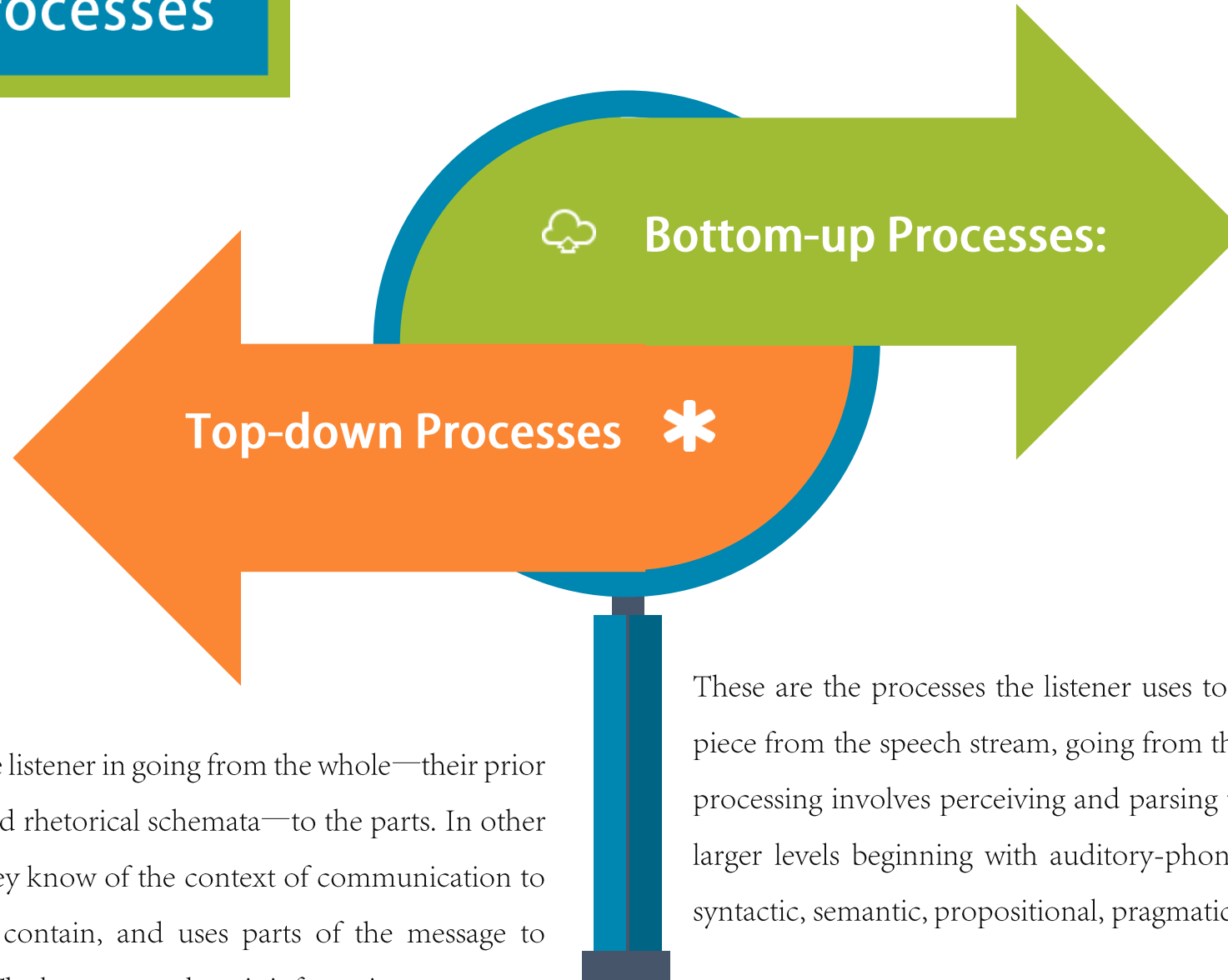
Typically associated with the transfer of information (transactional listening).



Two-way listening

Typically associated with maintaining social relations (interactional listening).

Listening Processes



Top-down processes involve the listener in going from the whole—their prior knowledge and their content and rhetorical schemata—to the parts. In other words, the listener uses what they know of the context of communication to predict what the message will contain, and uses parts of the message to confirm, correct or add to this. The key process here is inferencing.

