

Strategies for second language listening: current scenarios and improved pedagogy

Book

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Part 3: Pedagogical applications

Graham, S. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7743-3977>
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Part III: Pedagogical applications

Introduction

In this part of the book we present activities to further develop your own understanding of second language listening as well as some activities that might help you explore the areas discussed in Parts I and II with your learners. These areas have been selected on the basis of what we feel is their importance for the development of learners' ability to listen, and their applicability within real language classrooms. We focus on French, German and Spanish, as the languages we ourselves are most familiar with, but the suggested activities could be used with just about any language, adapted where necessary.

We suggest that in your work with learners you should incorporate as many of the activities presented as you can, but keep the following in mind:

Things to remember when planning and implementing activities:

- Do not try to work on too many aspects of listening at once. It is better to have frequent, shorter activities focusing on specific aspects of listening development than to have one or two longer, more broadly focused sessions. Some of the activities we propose could be broken down into shorter segments.
- At the same time, try to avoid teaching individual strategies one at a time; you are aiming to show learners that there is a range they can draw upon, and that strategies work best in combinations or clusters. Part of their task is to get into the habit of selecting the most appropriate combinations of strategies for different tasks.

- Try to be explicit in modelling, or demonstrating, what you want learners to do. For example, if you want them to focus on discourse markers to help identify important words in a passage, you might ‘think aloud’ in front of the class while you listen to a passage, pausing the recording and verbalising what is going through your mind as you hear discourse markers.
- Explain explicitly how the things you are asking learners to do will help them improve their listening in the medium to long-term (and not just get the right answers to listening tests in the here and now!).
- Offer guidance when you ask pupils to carry out strategy-based activities they have not done before, and remove that guidance gradually.
- Always incorporate an element of reflection in your activities: rather than simply ask learners to do this or that, also ask them what they found easy or difficult (and why) and encourage them to think of ways to deal with similar difficulties in the future.
- Always encourage learners to reflect on what impact the strategies they used had on how well they were able to listen. Peer discussion could be helpful too.

Each section starts with some preliminary thoughts regarding the areas to be explored. It then suggests a series of pedagogical procedures to be tried out in the classroom. It ends with a summary of the Key Ideas covered in the section. In Appendix 2 we include a photocopiable template for an Action Plan to help you implement what you have read.

Awareness-raising: How learners listen and how they can listen more effectively

Aims

- To consider in more detail where learners' difficulties in listening might lie
- To consider possible ways of gaining insights into how learners listen
- To discuss possible approaches to raising learners' awareness about how they listen in another language and the strategies they might have at their disposal

Preliminary thoughts

As we discussed in Chapter 3, listening strategy instruction tends to be more effective if it is needs-based; in other words, if it addresses the specific difficulties that a group of learners has. So, an important initial step for teachers is to gain a clear understanding of how their learners listen: what difficulties they encounter, what strategies they use, and so on. Learners also need to gain greater awareness of what happens when we try to understand spoken language, and how strategies might help with that.

Read the following excerpts. For each one, try to identify what problems in listening they highlight for these learners. Then, think about whether your own learners in the first few years of language learning experience similar problems. Finally, compare your thoughts with the items listed in the box over the page.

Excerpt A

It's just, yeah. It's too quick and takes me a while to actually get it. [...] I find it difficult, I don't know if it is difficult but it is to me. [...] I think it's difficult, but people who are

good at French probably don't [...] I'm just not very good at listening [...] I don't like, I try to listen to it but then I just give up because I can't, usually they play it twice, that isn't enough for me [...] usually I just find a word I know, try and make out. That's what I usually do. Doesn't always work, 'cos it's so fast and I find I'm still concentrating on what is said before when it moves on to the next part.

Excerpt B

I find it is quite difficult to, um, understand French as it's being spoken, because it's quite fast and dialect...

Excerpt C

Student: It's alright when there's a structure... structured question, it sort of makes you more aware of what you're listening to, but when it just says 'Make notes on what this person's saying', then I can't decide what to write... it's my weakest area, perhaps however much I do there I'm still going to be weaker... I need to have the actual sound in my... get it in my head... get used to the different sounds...

Interviewer: Right. And when you're listening to something, and you... how do you try to understand it? If you come across a phrase or sentence that you don't understand, what do you do to try and get to grips with it, anything in particular?

Student: *No, I don't really have any strategies...*

Suggested answers:

- I) These learners seem to have difficulties with:
- Motivation for listening – feeling there is no point in trying with it as it's just too hard, or they're just no good at it (Excerpt A)
 - Perceived problems with the 'speed' of listening (Excerpt B)
 - Lack of awareness of language varieties and the importance of understanding different speakers (Excerpt B)
 - Not knowing how to focus their attention effectively – over-focusing on individual words and then missing the next bit, and/or not being able to tell what is important when listening in a more unstructured listening task (Excerpt C)
 - Lack of strategies to deal with unknown/unrecognised words or phrases when listening (Excerpt C)
- II) Our research suggests that many learners at high school level experience these problems, especially when they move beyond the scripted listening material they experience early in their language learning, and if they are not helped to develop ways of dealing with more authentic spoken language.

We gained the above insights by interviewing learners about how they listen, something which might be less easy for teachers to do in their own classrooms. The problem is that it is probably quite difficult for a teacher to have a clear idea of how much learners have actually understood or how they are going about trying to understand, from just a standard listening activity from a textbook. Such tasks normally ask learners to record answers to very specific 'detail' questions; whether they get (or do not get) the right answers does not tell us what is really going on regarding learners' attempts to gain a sense of what they hear.

As we saw in Part II, while teachers may ask learners whether they found a listening activity difficult or not, they rarely seem to ask learners how they went about trying to understand. Below we make some suggestions for activities that might help teachers to improve their

understanding of what and how learners are understanding, as a precursor to helping their learners to improve their listening.

Pedagogical procedures

1. Finding out from learners what their problems with listening are, and where they might need some help

- You could give them a simple questionnaire about what they find hard in listening.

Possible questions to ask might be (using French/German/Spanish as example languages but any language could be substituted):

	Very true of me					Not true of me				
I find listening to French/German/Spanish difficult.	1	2	3	4	5					
The things we listen to are too fast	1	2	3	4	5					
When I listen to French/German/Spanish I focus on each word and miss the next bit	1	2	3	4	5					

If I hear a word I don't know I try to work	1	2	3	4	5
it out					

- You could ask them to do a slightly challenging listening activity in class and then ask them to write down any problems they had.
- You could ask them to listen to a short passage and then to write down in their first language everything they have understood. Looking at what they have written is likely to give you some insights into what they are finding difficult. To see how this might work, look at what some learners of French wrote down for a short listening passage about holidays, where the speaker claimed to want to try long, long hikes, *de grandes, grandes randonnées*, was not worried about carrying a rucksack (*un sac à dos*), and claimed that it was a cheap holiday because one could camp. As a whole, the passage translated as follows:

What sort of holidays do you normally prefer?

Up until now, I haven't had many different kinds of holidays. So, for example, I haven't gone on long, long hikes but I think I'd like that.

Long hikes?

Yes, I've already done day-long walks but it's not the same thing.

Well, that's very energetic!

Well, yes, indeed! And it's not dear, you can camp.

And carrying a ruck sack wouldn't bother you?

You don't have to go at top speed, you know.

Learners' responses:

Student 1: She prefers long walks, she's very energetic, he asks about presents and she says one has to buy at a great speed.

Student 2: She is very energetic. She likes to go on holiday to hot places because she likes to camp. She also enjoys going abroad for a new experience. She enjoys spending the day doing activities. She likes to live life to its fullest.

Student 3: Favourite holidays are where... for example a big, big.....

