

V. Listening

V.1. Before listening

Can I listen?

Task 1

Write down ten habits you have that distract you from listening and ten that help you to concentrate when listening.

Task 2

Suggest how you might eliminate those distracting habits.

V.1.2. Who will be speaking?

Task 3

Below are short biographies of the speakers. What can you predict about their manner of presenting ideas (accent, speed, interactivity)? When you have a clear idea of what to expect, watch their videos (www.ted.com) and check to see how accurate your predictions were.

a) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is an internationally recognised novelist (Commonwealth Writers' Prize; O. Henry Prize). She was born in Nigeria, but today she divides her time between Nigeria and the United States. She holds a Masters degree in Creative Writing. In 2005-2006 she taught Introductory Fiction at Princeton University.

b) Stefano Mancuso is an Italian scientist and “founder of the study of plant neurobiology, which explores signalling and communication at all levels of biological organization, from genetics to molecules, cells and ecological communities.”

c) Sir Ken Robinson is an international advisor on education to government, non-profit organisations, and educational or arts bodies interested in promoting creativity. He has influenced UK National Curricula as well as the whole system of education. His books *Out of Our Minds* and *The Element* have become international bestsellers and his public speeches are watched by millions on YouTube.

d) Kamal Meattle is an Indian scientist and environmental activist who “has spent a great deal of time in India and abroad convincing corporate leaders, diplomats, energy ministers, and other government officials that his ideas about sustainability, individual responsibility, and respect for the environment can ensure a healthier future for everyone.”

e) Erin McKean is a US lexicographer. She is a founder of the online dictionary Wordnik and a former Principal Editor of The New Oxford American Dictionary, second edition. She has formulated ‘McKean’s law’, a variation on Murphy’s law: “Any correction of the speech or writing of others will contain at least one grammatical, spelling, or typographical error.”

Task 4

Choose someone speaking in English who you might be expected to listen to in the future, find as much information as you can about them and predict what you can expect and think how you might prepare.

V.1.3. What am I going to be listening to, and why?

Task 5

Look at the titles with their subheadings and determine the topic and type (lecture, presentation, discussion, etc.) of the talk.

- a) Freshman Organic Chemistry: Force Laws, Lewis Structures and Resonance
- b) Is An "Academic Blog" An Oxymoron? – Q&A
- c) The Paradox of Choice
- d) Academic Freedom in an Age of Industry Collaboration: A Panel
- e) What 'us' nonprofits can learn from Coca-Cola
- f) European Civilization (1648-1945): Absolutism and the State

Task 6

Match the following titles with the abstracts below and then decide if there is any change in your expectations when you have the information from the title only or from both the title and abstract.

- 1) On Animal Movement: Biologically Inspired Design
- 2) How to start a movement
- 3) Connexions - Building Communities and Sharing Knowledge
- 4) Ideas, narratives and social change

a) This talk presents the initiative on the part of a team of young Pakistanis who started a counter-extremism social movement Khudi Foundation in 2009. Their aim is to promote a democratic culture in Pakistan. The team leader is a British Pakistani, a former member of the Islamic political group Hizb ut-Tahrir, and a co-founder and co-director of Quilliam, the world's first counter-extremist think tank.

b) This University of California Berkeley biologist studies the enormous variety of animals' legs and feet adapted to different conditions and allowed for different types of movement. He uses his research to design the perfect robotic "distributed foot", adding spines, hairs and other parts to metal legs and creating versatile scampering machines.

c) A professional musician and one of the largest sellers of independent music on the web explains how movements really get started. With the help of an illustrating footage he presents the essential actors and phases necessary for a movement to develop.

d) This talk presents the reinvention of how textbooks are written, edited, published and used. This new "open access movement" is based on a set of assumptions shared by a remarkably wide part of the academic community. The ideas that knowledge should be shared, free and open to use and re-use; that collaboration should be easier, not harder; or that concepts and ideas are linked in unusual and surprising ways and not the simple linear forms that textbooks present, are discussed.

Task 7

Read the abstracts and short descriptions below and say how you would prepare for each session. What do you need to do, to know, to be ready for? Create a detailed list of how you would prepare. Check if it works. If not, analyse what went wrong – what you had not expected.