These are the processes the listener uses to assemble the message piece-by-piece from the speech stream, going from the parts to the whole. Bottom-up processing involves perceiving and parsing the speech stream at increasingly larger levels beginning with auditory-phonetic, phonemic, syllabic, lexical, syntactic, semantic, propositional, pragmatic and interpretive.

Lynch and Mendelsohn suggest the following targets for practice:



Discriminating between similar sounds



Processing the meaning of different discourse markers



Coping with and processing fast speech



Understanding communicative functions and the non-one-to-one equivalence between form and function



Processing stress and intonation differences

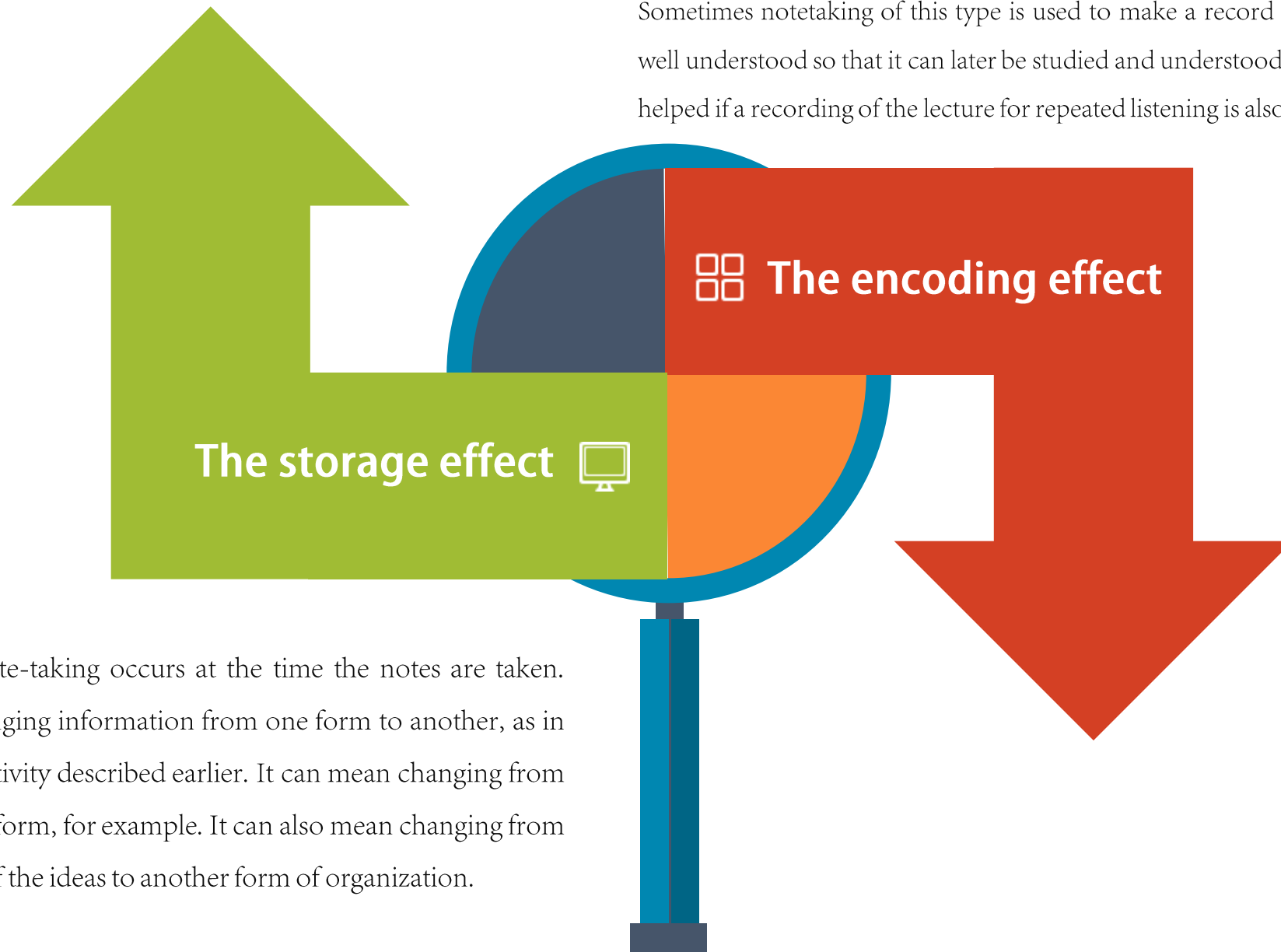


Advanced Listening: Note-taking

Note-taking is a meaning-focused listening activity. Note-taking does two jobs: it stores information for later use, and it provides the opportunity to encode information.