From these responses we can infer that: Student 1 has difficulty in identifying word boundaries and/or sound groupings, which might have led to her inability in distinguishing 'sac à dos'/rucksack' from 'ce cadeau/this present'.. Student 2 allows knowledge of context ('holidays') to dominate his thinking and 'hears in' what he expects to hear based on the context. Student 3 only hears individual, isolated words and latches on to 'key words' which are in fact fairly unimportant words ('grand, grand') but perhaps these are the only words she recognises.

If you do decide to give learners a passage to listen to, and ask them to write down everything they have understood, there are certain things to think about when you compare what they have written with what the text says: Are there any surprises? Do any 'incorrect' words suggest particular difficulties?

2. Raising learners' awareness of the process of listening and the role of strategies; introducing inferencing strategies

Before you can help learners to listen more effectively, it is important to make them aware of useful things they do already, maybe in their first language, or in the second language, that they can use more often to help them, including those for inferring unfamiliar words. Try the following task with them.

- Tell learners they will hear a passage which contains some strange words but that they should not worry about that. Explain that their task is to work out:
 - a) What the passage is about in general (did the speaker have a positive or negative experience? How do they know?);
 - b) What the strange words mean (you might want to list them on a worksheet with spaces for answers).
- Read the passage to them twice, at normal speed or a little slower (see Transcript below). Then ask learners to discuss in groups:
 - a) What the passage is about in general (Did the speaker have a positive or negative experience? How do they know?);
 - b) What they think the words mean and how they worked them out.
- Take group feedback and draw up a list on the board of what strategies learners used. This may include the suggestions given below on Worksheet 1 – if any are missing, suggest these to the learners as additional clues they could have used. During the feedback it should become clear to learners that they did not need to understand the precise meaning of all the problem words to understand what the passage was about.

- Finish the session by emphasising to learners that they can use many of these strategies when listening to the language. Tell them that they will have the opportunity to try some of them out in later lessons. You could also at this stage draw up a checklist of strategies for learners to try later.

You could also record the passage and ask learners to listen to it before the lesson, as homework.

Transcript:

'I've just come back from a holiday that cost me a fortune. I went to Florida and had booked a supposedly furbustuous hotel there. It's the first time I've had to deal with lotticks and izzids when on holiday!

We'd paid a lot of money to the travel company. Their brochure promised a furbustuous hotel, free happaps from the airport, free use of the hotel's gabonmang and lovely beaches. But when we landed, there was no one to meet us so we had to pay for a taxi to the hotel, the hotel room was infested with lotticks and izzids, and the gabonmang was completely flooded, from the ninth hole onwards.

We wrote to the tour company when we got back, and finally got some compensation from them, but not much. They said they'd been organizing holidays to Florida for 20 years and it was the first time they'd received any uptips. I'm not sure I believe them!'

Optional extra task

In Worksheet 2 you can find a similar task that you may want to use with your students. You can use it as it is (in English), or you can adapt it to the language you teach, offering your students an opportunity to work with the concept of unknown words in a listening passage in the L2.

Worksheet 1

The meanings to the unknown words and clues you might have used to work them out are as follows:

- Furbustuous: luxurious
 - **Using knowledge of sentence structure:** must be an adjective as it describes a holiday (comes between the article and the noun);
 - **Using the words surrounding or near the problem word, that is, the context:** ‘supposedly’ suggests the hotel didn’t live up to expectations.
 - **Using our world knowledge** tells us holidays in Florida are usually fairly plush, and we’ve already been told the holiday was expensive. Also, the holiday firm ‘promised’ a ‘furbustuous’ hotel so it must be something good. So, we can hazard a guess at what *furbustuous* means (although getting the exact meaning isn’t necessary to understand the general meaning).
 - **Using L1 knowledge** and comparing the word ending to English –‘ous’
- Lotticks and Izzids: both mean some kind of insect or other ‘pest’; exact meaning not necessary
 - Understanding that it’s something unpleasant we can **work out from other words in the passage that precede or follow** lotticks and izzids (‘deal with’;

‘infested with’) and **from the general context of the passage** – the speaker is unhappy with his holiday and had to be compensated for it.

- Happings: transfer, coach ride, etc. (again, exact meaning not needed):
 - it should have happened from the airport; if we can’t work it out from our **general knowledge** of what holiday firms usually organise between the airport and a hotel, **we can listen on** and get another clue from ‘But when we landed, there was no one to meet us so we had to pay for a taxi to the hotel’ - ‘happings’ is something similar to ‘taxi’ but provided free.
- Gabonmang: golf course:
 - not obvious on first mention; we have to **listen on for surrounding words** when it’s **repeated** later in the passage. That it’s a hotel facility we know as it’s ‘promised’ in the brochure; it’s something outside because we are told it’s ‘flooded’; we can use our background knowledge to work out that it’s a golf course, because golf courses have ‘holes’.
- Uptips: complaints:
 - our understanding of the **general gist** of the passage tells us that what the speaker has been doing is ‘complaining’ and we know from the last paragraph that the speaker ‘wrote’ to them on his return; general knowledge tells us when we write to companies it’s usually because we want to tell them we are unhappy; the sentence structure then tells us the problem word must be a noun (‘received any...’)

Worksheet 3

The passage below contains a large number of non-words and it was designed to support learners of English as foreign language in their development of listening strategies. You can use it as it is with your students; alternatively, you can use it as a template to create your own listening passage with non-words words in the language you teach, by translating the passage and replacing the words in italics with words that do not exist in the target language, but that could potentially exist.

There are days when everything seems to go *frobosky*. Yesterday was one of those days. I didn't hear the *blong* and I *overflought*. I rushed to the *kog* station and when I arrived there all the *kogs* had been cancelled because of the *zungzy* weather. I tried to *locateer* a taxi but all of them were *blituous*. So I had to walk to work. Because the weather was *zungzy* there weren't many people at the *onbud*, so I had to do my work and my *hallocs'* work as well. By the end of the day I was so *proby* that I made a *venilous errium*: I told one of my *hallocs* that I *frodied* that work, that I *frodied* my *glif*. My *glif* heard what I said and told me to go home and never *grabe* back.

(from Santos, D. 2013. *Ensino da língua inglesa: foco em estratégias* (p. 93). [English language teaching: focus on strategies]. São Paulo: Disal.

Key Ideas

- Helping learners with their listening is easier if you have an understanding of what their difficulties are
- It is not easy to gain an insight into these difficulties just through using comprehension-type listening activities; there are however simple activities teachers can use to gain a clearer insight

- Common difficulties learners experience include:
 - Difficulty in identifying word boundaries and/or sound groupings;
 - Failure in identifying known words because they sound different in connected speech;
 - Inability to tell which are the important words and phrases;
 - Under- or over-use of background knowledge/logic/common sense about what might have been said.
- Helping learners themselves to understand what resources they can draw on when listening is an important first step in improving their listening

Prediction and verification/monitoring

Aims

- To reconsider the importance of helping learners to use prediction effectively, with accompanying verification and monitoring
- To present possible approaches to teaching the effective use of prediction and verification/monitoring

Preliminary thoughts

In Part I of this book we sought to problematise some of the activities through which teachers introduce listening material. These included reminding learners of vocabulary linked with the topic to be heard prior to the actual listening, something which teachers in our study reported that they often did. That approach, we argued, does not necessarily involve learners in actively thinking about language and content associated with the topic. In other words, the teacher is doing all the work, and learners may not be learning how to make predictions themselves, independently from the teacher – thus they are not developing prediction-based strategies. Or, they may develop less effective patterns of predicting behaviour, like some of the listeners we discussed in Part I, leading to a narrow and possibly unproductive focus on limited aspects of what they are about to hear.

Importantly, learners will not necessarily know how to apply prediction strategies effectively if they are not taught possible ways of engaging in those practices. It is thus important to teach learners how to predict and verify or monitor predictions. This may involve modelling and demonstrating the use of such strategies, as we outline below.