**a) Justice: What's The Right Thing To Do? “The Moral Side of Murder”
Professor Michael Sandel**

If you had to choose between (1) killing one person to save the lives of five others and (2) doing nothing even though you knew that five people would die right before your eyes if you did nothing – what would you do? What would be the right thing to do? That’s the hypothetical scenario Professor Michael Sandel uses to launch his course on moral reasoning. After the majority of students vote for killing the one person in order to save the lives of five others Sandel presents three similar moral conundrums – each one artfully designed to make the decision more difficult. As students stand up to defend their conflicting choices, it becomes clear that the assumptions behind our moral reasoning are often contradictory, and the question of what is right and what is wrong is not always black and white.

**b) Barnard Commencement Speaker 2010, Columbia University
Meryl Streep**

Meryl Streep addresses her speech to a class of graduates at Barnard College, Columbia University Commencement 2010.

**c) Foundations: This Is Your Brain - Introduction to Psychology
Professor Paul Bloom**

This lecture introduces students to two broad theories of how the mind relates to the body. Dualism is the ubiquitous and intuitive feeling that our conscious mind is separate from our physical bodies, whereas Materialism is the idea that all of our mental states are caused by physical states of the brain. This lecture reviews arguments explaining why materialism has become the predominant theory of mind in psychology. This discussion is followed by a basic overview of the neurophysiology of the brain.

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V.2. While listening

Task 8

There are some strategies related to listening skills. Choose which of these refer to effective active listening practices.

1. The subject is boring, dry and it does not relate to my interests. I don’t have to listen to this.
2. When I do not understand some complex idea or key point, I should ask for clarification.
3. I can change my note-taking systems when I need to.
4. I write down only the important information.
5. I can make judgements really quickly; I do not have to understand all the presenter’s arguments.
6. I will try to recognize organizational patterns of the talk.
7. I am going to take everything down in note form, and hope I will manage to write down almost all the words the speaker will say.
8. The talk will give me all the information I need, so I will not need to consult other sources later.
9. I will not need to make judgements about the content if I listen very carefully.
10. I should not form an opinion until it is explained properly so I can fully understand it.

11. The information on the slides is more important than anything that is said.
12. The topic is not my subject matter; therefore, I need to pay attention to find areas of interest.
13. The speaker makes so many mistakes in their delivery that I do not need to listen to it.
14. When I do not understand, I do not ask because I might make a fool of myself.
15. I may concentrate on the content only and ignore all those evident but irrelevant errors.

Task 9

Match the sign posting types with the groups of linking words below.

- a) introducing a different or opposing idea
- b) restating an idea using different words
- c) listing or ordering ideas
- d) adding emphasis to an important idea
- e) stating a cause-and-effect relationship
- f) summarizing or completing an idea
- g) showing examples
- h) introducing unimportant ideas

- 1) *for example, that is, for instance, namely, to illustrate this by ..., let's take the case of ...*
- 2) *then, secondly, finally, ultimately, the next point is*
- 3) *in brief, in conclusion, for these reasons, so to sum up*
- 4) *in other words, let me put that another way, what I have been saying is, to recapitulate*
- 5) *by the way, which reminds me of a story, incidentally*
- 6) *accordingly, because, consequently, therefore, if ... then, as a result, resulting in, leading to, therefore*
- 7) *specifically, most importantly, especially, and this is crucial*
- 8) *conversely, however, but, despite, on the other hand*

Task 10

This is a transcript of a part of a seminar – that part which the listener managed to understand. Read the transcription and answer the questions related to what the listener was thinking during the session. Each question is related to the paragraph preceding the given number.

This afternoon is about listening and the processes of listening, and the mysterious things we do when listening. I would like to suggest you that when we are listening in a normal kind of way, not for an examination, not in other specialised situations, when we are listening just to ordinary conversations, we do five different things, we do them in different proportions but we do five things. **(1) What was the main idea of this part?**

One of the first things we do is to delete. We wrap stuff out, if I was to talk to you for a moment about my journey from Cambridge to this building, there would be a lot of details about how I got lost between, and maybe you won't believe me, but between Kings Cross and here. The number of people whom I asked and the number of people who didn't want to tell me, and the number of people who didn't know, and in all that plethora of detail and the general mess you get that I am pretty unhappy and pretty bad at geography. But you would certainly or almost certainly delete many of the little bits that I've just told you. You just got the overall picture of this poor guy getting lost. **(2) Why was the speaker's journey to the seminar place mentioned? Is it important?**