These two effects are called the storage effect and the encoding effect.

The storage effect of note-taking is the one that most students consider to be important. Students make use of the storage effect of note-taking when they take notes which they will later use to help recall or revise what occurred in the lecture. Sometimes notetaking of this type is used to make a record of material that is not well understood so that it can later be studied and understood better. This process is helped if a recording of the lecture for repeated listening is also available.



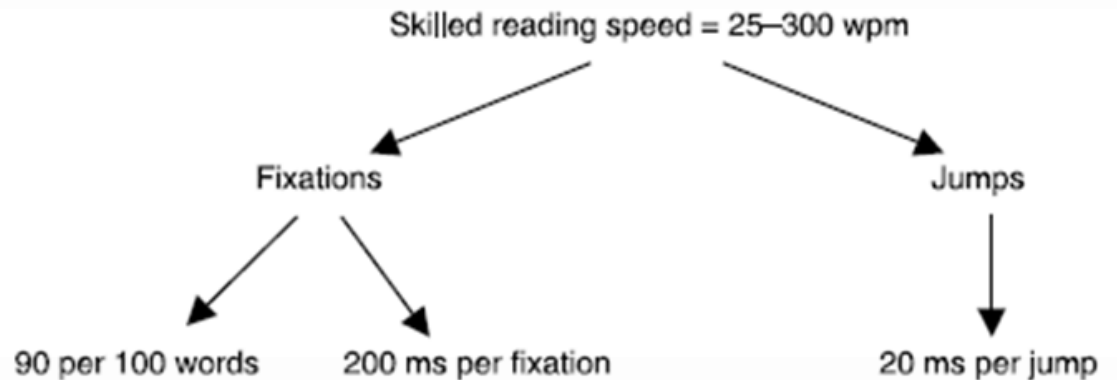
The encoding effect of note-taking occurs at the time the notes are taken.

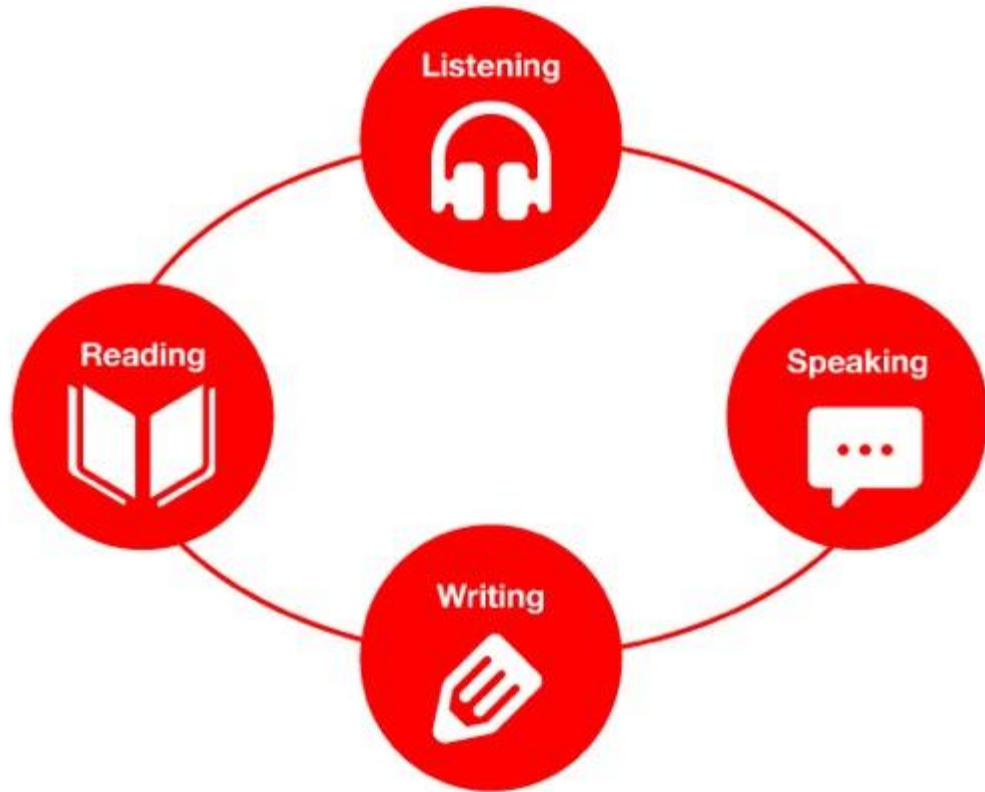
“Encoding” means changing information from one form to another, as in the information transfer activity described earlier. It can mean changing from a written form to a spoken form, for example. It can also mean changing from one form of organization of the ideas to another form of organization.