Pedagogical procedures

1. Modelling prediction and verification/monitoring: possibilities

- Think aloud your own predictions before carrying out a listening task, and justify why you have made them (emphasising phrase-level predictions, content predictions, synonyms for predicted items).
- Brainstorm with the class what might be predicted for a given passage, both linguistically (words, phrases) and non-linguistically (themes, ideas).
- Think aloud the process of reflecting on the pronunciation of certain items and how these might change in connected speech.
- Think aloud the process of getting ready to verify predictions – what ‘traps’ might lay ahead, in terms of contradicting factors – for example, negatives, surprising content compared with the context. Learners could also offer suggestions here.
- Use charts to keep a record of predictions and their verification, like the ones shown in Pedagogical Procedures 2 and 3 below.

2. Asking pupils to make predictions, to verify them and to justify their predictions and verifications

The following activities are best carried out using materials where there is a discrepancy between the expected content of a listening passage and the actual content. For example, when we demonstrated this to teachers in England, we drew on a listening task which required beginning learners of French to listen to five mini-conversations and work out where each of them took place (Meier & Ramage, 2004). The task included visual and written cues which could be used as support before and during the listening. Importantly, some of the information contained in the conversations ‘contradicted’ what learners might expect to hear

from the visual clues; e.g. Picture 1 was of a waiter in a restaurant, and rather than taking the customer's order as might be expected, he asked her not to smoke in the restaurant.

We might exploit such a listening activity in the following way:

a) As an opening activity, the teacher asks learners to predict some phrases and vocabulary that speakers might use in each location, e.g. 'votre plat principal, madame' [here's your main course, madam] for the waiter/restaurant scenario, as well as some ideas about possible topics of conversation (either singly, in pairs or as a whole class). Learners complete the following grid (reflecting the pedagogical cycle in Vandergrift, 2004), using French as the example language (followed by English translation):

Question/theme <i>(question to be answered, passage, scenario, etc.)</i>	Prédictions <i>(predictions)</i>	Première écoute <i>(first listening)</i>	Deuxième écoute <i>(second listening)</i>	Décision? <i>(decision)</i>

b) Learners listen to the text, played with pauses at the end of each section only. As they listen, they put a tick in the 'première écoute' (*first listening*) column for any predictions that are confirmed, plus any confirming evidence. Any predictions not heard, or contradicted, have a cross put against them.

c) Learners then work in pairs to discuss which of their predictions they think are correct and why. They identify any points of disagreement with their partner that they need to listen again to in order to check them further.

d) Learners listen a second time and note down in the ‘deuxième écoute’ column (*second listening*) any further information gleaned from the passage, and what their final response is (their *decision*).

e) After this, the class as a whole discusses where each conversation took place and how they know - what evidence they have, how what they predicted differed from what they heard, and anything else they did that they found helpful. Clues used might be linguistic ones (such as certain words or phrases might have been said, repeated or paraphrased), paralinguistic (such as the speaker’s tone of voice) or extralinguistic features (for example, background noises). Where students have the ‘wrong’ answer, they also discuss what led them to that answer.

f) The teacher pools the suggestions from (e) for how to verify/monitor predictions and writes them on the board. Learners write these down as a checklist.

g) After the listening, the learners refer back to the checklist and note down what strategies they used that were helpful and the ones they are going to use again next time. The teacher takes this in and writes brief feedback on the range of strategies they used and their future plans for strategy use.

3. Applying strategies developed in subsequent listening activities

For subsequent listening activities, learners refer to the checklist they drew up earlier and indicate which strategies they have used, which ones were the most useful and which other ones they might try next time. As before, the teacher gives brief feedback on strategy use and

future plans. Gradually over time learners are reminded less often to use the checklists and the teacher feedback decreases, once learners seem to be using the strategies independently.

A checklist might look like the following example. Again, this could be written in the L2 in simple language.

<p>Before I listened I...</p> <p>() read the exercise carefully, paying attention to the rubric and images.</p> <p>() thought of possible words, phrases and ideas I might hear.</p> <p>() thought about how these words and phrases would be pronounced.</p> <p>() thought of the different ways certain ideas could be expressed.</p> <p>() got ready to verify/check out my predictions.</p> <p>While I listened I checked out...</p> <p>() all the things I predicted (questions, vocabulary, possible ideas and answers).</p> <p>Please underline which of the above strategies was the most helpful and put a tick against the ones you will use again.</p> <p>Teacher feedback on strategies used/planned: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

The teacher's feedback should try to encourage the use of a range of strategies, in combinations, and also draw the learner's attention to the way in which the strategies used

have contributed to how well the learner has understood the passage (or not!). Below is an example of such feedback:

Well done, Rhianna. You have made a lot of progress in your strategy use over the last few weeks, and as a result, in your listening. You have taken on board my earlier suggestion of comparing different parts of the passage to see if your original predictions and interpretations are correct. Evaluating decisions taken is a vital part in this process. Your comments on how you answered section B show that you are taking a very thoughtful approach to your listening. Predicting what you might hear, working out unknown words from context, but all the time self-questioning, checking that it makes sense, is a good approach, and has helped you gain a very good understanding of the passage.

Key ideas

- Predicting what you might hear in a listening passage can help understanding, but it needs to be done with care
- It is helpful to predict phrases rather than just individual words
- It is helpful to predict ideas as well as expected language
- Any predictions made before listening need to be verified and monitored - the listener needs to listen carefully to check that they do in fact hear what they predicted they might hear
- Learners need to be shown how to predict and verify/monitor, and be given the opportunity to practise these strategies

- Prediction and verification/monitoring can be modelled by the teacher thinking aloud and other methods (see above)
- Prediction and verification/monitoring grids can be used to model and practise these strategies with learners
- Learner evaluation of their prediction/verification strategies, and feedback on these from the teacher, are vital parts of the process

Listening for gist and identifying key words

Aims

- To consider the difference between ‘listening for detail’ and ‘listening for gist’
- To understand what we mean by ‘key words’ and gain insights into their role in listening for gist
- To present ways of helping learners identify and listen out for key words

Preliminary thoughts

In response to our questionnaire, teachers claimed that they often asked learners to ‘listen for gist’, but what do we really mean by this? Read through the following outline of a listening activity, taken from one of the textbooks we reviewed in Part II of this book. It is described in the accompanying Teacher’s Book as requiring learners to ‘listen for gist’. Do you agree that the activity requires gist listening?

Learners listen to a passage describing a visit by two people to the French tourist attraction, Cité de l’Europe (approximately 140 words in length, delivered in the form of a monologue). They are asked to reply to six questions in English, asking where the speakers went, what they bought, what they ate, etc. (from Meier & Ramage, 2003/2008, *Expo 2 Rouge*, Pupil’s Book, p.51, Teacher’s Book, p. 87)

Suggested answer

In this task listeners are asked to answer very specific questions about the passage, and not to listen out for the general idea of the text!

It is very important , however, that learners **do** learn how to listen for gist – that they learn how to gain an overall sense of a passage rather than focusing on every single word. The problem is that many textbook passages and activities require listening for specific details, rather than for global gist (even if the activity is labelled as ‘listening for gist’).

Another problem related to an over-emphasis on listening for detail rather than listening for gist is that many listening passages in textbooks are also very short, and lack what we call ‘redundancy’ (additional information, repetition, paraphrases, etc.) as well as hesitancy and pauses, which are all things that frequently happen in naturally-occurring speech and give listeners extra time and ‘space’ in which to understand the gist of what is said.

The short, ‘bare’ passages often found in textbooks also run the risk of persuading learners that when they listen, they need to understand every word – which of course in real life is rarely the case. That takes us to an important point: if we do not give learners the opportunity to deal with longer, more sophisticated listening passages and show them that it is possible to gain a general understanding of those passages (and even to identify key words in them!), they are unlikely to develop the ability to cope with unknown vocabulary when listening in a second language.

