How to Teach Listening
Passive or Active?

- Is listening a passive or active skill?

Listening is considered to involve the active selecting and interpreting of information coming from auditory clues so that a listener can identify what is happening and what is being expressed.

What does listening involve?

- Identifying information
- Searching memories
- Relating that information to those memories
- Filling it in the proper spot (or)
- Creating a new place for it
- Using it when needed
Effective listeners

- monitor comprehension
- associate new information with background knowledge
- make inferences about unknown words
- continue listening even if they don’t understand certain words
- have metacognitive knowledge about the task
- manage to get the main idea rather than listen word-for-word
What interferes with listening comprehension?

- Unfamiliar vocabulary
- Grammar
- Text too long
- Several people talking
- Unfamiliar Context
- Lots of details
- Topic not interesting
- Theme not clear
- Accent
- Speed
- Idiomatic speech
- Task too difficult
- Unprepared for the discussion
- Not prepared for the format
- A lack of background information
Principles of teaching listening comprehension

- Let students understand how foreigners speak English and build students’ sensitivities.

- All we can do is give them some guidelines, provide an opportunity for meaningful practice and trust they will learn these things for themselves. (Buck, 1995)

How do most teachers in Taiwan teach listening comprehension?

TTT Approach

- Test-test-test
- A sink or swim method
- The use of passage with multiple-choice questions to teach listening comprehension.
If not TTT Approach, then how?
How to prepare students for listening tasks?
Involve ss in focused listening

- Make it relevant to ss (interesting)
- Provide background knowledge
- Pre-listening exercise to activate content
- Use a variety of activities
listening activities (with focus) to overcome the difficulties

- giving them charts / categories
- asking questions ahead of time
- showing pictures/charts
- discussing the topic first
- describing the context
- role playing the situation
- providing key word list
- brainstorming (situations / pros / cons)
- Predicting
- Doing follow-ups that allows them to connect directly with their lives
Other listening activities

- Follow-up activities
  - More listening
  - Writing activities
  - Role-playing

- Use activities to wake up ss
  - Jazz chants
  - Jokes
  - Puzzles
  - poems
Strategies to teach Listening Comprehension

Bottom-up Strategies
Top-down Strategies
Bottom up strategies 1: words

1. Counting **syllables** by using a rubber band
2. Teaching word **stress**
   - circling stressed syllable
   - underlining unstressed syllable
   - circle the most stressed word in a sentence
   - using noise maker (or a flute) so that students can understand the sound and stresses (focus on the movement)
Bottom up strategies 2: words

1. **Pronunciation**
   - minimal pair practices
     - lice / rice  pin / pen  pin/pin/pen (choose)
   - present tense or past tense
     - They share the food. They shared the food.
   - pronunciation change / blurred speech
     - What do you mean? Where’s the boy?

2. **Teach** intonation
Bottom up strategies 3: words-phrases

- listen and find the **word groups** which carry meanings
  - take a script
  - mark where they think the groups are
  - Listen to the tape
  - get students to notice the way that English is spoken
Top-down Strategies 1: (thinking strategy)

- Get students to determine:
  - The setting
  - Interpersonal relationships
  - Topic
  - Mood
  - Main idea
Top-down Strategies 2: (thinking strategy)

- Help them to
  - hypothesize
  - predict
  - Infer
- Example: Give them one/two words
  - Let students guess what the story is about in order to develop their abilities
- Example: Guess the answers as soon as they see the multiple choices
Dictation Activities

- Single word dictation
- Line-by-line dictation
- Full-text dictation
- Student-centered dictation
Dictation (for both strategies):  

*Single Word dictation*

1. Students have to match the words with the pictures.
2. Students have to do “odd-man-out”.
3. Students have to make a sentence out of the word that they hear.
4. Students have to write words in groups or columns according to pronunciation differences. The words may be read alone or in complete sentences.
5. Students have to write words read out by the teacher. They need to put the words in groups or columns according to their characteristics.
Dictation (for both strategies): Line-by-line dictation

1. Students each have a line from a text. They dictate their line to the teacher in the order they think is appropriate. The teacher writes exactly what they say, as they say it, including mistakes. The class then corrects as necessary.

2. Teacher reads out the text line by line. After each line, students pass their paper to their right, and correct any errors before continuing the dictation.
Dictation (for both strategies):

*Full text dictation*-1

Teacher reads out the text.

1. Students write down **the whole text**.
2. Students have an incomplete version of the text with **gaps to fill in**.
3. Students have **a multiple-choice exercise**.
4. Students write down the **content word** in the blanks.
5. Students **draw** what the teacher describes. They may color it, complete it, etc.
Dictation (for both strategies):

1. Students **respond to the text** by answering the questions.
   - Short answers
   - Complete sentences

2. Teacher reads out the text. Students have a copy of the text with errors, missing words or extra words added. They **correct the text** to make it the same as the teacher’s.

3. Teacher reads out the text **very quickly** while students write down what they can. Then, in groups, they try to reconstruct the text. In the end, they compare with the original text.
Dictation (for both strategies):  

**Student-centered dictation**

1. **Pair work dictation**: Students work in pairs, each one having an incomplete version of the text, with gaps in different places. Not allowing the students to look at each other’s text, they read out what they have, completing their own text.

2. **Information Hunting**: Students work in groups of 3. The text for each group is put on the other side of the room. S1 goes to the text, reads and memorizes a section, returns to the group and says what is remembered. S2 writes it down and S3 checks what S2 has written. They may then change roles and continue.
Sample of Listening activities

- Information Gap (pair work)
- Predicting
- Listening Comprehension
- Phantom of the Opera
Online Resources

- Randall’s ESL Cyber Listening Lab
- BBC Online Soap Opera
- CNN Student News
- Podcast
  - English Idioms and slang
  - Breaking News English
  - ESLpod
    - ESL Podcast
    - TOEFL Podcast
    - English Through Stories
End of this session