It may involve a change from a listing form such as:

1. Skilled reading speed = 25 – 300 wpm
2. Around 90 fixations per 100 words—200 ms per fixation
3. Saccadic jumps
 - (a) 1.2 words per jump on average
 - (b) 20 ms per jump

To a diagrammatic form such as:





Listening among other skills:

While considerable attention has been given to the other three language skills (reading, writing and speaking), studies focusing on listening have only recently been made. Such neglect derived from the fact that listening has been viewed as a passive skill.

Even though listening is now well recognized as a critical dimension in language learning, it is still one of the least understood processes listening was included into new instructional frameworks, the functional language and communicative approaches.

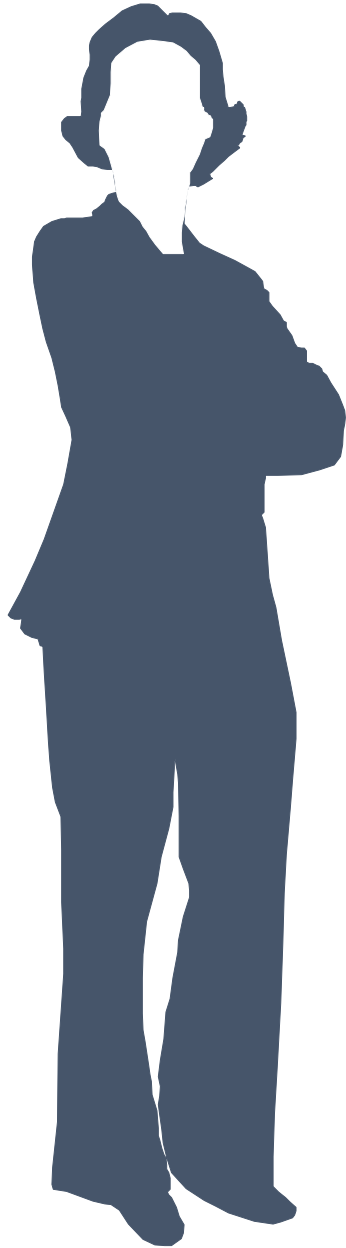
Difficulties to understand aural information:



What researchers have been able to conclude is that in order to understand aural information, listeners must use effective listening strategies. While learning listening comprehension, learners might encounter several difficulties: learners might be unable to control the speed of the speaker; they can't ask for words to be repeated all the time; their limited knowledge of vocabulary makes listening comprehension difficult and they suffer to understand the meaning of every word; and they lack context knowledge.

Many language learners believe that the greatest difficulty with listening comprehension, as opposed to reading comprehension, is that listener cannot control how quickly a speaker speaks.

Discourse markers used in formal situations might be clear to listeners, but in informal situations, signals such as gestures, loudness, or change of pitch are very confusing for second language learners.



Common listening comprehension problems:



Students quickly forget what they heard



They do not recognize words they know



They understand words but not the intended message



They neglect the next part when thinking about meaning.

Listening Strategies

1

Cognitive

Cognitive strategies are problem-solving techniques used to solve learning tasks and facilitate the acquisition of knowledge or skill.

2

Metacognitive

Listening is an active process

Listening is a very active process, despite the fact you're not saying anything. That's why you're so tired when you go home after a social event in another language.

Getting over the feeling that we are doing nothing is a key step towards listening effectively.

One solution is to employ active listening techniques, to remind yourself and others that you're involved in the conversation even if you don't speak so much.



Some tips to show that you are actively listening:



Make eye contact with the person who is talking.

Lean forward slightly to show interest. If you're actually listening this should be natural.