So far in this section we have discussed what ‘listening for gist’ involves, and one of the main points to be kept in mind here is that in order to identify the gist of a listening passage, listeners need to be able to identify the key words in it, namely the important words, what in the literature might be called *selective attention*. Indeed, teachers often

advise learners to approach the comprehension of spoken language by ‘listening out for key words’. Yet our previous research (see Chapter 2) suggests that what students may understand as key words are words that they happen to recognise, which may not be words that are important for the meaning of the passage. If that is the case, the questions to be asked then are: how can we help learners listen for gist? How can we help them identify the real key words in a listening passage?

Pedagogical procedures

1. Providing opportunities for listening for gist

The first step is to give learners plenty of activities where their aim is to get the overall sense of the passage and not worry about understanding everything. That is most easily done by asking them some very broad questions about the passage the first time they listen, such as:

- Where is the conversation taking place? How do we know?
- How many speakers are there? Are they male/female/young/old – how can we tell?
- What sort of mood are they in? How can we tell?
- If we give learners the setting of the passage, can they predict what the topic of discussion might be? What might they expect to hear? They can make use of some of the prediction/verification strategies we looked at in the previous section.

2. Thinking of ways of identifying key words

To be good at listening, learners do not have to understand every word. But they do have to

know which words are the really important ones, the ‘key’ words. To help them with this, you as the teacher need to be clear in your own mind about what might be possible ways of determining what the key words or phrases are in a listening passage. Note down what you think these might include.

Suggested answer: You might have come up with some of the following:

- Key words tend to be verbs and nouns
- Key aspects of the text are often repeated or restated (paraphrased)
- Key aspects of the text are often introduced by ‘discourse marker phrases’ that indicate that something important is coming up. In English examples might be ‘In my opinion’, ‘first of all’, ‘therefore’
- Depending on the language learners are listening to, key words may be more heavily emphasised by the speaker, or they may come in first position in the sentence
- Negatives and words that restrict (such as ‘almost’, ‘sometimes’)
- Expressions of emotion (‘Oh!’, ‘Great!’)

3. Demonstrating how to identify key words, alongside recycling strategies for inferencing

Choose a text through which to model some of the ways of identifying key words outlined in the box above. It should have enough redundancy for it to be unnecessary for learners to understand every single word; ideally too there should be some expression in the speaker’s voice that helps to convey meaning. It is also helpful if there are some more difficult words in the passage that learners may not know too well. Below we show a possible teaching sequence using a French text from *Expo 2 Rouge*, Teacher’s Book (Meier & Ramage, 2008, p. 132), reprinted here with the permission of the publishers.

Adrien Storr (14 ans) a de la chance: sa mère a gagné notre concours du mois de juin. Son prix? Quinze jours au Sénégal pour deux personnes ...

Adrien et sa mère sont partis de l'aéroport Charles de Gaulle à Paris le 15 juillet, et ils sont arrivés à Dakar, capitale du Sénégal, sept heures plus tard. L'hôtel 'Silhouette de la Mer' était très luxueux. Les chambres étaient toutes dans des bungalows à l'architecture respectant le style local, et avec accès direct à la plage. Et quelle plage! ... Du sable fin s'étendant sur plus de trois kilomètres!

Madame Storr a lu tranquillement des livres sous un parasol sur la terrasse. Par contre, Adrien a profité de toutes les activités: il a fait de la planche à voile, du ski nautique, du tir à l'arc et même du banana-riding! Il a aussi joué au tennis de table, au golf et au volley-ball.

Pendant la deuxième semaine, ils ont voyagé au parc national de Djoudj pour voir les nombreuses espèces d'oiseaux (pélicans, hérons, flamants) qui y habitent.

C'était magnifique!

Adrien pense que le Sénégal est vraiment incroyable. Il fait des économies maintenant pour y retourner un jour. On ne sait jamais...

English translation

Adrien Storr (14 years old) is lucky. His mother won our June competition. Her prize ? 15 days in Senegal for two people...

Adrien and his mother left Charles de Gaulle airport, Paris, on 15 July, and arrived at Dakar, the capital of Senegal, seven hours later. The hotel 'Sea Silhouette' was very luxurious. All the rooms were in bungalows built according to the local style, and with

direct access onto the beach. And what a beach !...Fine sand, stretching out for more than three kilometres !

Madame Storr peacefully read books under a parasol on the terrasse. By contrast, Adrien made the most of all the activities : he did wind-surfing, water skiing, archery and even banana boat riding ! He also played table tennis, golf and volley-ball. In the second week, they travelled to the Djoudj national park to see the many species of birds (pelicans, herons, flamingoes) that live there.

Adrien thinks that Senegal is really wonderful. He is saving up now to go back there one day. You never know...

Possible teaching sequence:

- a) The teacher tells the class they are going to listen to a passage about a special trip a boy has been on. S/he asks them to predict what they might hear (ideas, anticipated language) and learn in relation to two questions: who was involved and what happened. The class uses the kind of grids presented in **Prediction and verification/monitoring**.
- b) The class then listens to the passage for a first time, checks out the predictions made and makes notes to explain whether they were incorrect or correct, and what helped them to come to those conclusions.
- c) The teacher asks the class to feedback on what were some of the things they thought were discussed in the passage, and what were the clues for this. How did the class know what to focus on? Were they able to understand some of the passage without

understanding every word? This discussion should lead the class to mention some ways of working out the main messages and identifying the key words. These ways should then be displayed as a list on the board. The teacher can add to the list as necessary. A simplified version of the items given in **Pedagogical Procedure 2** might include the following:

- Key words are repeated or paraphrased (said again but in a different way)
 - Key words come after ‘marker’ phrases
 - The tone of voice suggests it’s a key word
 - One of the words from the accompanying questions appears in the phrase
- d) The teacher plays the passage again. When s/he comes to one of the ‘clues’ displayed on the board, s/he pauses the recording and thinks aloud about what was heard, and how it indicates that some key language has been given.
- e) As a follow-up activity, the teacher can play the recording again, this time demonstrating how to deal with unknown words, reminding the class of the work they did when starting to think about how they listen in a second language (see **Awareness-raising**). For example:

- Making use of repetition and paraphrase to make out a new word, as in this example: *et avec accès direct à la plage. Et quelle plage! ... Du sable fin s'étendant sur plus de 3 kilomètres...*
- Listening to what comes before and after the problem word, as in this part: *Adrien Storr (14 ans) a de la chance: sa mère a gagné notre concours du mois de juin. Son prix? Quinze jours au Sénégal pour deux personnes ...* Here, clues for the unknown word ‘concours’ (competition) come from ‘gagné’ (won) and

'son prix' (his prize). Also from the fact that Adrien is being offered something pleasant.

f) As before, learners can be given a tick sheet listing the strategies discussed which they then use with other listening activities. They identify the most helpful strategies, identify new ones to try, and the teacher gives feedback on this strategy use, as before.

The example tick sheet below incorporates strategies for identifying and understanding key words with those for prediction and verification. Your own might look slightly different, of course, depending on what strategies you have introduced.

Before I listened I...