You also have the phenomenon of distortion. When we listen we distort. Or we pull around and change our own schemata change what's coming in. OK? Let me give you an example, I just want you to go back for a moment in my own life to the time when I was eleven, twelve, thirteen **(3)**..... So, Lago Maggiore evokes a volcano lake and it evokes a lake in Algeria, and that's perfectly normal in terms of everyday listening, while you listen to me talking about my lake, Lago Maggiore, you will go, some of you, to your own lake. Now, that means that the resultant stuff that you put into midterm memory is going to be a mixture of what you added and what I gave. **(3) I missed some part of the speech. What was it about?**

And for me, the active listening, which could be a metaphor, which would be the Mississippi flow of internal stuff in the listener comes down to meet the ocean coming in, so the other person talking to me is the ocean coming in and I with my own schemata am the river coming down and the act of listening is actually the mixing of those two waters, is the mixing of the river water and the ocean water ... and what we store in midterm memory is the mixture. Certainly not only ocean water, very unusual. **(4) Is the Mississippi metaphor helpful for me? Is the deletion clearer now?** So we delete, we get rid of things that don't strike us as important. And why do we do that? We do it because we can't hold all the details. It's too much, for the conscious mind. We distort. We modify. We change. So Lago Maggiore becomes the Algerian lake or whichever. OK?

We generalise. If I give you a whole lot of detail about some things, you will almost certainly, to retain it, you will go to an upper level, you will chunk, so if I was to tell you that one of the results of the Pinochet **(5)**..... you generalise the details up to the level of fruit and veg in order to remember, because you don't need to remember every example I gave you. And this is not the same as deletion. Which is cutting out. This is bringing the details up to a higher level so that you can remember them as one chunk. OK? **(5) I missed the point about Pinochet and Chile. Is it a problem? Yes / no-Why?**

And then finally you do elaboration. **(6) I am confused. Why?** People are always elaborating. People will create pictures in their minds. People will take something smaller and make it bigger. And most of the talk this afternoon is going to be about this area of elaboration. OK?

One other thing that you do when it's a conversational listening is begin to prepare for taking the conversation over for your own turn. You begin to mentally prepare what you are going to say. OK? So, that's the fifth thing we often do in conversational listening. **(7) I am not confused any longer. Why?**

And I want to bring you back to normal listening. To the kind of listening that happens in a normal way. And most of that happens on an unconscious or semiconscious level. I mean, when you're listening to someone, you don't say HA! That's unimportant: Delete! The unconscious mind deletes. It doesn't ask the conscious mind, it does it, automatically. **(8) Here, I did not understand the words "conscious" / "unconscious". Is it a problem or do I understand this anyway?**

What I am going to do now, is to show you how elaboration works by bringing what is normally an unconscious process into consciousness. What I am going to do ... is going to start at the word level. And I want to give you some words. **(9) I have changed my listening strategy. Why and How?** I am going to launch the word at you and then I want you to wait for about six or seven seconds, until I say "please, report", and then you turn to your partner, somebody sitting near you and you'll report what was going on in that extraordinary box called your head. OK? Don't do anything special with it. Just let it happen. Let your reaction come. And then you turn to your partner and tell them what happened in those five or six seconds. Normally, this happens at lightening speed unconsciously. OK? Are you ready for the first one? OK. So when you hear the word, let it simmer for a moment and then I will ask

you to report to your partner. **(10) The “OK?” helped me a lot with the orientation in the speech. What did that signal?** (Rinvoluceri, 2009)
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V.5. Note taking

Why do I take notes?

How do I take notes?

Task 11

Match the abbreviations and symbols used in English texts below with their meanings.

(A)

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|-----------|----------|------------|
| (a) incl | (g) cf. | (m) no. |
| (b) 20c | (h) min. | (n) dept. |
| (c) e.g. | (i) viz. | (o) p./pp. |
| (d) i.e. | (j) & | (p) excl. |
| (e) govt. | (k) N.B. | (q) max. |
| (f) etc. | (l) Q. | |

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|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 1) for example | 7) that is | 13) minimum |
| 2) government | 8) compare | 14) and |
| 3) namely | 9) 20th century | 15) etcetera, and so on |
| 4) note | 10) page/pages | 16) maximum |
| 5) excluding | 11) number | 17) question |
| 6) department | 12) include | |

(B)

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|-------|-------|
| (a) < | (f) → |
| (b) = | (g) ↑ |
| (c) > | (h) ↓ |
| (d) ~ | (i) ↔ |
| (e) × | (j) ≠ |

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| 1) mutual interference | 6) more than |
| 2) more or less | 7) contradiction |
| 3) not the same as | 8) rise |
| 4) equals, the same as | 9) less than |
| 5) decrease | 10) consequently |