Nod your head slightly to show you're understanding.

Make agreeing noises and nod your head if you agree with something they've said.

Listening in private schools:

The private school teachers, unlike the public school teachers were more inclined to the interactive listening approach. They usually asked their students to listen to the recordings or watch the movie clips first without questions, listen (or watch) again, fill in the blanks or complete short-answer questions, discuss the answers with the group, share them with the class, and they ended with the teachers' feedback.



Excuses for not teaching English listening:



The teachers who did not teach English listening in class (from both types of school) gave a number of similar reasons.

One main reason for the public school teachers was that they did not have additional class hours for listening training.

Other reasons included the belief that students could learn by themselves by practicing listening after school and their tendency to focus on teaching the test content of the reading comprehension, grammar, and translation.



Listening skill and memory forms:

Memory comes in many forms: visual memory (remembering what we see), motor memory (remembering our experiences such as smells and tastes), and auditory memory (remembering what we here).

Listening skill as one of the four language learning skills is very important and inevitable auditory memory helps us absorb sounds, especially spoken language sounds. Without auditory memory, we can not process, store, or remember information.

Listening as a key:

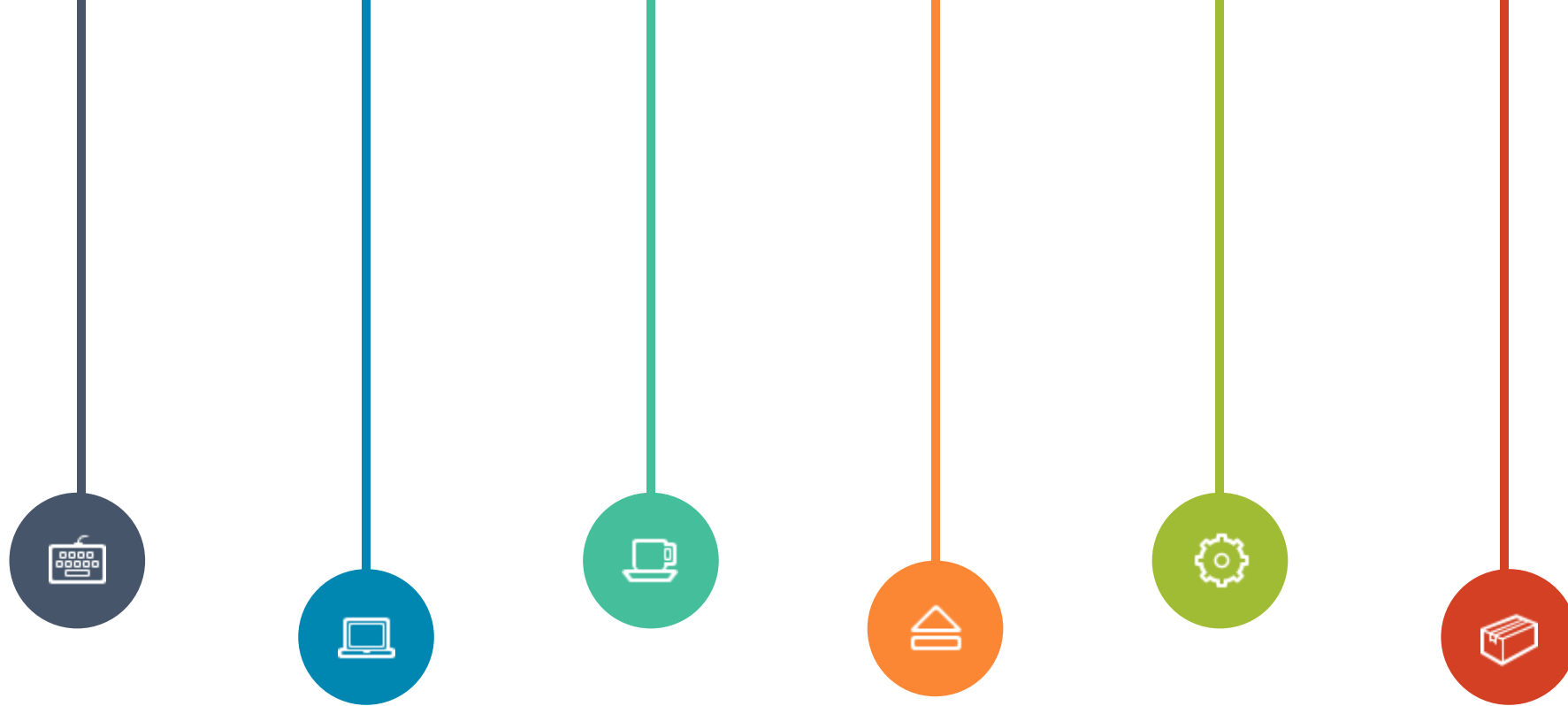
Listening is key to all effective communication. Without the ability to listen effectively, messages are easily misunderstood. As a result, communication breaks down and the sender of the message can easily become frustrated or irritated. If there is one communication skill you should aim to master, then listening is it.