1. () read the exercise carefully, paying attention to the rubric and images
2. () thought of possible words, phrases and ideas I might hear
3. () thought about how these words and phrases would be pronounced
4. () thought of the different ways certain phrases could be expressed
5. () got ready to verify my predictions

While I listened I paid attention to:

6. () repetition or paraphrase
7. () marker phrases
8. () the questions and tasks that go with the passage
9. () all the things I predicted (questions, vocabulary, possible answers)

While I listened I worked out any words I didn't know by:

10. () using the words I did understand to get the general meaning of the passage
first
11. () listening to words that came before or after the unknown word
12. () using my general knowledge to think about what the unknown word might logically mean
13. () listening to what came later in the passage for further clues, or to check whether the unknown word did in fact mean what I thought it meant
14. () using what I know about sentence structure to work out what kind of word it is
(noun, adjective, verb)
15. () using what I know about sentence structure to work out what kind of word it is
(noun, adjective, verb)
16. () thinking whether the unknown word is like a word I know in English or the TL,
and then checking whether that meaning would make sense

In future listening tasks I would like to improve: _____

I am going to try these strategies (put the strategy number): _____

Teacher's comments:

Key Ideas

- Learners need opportunities to learn how to listen for gist
- Textbook activities do not always provide enough such opportunities or for making use of text redundancy
- Learners can be helped by being shown ways of identifying key words

Understanding of key sounds

Aims

- To consider learners' difficulties with sound patterns in the second language
- To consider learners' difficulties in identifying words they know
- To discuss possible ways of teaching learners how to deal with those difficulties

Preliminary thoughts

Learners sometimes find it difficult to recognise in spoken form many words that they would probably know if they saw them written down, or if they heard them pronounced on their own (that is, not as part of a sentence). This lack of understanding may also occur, for example, when learners encounter cognates that may have different phonological realisations in the L1 and the L2, for example 'hamster' in French, 'sociable' in Spanish or 'final' in German. Another difficulty is that learners' knowledge of key sounds in the second language may be insecure, so that they are unable to distinguish between similar phonemes (such as *rue/roux* in French; *barra/baja* in Spanish; *Küche/Kuchen* in German). Note that in this section we use the terms 'sounds' and 'phonemes' fairly interchangeably, for simplicity's sake.

There are many possible ways of teaching key sound-spelling links (or grapheme-correspondences, GPCs, as they are also known). You need first of all to identify the key sounds to teach, and what sounds you will focus on at any one time. One important thing to keep in mind while implementing the pedagogical procedures suggested below is that the focus of the work is on sounds and not on word meaning. We therefore suggest that it is

important to spend most of your time on oral practice (listening, repeating, identifying key sounds and/or intonation patterns) rather than on reading and copying rules relating to sounds.

Pedagogical procedures

1. 'Noticing' the sound

To help learners identify key sounds in listening, you need to build in some listening practice. Select a recording containing one or more examples of the sound you have been practising. Ask learners to raise their hand when they hear the sound.

As an extension to the above, you can encourage learners to 'visualise' the sound they are hearing, without looking at the written form – in other words, to try to see the sound representation (for example, in French, '-u', '-ou') in their mind's eye as they hear it.

2. Raising awareness of how the sound is pronounced

Use some of the 'listen and repeat' activities in textbooks. After learners have listened and repeated, do the same thing but this time showing them the transcript. Then ask them to look at similar but unknown words (containing the same sound) and to predict how they will be

pronounced. Or, give them three possible spellings of a list of words that you read out. Get them to tick which is the correct spelling, and to justify their choices.

Something to keep in mind about repetition is that, although it may help learners develop sensitivity to hearing and producing particular sounds, it does not necessarily lead to the development of learners' awareness of sound-spelling correspondence. This issue will be resumed in the section **Segmenting chunks of language**.

To illustrate this Pedagogical Procedure further, let us consider two ways of approaching the same listening passage from *Listos! 1*, a Spanish textbook for speakers of English in their first year of learning the language. The Pupil's Book (page 36) contains five pictures of faces with speech bubbles, each one saying what 'colour' the person is, for example '*Soy rubia*' (*I have red hair*). The learners' task is to listen, follow in the book and to repeat what is said on the recording.

PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

- a) What knowledge/skills does this approach presuppose/develop?
- b) Does it necessarily contribute to learners' awareness of how the phrases (and their corresponding sounds) are represented in written form?

Suggested answers:

- (a) By asking pupils to 'Listen and repeat', the activity does not presuppose any specific set of knowledge about Spanish phonology. In principle, it is possible to 'Listen and repeat' what you hear even by listening to an unfamiliar language. Also, the fact that

students have their books open (and therefore can read the written text) while hearing may influence (in a negative way) the way they articulate their repetition. The only skills that the activity presupposes are the abilities ‘to hear’ what is played and ‘to articulate’ the sounds heard. In that sense the activity does not necessarily lead to any conscious development of L2 phonological knowledge.

- (b) Repetition is not necessarily accompanied by awareness-raising of the sound-spelling correspondence of lexical items.

An alternative way of using this exercise might be as follows:

Step 1: With their books closed, pupils listen to the audio and repeat what they hear. (This can be done once or twice).

Step 2: In pairs, learners discuss: how do you think the word you have heard is spelt?

- i. () rrubia () rubia () jubia

Step 2b: Learners discuss possible spellings for other, key words heard, for example:

- ii. () moreno () morreno () mojeno

- iii. () negra () negrra () negja

- iv. () branca () blanca () brranca

- v. () pelirrorro () pelirojo () pelirrojo

Step 3: While students are working the teacher can circulate around the class encouraging pupils to justify their responses and noting down the comments that are either ‘spot-on’ or misguided. Those comments should be discussed with the whole class later.

Step 4: Wrap up the activity by asking learners to write down their conclusions about the sound-spelling correspondence regarding the letter r, rr, j.

PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

- a) What knowledge/skills does this second approach to the task presuppose/develop?
- b) Does it necessarily contribute to learners’ awareness of how the phrases (and their corresponding sounds) are represented in written form?

Suggested answers:

- a. Approach 2 presupposes different sets of knowledge and skills compared to Approach 1. At first (Step 1) learners are encouraged to focus on sound production only (as they have their books closed) and have to repeat what they hear without perhaps being influenced by what they read. In Step 2 they are asked to reflect on how particular written representations might be produced orally in the target language. Those reflections are accompanied by teacher guidance (Step 3) and a collective final reflection about the rules associated with those letters and their corresponding sounds

(Step 4). This sequence of procedures is likely to develop stronger knowledge about phoneme-grapheme correspondence in L2, hence to support learners on future occasions when they have to write or articulate those letters and sounds.

- b. The breaking down of the activity into (1) focus on sounds and (2) focus on letter, accompanied by talk around the interplay between the two areas in focus and finalised by an attempt to construct the rules associated with the topic is likely to help learners to develop their awareness of sound-written correspondence in the L2.

3. Using peer-peer dialogue and audioscript to support discussion about sound-spelling links

Step 1: Play a short listening passage and ask pupils to write down what they hear (try to use passages including sounds potentially problematic for your learners).

Step 2: Learners compare what they have written in pairs, trying to justify their spellings.

Step 3: Learners read the audioscript and have a final check.

Step 4: In plenary, the class discusses the most frequent problems, and writes down their conclusions in their notebook, using a chart like this:

Words that I find difficult to spell:	
Possible causes to my difficulties:	
What I can do to deal with those difficulties in the future:	

Key Ideas

- Learners' main difficulties:
 - Perceiving lack of ability to distinguish similar sounds
 - Recognising in spoken form words they probably knew

- Possible reasons causing those difficulties:
 - Learners' knowledge of L2 sounds is weak
 - They do not know how the written and spoken forms of a word may differ

- Possible solution to those difficulties:
 - Give learners practice in differentiating between similar sounds

Segmenting chunks of language

Aims

- To consider learners' difficulties in breaking down chunks of language
- To consider learners' difficulties in identifying words they know within stretches of language
- To discuss possible ways of teaching learners how to deal with those difficulties
- To consider how intonation patterns can help in meaning-making

Preliminary thoughts

If you try listening to a language you do not know, it is likely that you will perceive what is spoken as a 'chain' with no internal boundaries, that is, it will be very hard indeed for you to know when one word finishes and another one starts.

Your students may well feel the same way when they listen to French, Spanish or German, or any other language. When they are asked to read in a foreign language they can figure out where the boundaries are because they can see spaces on the page – but those spaces are not necessarily evident in speech!

Indeed, when we asked intermediate learners in England what they found most difficult about listening, a very common response was that the language heard in listening exercises sounded like an unbroken stream of speech. In other words, learners found it hard to spot where one word ended and another began, with obvious implications for their ability to work out the meaning of what they were hearing.

PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

What might be some of the reasons behind these difficulties? Note down some possible reasons.

When we present new vocabulary orally, we may present items singly rather than embedded in sentences. Often, the pronunciation of words changes when they are combined into a sentence. This happens in English too, as this example from Field (2008, p.145) clearly shows: *‘The customer made out a cheque – may doubt’*.

We do not often explicitly teach learners about how words change when they are pronounced in a sentence, and that may affect listeners’ ability to identify words they might understand in written form. Additionally, learners often lack specific awareness of how the second language marks word boundaries and how this differs from English. For example, in French, although we usually feel that this language is completely ‘flat’, there are in fact clues in the intonation pattern that signal the end of a sense grouping, that could help learners to spot where words end.

In sum, learners’ difficulties may reside in the following:

- They do not know how words change when pronounced with other words

- They do not know how the written and spoken forms of a word may differ
- They have difficulties in identifying word boundaries in speech

Pedagogical procedures

1. Raising learners' awareness of how certain sounds change in connected speech

Step 1: Tell learners that problems in identifying word boundaries can occur because of the ways in which the final sound in a word 'mingles' with the initial sound of the next word.

Give them examples of how this happens in their first language too. If you are teaching

French, you might want to use the term *liaison* to describe the phenomenon, or

resilabificación for Spanish it may make the identification of word boundaries difficult, as

Step 2: Read out a selection of phrases for the language in question, also displayed on the board, in which this 'mingling' of final and initial sounds occurs. Below we give some examples for French and Spanish. In the Spanish version, the left column illustrates the example; the right one, how the phrase is realised phonetically.

French

un chat	un h omme
les lapins	les a mis
deux maisons	deu x e nfans
mes parents	mes é lèves
petit chien	petit a mi
vous regardez	vou s a vez

Spanish

piel azul	pie-la-azul
casas enormes	ca-sa-se-nor-mes
fiel amigo	fie-la-mi-go
sitio umbroso	si-tium-bro-so
culta Europa	cul-teu-ro-pa
esta o aquella	es-to-a-que-lla

Step 3: Ask learners what they notice about the pronunciation of the second word in each pair. They should be able to notice that the final consonant of the first word is sounded in the second pair. See if they can work out what some of the rules for the phenomenon are.

Step 4: Put some simple phrases and/or sentences up as bullet points as further examples of some of the basic rules. Ask them to work in pairs and have a go at working out how these phrases would be pronounced.

Step 5: Adapt textbook passages meant for repetition only so that they become opportunities to develop learners' awareness and understanding of liaisons. So, in addition to asking learners to repeat given phrases, ask them to look at the transcript and think about the following before listening to the recording: Which of those phrases (if any) will include

liaisons? Why? Then students listen and check their hypotheses, discussing what they predicted correctly and surprises they had while listening.

2. Giving learners practice in identifying known words within a speech stream

Step 1: Model 'lone' pronunciation of a group of words (which can be displayed on the screen or listed on a handout).

Step 2: Play the recording containing those words in a larger passage; learners listen with transcripts and try to identify any changes that occur when the words are used in a sentence rather than on their own.

Extension: To build on the above you can ask learners to read a transcript before listening and to work in pairs, identifying the words from the script that have different pronunciations depending on whether they are pronounced in isolation or within a sentence or phrase. Learners may refer to their notes on liaisons while doing that. Then they listen to the recording and check their predictions.

3. Raising learners' awareness of intonation patterns and clues that indicate where word boundaries are, and giving them practice in identifying these boundaries.

Step 1: Share with learners right from the start of their language learning some key points about stress and intonation, illustrating them with examples from listening passages, and presenting them gradually. Key points to consider might include:

French (summarised from Grauberg, 1997)

- Different stress patterns from English (on the last syllable of a word, whereas in English it can occur in varying positions)
- Less rise and fall than in English, making it hard to differentiate between/segment words
- In French the final syllable of sense groupings is stressed - listening out for this slight final syllable stress can help learners divide up stretches of French.

German (summarised from Grauberg, 1997)

- Closer to English, having stressed and unstressed syllables
- Content words are given more emphasis than function words; identifying the former may assist in segmenting a stream of German into the most important elements
- A stressed word often conveys new information and occurs towards the end of the sentence: - being aware of this may help learners to know how to identify important information.

Spanish

- Spanish words usually have one syllable that sounds stronger than the others (in most cases the stress falls on the last or second to the last syllables)
- Listening out for this stronger syllable stress can help learners divide up stretches of Spanish.

Step 2: Show videos with native speakers of those languages speaking in English, asking students to identify traces of those features in the speakers' speech. When doing this, make sure learners understand that the purpose of this activity is not to find fault with those speakers' oral production, let alone to make fun of them, but to **notice** features that

characterise the language learnt and that should be incorporated in their own learning. You might want to put some of the intonation features given above into a checklist for learners to use while they are listening, to see which ones they can spot.

Step 3: Give learners practise in applying some of this knowledge to help them segment speech. Ask beginner learners to listen to simple sentences and give them the transcript with no spaces between words, asking them to mark the boundaries between the words. For example, to accompany a hypothetical recording (with its transcript shown on the left below), students would be given a script like the one on the right-hand side of this table:

(Speaker 1)	
- <i>Me llamo</i>	- <i>MellamoMaríaysoydeMadrid.</i>
<i>María y soy</i>	<i>AhoravivoenInglaterraperoechoydeunosamigosyami familiaenEspaña.</i>
<i>de Madrid.</i>	
<i>Ahora vivo en</i>	
<i>Inglaterra</i>	
<i>pero echo de</i>	
<i>unos a mis</i>	
<i>amigos y a mi</i>	
<i>familia en</i>	
<i>España.</i>	
(Speaker 2)	- <i>¡Hola!MellamoGabrielynacienSevilla.</i>

- ¡Hola! Me llamo Gabriel y nací en Sevilla. Ahora vivo en Londres ¡y me encanta esta ciudad!	AhoravivoenLondres¡ymeencantaestaciudad!
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------

Step 4: When students are familiar with this procedure, you can make it more challenging by omitting punctuation marks and line breaks, like this:

*MellamoMaríaysoydeMadridahoravivoenInglaterraperoehodemenosamisamigosyamifamili
aenEspañaholamellamoGabrielynacíenSevillaahoravivoenLondresymeencantaestaciudad*

Steps 3 and 4 can be used with dialogues as well. A very simple awareness-raising activity would be to ask learners to mark only the end of a speaker's turn and the beginning of a new speaker's turn. In a second playing of the recording, learners can then be asked to mark the word boundaries within each turn.

Step 5: After checking their answers, learners should be encouraged to exchange ideas about (1) their main difficulties; (2) what the clues were that helped locate the word boundaries; and (3) what can be done to deal with those difficulties in the future. To support learners' discussions, you might give them the information about intonation patterns listed earlier which is also useful for spotting word boundaries more easily.

Step 6: At home, students can be asked to identify word boundaries in lyrics. You can make this task less challenging (by providing the non-segmented words line by line) or more challenging (by giving out the all words in a block, without separating out into lines).

4. Raising learners' awareness of the use of intonation as a meaning-making tool

Step 1: Using a listening passage in which one or more speakers express their opinion about something, ask learners to make a list of predictions about what they might hear in the passage, in terms of phrases that indicate a positive, negative or neutral reaction.

Step 2: Elicit suggestions from three or four students and write them on the board.

Step 3: Ask learners how they think those suggested statements should be pronounced.

Learners should pay attention to intonation patterns and tone of voice while reading out those statements.