Is listening physical or mental process?



- Hearing refers to the sounds that enter your ears. It is a physical process that, provided you do not have any hearing problems, happens automatically.
- Listening requires focus and concentrated effort, both mental and sometimes physical as well.
- Listening means paying attention not only to the story, but how it is told, the use of language and voice, and how the other person uses his or her body. In the other words, it means being aware of both verbal and non-verbal messages.
- Your ability to listen effectively depends on the degree to which you perceive and understand these messages.



Difficulties of listening:

The main problem in strengthening listening skills is the difference between what is heard and the written part of the text. That is, what you hear is very different from what you write on paper. This is because some letters are eaten between words or are pronounced so poorly.

We spend much more of our time listening than speaking, reading and writing, and yet we remember relatively little of what we hear. After only a few days, only about 25% of a brief discussion will be retained.

Stages of listening:



The first step is to open yourself to the incoming message by letting down your defenses as far as possible, and trying to sense the real, underlying meaning of what is being said.



The second step is to begin to interpret, or reconstruct, what is being said, remembering always that words have different meanings to different people.



The third step is to evaluate what is being said, only after you have made a reasonably objective interpretation of the message.

Listening role in jobs:



Listening is so important that many top employers provide listening skills training for their employees. This is not surprising when you consider that good listening skills can lead to better customer satisfaction, greater productivity with fewer mistakes, and increased sharing of information that in turn can lead to more creative and innovative work.

Many successful leaders and entrepreneurs credit their success to effective listening skills. Richard Branson frequently quotes listening as one of the main factors behind the success of Virgin.

The ability to listen carefully allows workers to better understand assignments they are given. They are able to understand what is expected of them by their management. The ability to listen and to comprehend also allows workers to build a strong rapport with coworkers, managers, and clients

Strength your listening skills:



By strengthening your listening skills, you can improve your relationships with your English-speaking friends. Because your friends feel that you fully understand what they are saying. You can also start new friendships with more confidence.

How much time do you spend on your practicing?

I want you to ask yourself a question and answer it honestly. How much time do you actually dedicate to practicing and improving your listening skills? Now you've recognized that you're probably not practicing enough. Honestly, practice makes perfect. You're not going to suddenly wake up and be perfect at listening. It takes time, it takes dedication and it's called a skill for a reason. It's something that you have to develop, principally on your own and also with help from others. But what is listening practice?



Importance of different accents:



You should use a wide range of resources and listen to wide range of accents as well. Why? Because lots of students say that we want to learn British English and to do that we're only going to listen to British speakers. But that's not true! You're going to meet people from all over the world with all different accents and you're going to need to understand them, so listen to as many accents as possible and then think about the different sounds that each accent makes. There's not one definitive way of speaking English.

There are lots of variations: Regional variations, Variations by country. For example, English spoken in New Zealand is very different to English spoken in America. So you need to be able to recognize more or less everything and diversify your English.

Order your resources:



Now the biggest tip that any English teacher will give you if you're trying to improve your listening is listen to movies, listen to audio books, listen to more exams and things like that. Excellent tip, but it's important that students listen to the right things in the right order. It's not suitable to recommend a sarcastic British comedy that uses the complexities of British English. So you want to start with easier things and work your way up to more difficult things.



So the best way is test out listening to children's TV programs. Simply because children's TV programs are normally designed to help a child learn more and understand more and also improve their vocabulary, especially TV programs for younger children.



If you find yourself understanding 80% of whatever you choose to watch then you can move up to slapstick comedy, comedy that is silly, it's not got in depth humor and it doesn't play around with the language. It's just basic comedy. Normally American comedy shows are more on this level than the British ones.