Step 4: Elicit comments from students about how the tone of voice/intonation patterns they hear can signal one of the three possible responses (positive, negative or neutral).

Step 5: In pairs or small groups, pupils read out their own predictions.

Step 6: Pupils listen to the audio and check their predictions.

Step 7: In plenary, discuss: Were your predictions accurate? If yes, in what ways? If not, why not? To what extent did focusing on the tone of voice/intonation while listening make the

identification of the speakers' opinions easier? To what extent did the predictions made facilitate such identification?

Key Ideas

- Learners' main difficulties:
 - Spotting where one word ends and another starts

- Possible reasons causing those difficulties:
 - They do not know how words change when pronounced with other words
 - They do not know how the written and spoken forms of a word may differ
 - They have difficulties in identifying word boundaries in speech
 - They have limited awareness of intonation patterns in the L2

- Possible solutions to those difficulties:
 - Make learners aware of key sound-spelling links, and give them practice in differentiating between similar sounds
 - Have learners reflect about how certain sounds change in connected speech, and give them practice in identifying known words within a speech stream
 - Raise learners' awareness of key intonation features in the L2
 - Point out to learners clues that indicate where word boundaries are, and give them practice in identifying these boundaries

Understanding and adapting existing listening materials

Aims

- To examine the importance of assessing the objectives and achievements of listening materials available in textbooks
- To reflect on what is done (and what is not done) in different tasks using the same listening passage
- To discuss ways of adapting existing materials with the objective of developing learners' listening strategies

Preliminary thoughts

In Part II we commented that one of the findings of our project with teachers in England was that many of the listening tasks contained in textbooks offer too little challenge and too little explicit focus on **how** to listen. It is likely that this may be your perception, too, in your own context. In order to incorporate strategy development into your teaching of listening you do not need to go out and buy a lot of new materials, though. It is possible to adapt what you already have in textbooks to make them both more challenging and more useful in terms of developing listening strategies and skills.

We suggest that, as often as possible, you try to use listening activities not just as a way of 'consolidating' or checking that learners can extract information from the text, but as a way of practising listening strategies such as predicting and verifying/monitoring, listening for gist, identifying key words/key sounds, working out the meaning of unknown words, *inter alia*.

However, any adaptation you may want to carry out should start with some fundamental questions:

- What does the task as it stands really require learners to do?
- What skills and knowledge does it presuppose and help develop?
- Is this a worthwhile activity?

Without knowing what the task really does, or offers, it is not possible to make principled decisions about how to implement it in the most beneficial ways for your learners.

PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

Think about the questions above in relation to the following activities:

- a) The textbook presents a situation in which three people speak, in three dialogues. Their utterances are presented in speech bubbles in the form of two questions and two answers per dialogue, but the order of these utterances is unclear. The task requires students to listen and identify the order in which the utterances were made.
- b) The textbook presents a matching task in which students are shown the illustration of a bedroom whose elements (for example curtains, bed, wardrobe) are labelled a, b, c, and so on. The textbook also contains a written list of the vocabulary to be heard on the audio (*las cortinas/les rideaux; la cama/le lit; el armario/l'armoire*), but in a different order. The students' task is to listen to the vocabulary and match what is heard to the labels in the illustration.

Suggested answers:

- a) If the spoken text is very short, or matches the written prompt in the textbook exactly (as in this example), then all learners are doing is matching written and spoken forms. They do not necessarily need to understand what is heard and there is no guarantee that the work will trigger reflection about or awareness of grapheme-phoneme correspondence.
- b) Here pupils are being asked to understand what is heard and recognise the connection between sound and writing. This latter recognition, however, will not be necessarily accompanied by awareness of sound-spelling correspondence if pupils are not given the chance to talk about how they carried out the task and how they dealt (or failed to deal) with their difficulties. Without this awareness, there is no guarantee that pupils will be able to cope with similar challenges in the future.

When we ask students to listen, we thus need to ask ourselves: what are we really asking them to do? To what extent are we contributing to the development of their listening strategies and skills?

To explore those questions further, consider how we might adapt a textbook activity, using the passage from the French textbook *Expo 2 Rouge* that we referred to in the section

Listening for gist and identifying key words. Below we outline in two charts a) the steps suggested in the original textbook activity and b), a summary of the steps we proposed in **Listening for gist**. For a) and b), can you identify the apparent rationale for each step (we have partly completed the first section as an example). You may wish to refer to the audioscript on page 206.

Adapting a textbook activity

Original textbook activity (using the instructions given in the <i>Expo 2 Rouge</i> Teacher's book, Meier & Ramage, 2008, p. 132), reprinted here with the permission of the publishers).	Apparent rationale? Additional comments
Step 1: Pupils listen to the recording and follow the text in the book. Beforehand, you may want to ask pupils to read the text aloud in pairs, identifying words which they find difficult to pronounce.	Focus on production (pronunciation) rather than on comprehension?
Step 2: Encourage your pupils to listen out for these words when they then listen to the recording.	
Step 3: Having identified cognates and words they know in the text during the starter activity, pupils look up unknown words in the glossary at the back of the book.	
Step 4: You might want to set a limit of three or four key words to be looked up, so that pupils practise identifying unknown words whose meaning is essential to their understanding of the text.	

Our suggested adaptation	Key principle/rationale
<p>Step 1: The teacher tells the class they are going to listen to a passage about a special trip a boy has been on. S/he asks them to predict what they might hear, using the kind of strategies and grids used in the section on Prediction and verification/monitoring. She tells them she wants them to find out from the passage the following things: who was involved and what happened.</p>	
<p>Step 2: After writing these predictions, the class listens for a first time, checks out the predictions and makes notes to explain incorrect/correct, also in answer to the two gist questions.</p>	
<p>Step 3: The teacher asks the class to feedback on what were some of the things they thought were discussed in the passage, and what were the clues for this. How did the class know what to focus on? Were they able to understand some of the passage without understanding every word? This discussion should lead the class to mention some ways of working out the main messages.</p>	
<p>Step 4: The teacher then adds to the list, emphasising the following: We can use different clues to help us identify the important words that we need to understand – the ‘key’ words; draws attention to use of redundancy (repetition, paraphrase); marker phrases; questions that go with the text; intonation/tone of voice.</p>	

Step 5: The teacher asks the class what they did when they didn't understand certain words or phrases. Class discusses this question in groups.	
Step 6: Groups feedback the things they did when they didn't understand; teacher writes these up as a list on the board.	
<p>Step 7: Teacher also models one or two strategies pupils didn't suggest, for example, listening to what comes before and after the problem word, as in this part:</p> <p><i>Adrien Storr (14 ans) a de la chance: sa mère a gagné notre <u>concours</u> du mois de juin. Son prix? Quinze jours au Sénégal pour deux personnes ...</i></p> <p>Unknown word = concours. Clues from 'gagné' and 'Son prix?' Also from the fact that Adrien is being offered something pleasant.</p>	
Step 8: Teacher gives learners a checklist of strategies discussed. Using another passage containing some unknown words, teacher asks learners to try to use at least two of the new strategies.	
Step 9: Learners reflect at the end of the lesson which of the techniques seemed to be the most helpful and why, using a checklist with space for reflection too.	
Step 10: Homework is to try out a wider range of strategies from the checklist using another passage, to	

tick which ones they used, and to report back next lesson on which were the most helpful.	
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Suggested answers:

Original textbook activity	Apparent rationale ? Additional comments
Step 1	Focus on production (pronunciation) rather than comprehension?
Step 2	To compare how they thought words should be pronounced with how they are actually pronounced? Feedback on these words would be necessary for this to work effectively.
Step 3	Focus on using cognates to understand in written form (what about change in pronunciation in spoken form? what about other clues to meaning?); focus on looking words up in the glossary? Focus on what is known.
Step 4	Encouraging learners to decide which words are essential to look up – but how do they do this? On what basis?