Practice listening blindly:

- ❖ Maybe you're watching programs with English subtitles. That's good but you don't want to rely on the subtitles. I want you to learn with your ears and not with your eyes. So the recommendation to take your listening to the next level is watch each program or movie twice! Probably, more achievable with short programs.
- ❖ Learn the patterns of voice that you use. If you've got a listening exam or you're going to have some sort of interview or conversation over the phone, you're not going to be able to read the person's lips which can be really useful.

Audio books:

Reading is great for building your vocabulary but it doesn't do much for your listening skills because what a book does not offer you is a pronunciation guide normally. Pick a book that's interesting and relevant to you. Judge it by your level. If you're quite a low-level, choose a children's book. For more intermediate maybe go something for teenagers and if you're advanced obviously go for something that's aimed at adults or maybe has a lot of technical language. Remember that if you want to check your understanding you can always buy the book as well, listen to a section and then read it, listen to another and read it. This is a wonderful way of improving your listening comprehension.



Youtubers:



Another resource that often gets overlooked is Youtubers since it's an amazing resource, full of free videos and listening tools.

Find something that's interesting for you. Maybe you're interested in Gossip, celebrities, science, etc. Search for it in English and start listening to it.

Do not translate!



When you're speaking to someone in person, I want you to listen for context. It's really important to understand that you don't need to be perfect, you don't need to understand every single word. You need to understand context and general meaning. If you spend too much time analyzing each word, the conversation or monologue will have moved on, by the time you finally understand the word that you're focusing on. So you actually then have to catch up and you lose understanding. So instead of listening word-by-word listen to phrases as a whole.

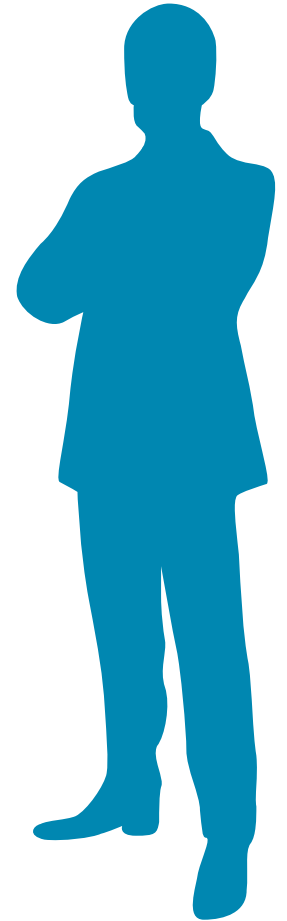
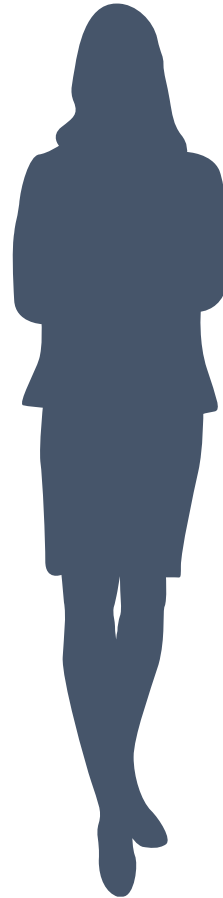


How to understand native speaker?



This point is more focused on real life conversations and how to understand native speakers when they're talking to you and when they're talking quickly.

My tip for you is dominate the conversation (lead the conversation) which I know can be quite hard but I mean take the lead with the conversation and direct it because if you're speaking with a native speaker, you are the one who is doing most of the work and they can kind of relax.



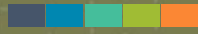


All tips link together:



And really these tips, they all link together. You need to practice, in order to practice you need to use different resources but make sure you choose the right one, make sure you put them in order, understand that you might be feeling really confident after an English lesson but when you go out and you speak to a native you might not be able to communicate as much as you thought before, so manage that expectation. But something you can do to understand more in real life is lead that conversation. You ask the questions, ask them to slowdown, ask them to speak more clearly and ask them to repeat things.

Resources:



- I. S. P. Nation Jonathan Newton. Teaching ESL/EFL Listening and Speaking.
- YouTube videos
(<https://youtu.be/uNOnyMRdDTA>
<https://youtu.be/BVMkUzxiMCo>)
- Websites



Thanks for your attention!