Our suggested adaptation	Key principle/rationale
Step 1	A more challenging text but on a familiar topic (holidays) can be used for developing prediction strategies; it can be used to practise pre-activating prior knowledge of both topic and related language before listening; a longer text can be used to practise focusing on global understanding rather

	than on specific details.
Step 2	Developing the strategy of verifying and monitoring predictions.
Step 3	Developing awareness of what can help us when we listen; developing understanding of how to focus our listening.
Step 4	Modelling of how to use various clues to identify key meaning in the text.
Step 5	To raise learners' awareness that we can actively overcome comprehension difficulties.
Step 6	To raise learners' awareness that there is a range of possible strategies we can use.
Step 7	Modelling and making explicit what we can do to deal with unknown words when we listen.
Step 8	Guided practice of modelled strategies.
Step 9	To give learners the opportunity to evaluate the process so far and develop a greater sense of control over their learning; to develop their understanding that there is a link between what they do when they listen and how well they understand.
Step 10	To give more strategy practice and further evaluation of strategies, increasing likelihood that strategies will be adopted

The key differences between the two approaches above are: (1) the textbook activity assumes learners know which are the key words to look up whereas the strategy-based activity teaches them how to identify which are key words; (2) the textbook activity encourages learners to use a limited range of strategies to deal with unknown words (looking for cognates and

looking words up in the glossary); (3) the strategy-based activity models and practises a wide range of strategies that can be used, and gives learners the chance to reflect on those strategies and develop greater awareness of how they can listen more effectively.

In summary, the task has been adapted by:

- adding in prediction stages before listening and a verification/monitoring stage during/after listening;
- giving learners a greater challenge by listening without the text but also giving them more staged tasks to go through (simple gist questions at the start);
- finding opportunities to model key strategies through thinking aloud and whole-class/paired discussion of what strategies might help us;
- providing opportunities for learners to reflect on what worked;
- considering transfer of strategies practised to other tasks.

Pedagogical procedures

1. Adapting short, 'listen and repeat' tasks

Step 1: Do as suggested in the textbook, once.

Step 2: Give learners a written list of words containing similar sounds. In pairs, students predict how these words will be pronounced. The list should contain unknown words as it is important that learners can read aloud words they have not met before.

Step 3: Feedback with the correct pronunciation. Ask learners to comment on what problems they encountered during the task, and what they would do differently the next time they have to produce similar sounds.

Extension: If the initial listen and repeat task contains individual, isolated words, make the next stage more challenging by putting these words into phrases or sentences. Can learners spot if/how the sound changes in connected speech? Can they segment the phrases if you give them the written form with no space between words?

2. *Adapting tasks that ask learners to listen and put in the correct order items heard, which are also given in written and visual form in the book.*

Step 1: To make the identification of words more challenging, create or read out new prompts, in longer sentences. These might include paraphrases of the items being listened out for. For example, if the textbook has a list of phrases about places in school (una biblioteca; una piscina/une bibliothèque; une piscine), offer a more complex cue such as ‘este lugar contiene una gran cantidad de libros y otros recursos de aprendizaje’ or ‘ce lieu contient beaucoup de livres et d’autres ressources d’apprentissage’ (‘this place contains many books and other learning resources’).

Step 2: Students listen and carry out the task as suggested in the textbook.

Step 3: Feedback could focus on how the paraphrases provided additional clues for them. Post-listening discussion could also address the question: is it necessary to

understand all the words from a listening passage in order to carry out a task around it?

3. *Bringing in prediction and verification/monitoring to a task*

This can be added to most tasks. The longer, often harder listening texts from the ‘Optional Extra’ section that comes at the end of chapters in many language textbooks and which many teachers often avoid because they feel they are too difficult for learners, are particularly suitable for the practice of this group of strategies.

Step 1: Give out a chart like the one below, specifying in the first column the points in the recording where you would like to pause the audio for students to record their predictions. The chart can have as many rows as you think appropriate. The example below illustrates a possible way of working with an audio recording of the following script: ‘*Me llamo María y soy de Madrid. Ahora vivo en Inglaterra pero echo de menos a mis amigos y a mi familia en España.*’

Listen up to...	Prediction: what will be said next? (To be answered while the audio is paused)	Correct/Incorrect? (To be answered after listening to what comes next)
<i>Me llamo</i>		
<i>María y soy</i>		
<i>de Madrid. Ahora</i>		
<i>vivo en Inglaterra pero</i>		

<i>echo de menos a mis</i>		
<i>amigos y a mi familia en</i>		

Step 2: Play the audio up to ‘llamo’. Students note down some predictions in the middle column, second row.

Step 3: Play the audio up to ‘y soy’ and students check their original predictions in the second row, writing down comments under “Correct/Incorrect” (second row). The verifications may be done in pairs.

Step 4: Students note down their new predictions in the third row, middle column.

Step 4: Play the audio up to ‘Ahora’ and repeat the verification and prediction procedures. Go on until the end of the chart.

Step 5: When all the predictions and verifications have been made and the audio has been fully heard, discuss in plenary: What difficulties did you encounter while listening? To what extent did your predictions and their verifications make it easier to understand the passage? What would you do differently the next time you listen to a long, more challenging passage?

4. *Raising learners’ awareness about redundancy (repetition/paraphrase) using activities with a focus on ‘listening for specific information’*

Step 1: Select a task requiring student to listen for specific information (such as filling out a chart or answering multiple-choice questions), where the listening passage

provides the required information in more than one section or part of the passage (for example by using paraphrases, repetition, use of pronouns/names to describe the same person).

Step 2: Students carry out the task as suggested in the textbook.

Step 3: Students listen again and identify all the points in the passage that provide the information.

Step 4: During feedback, the class discusses what was the easiest element to understand (and why). This should bring out the fact that the redundancy in the passage was helpful. They also discuss whether they heard all the repeated information or if there were one or more items they did not understand. Finally, they discuss what they have learnt about the listening process and the lessons they will apply in future, similar tasks.

Key Ideas

- The first step before adapting any textbook task is the identification of what the given tasks actually do and seek to accomplish.
- The second step in textbook adaptation involves the decision about what strategies to focus on.
- For tasks to support the development of learners' listening strategies they must go beyond comprehension-based questions focusing on the product of listening and address the process of listening.

- When deciding how to adapt textbook tasks with a view to develop learners' listening strategies always incorporate elements of awareness-raising, guided practice and evaluation.

Giving feedback on listening

Aims

- To compare and contrast different ways of giving feedback on listening
- To reflect on outcomes of feedback in which listening is seen as ‘product’
- To consider alternative ways of giving feedback on listening

Preliminary thoughts

1. Our research: Teachers’ priorities when giving feedback

Let us look again at what we observed in classrooms. Here are some examples of teachers giving feedback on listening activities. Extract 1 is repeated from Part II. Here are some extracts from lessons we observed, looking at the feedback element. Read the extracts and answer: Where is the emphasis being placed?

Extract 1

The class has been listening out for present tense verbs in a Spanish class. One learner thinks he/she has heard ‘estudio’ (= I study), whereas the tape actually says ‘eso es todo’ – ‘that’s all’. Teacher feedback:

T: *Guys you could be right. You know how people make textbooks, they can be in a hurry.*

T reads script and says, *Ah I know exactly what you've done*. Writes *Eso es todo* on board, and explains, highlighting the fact that this is a new phrase for learners.

Don't worry about this. Don't take a mark off.

Scores? ... Good... Level 3... This is new vocabulary, you're coping really well.

Where is the emphasis being placed in this feedback session?

Suggested answers

The scene above could be paraphrased like this: students are supposed to listen out for vocabulary they are familiar with; a student hears an unfamiliar phrase and misunderstands it as a verb he knows; the teacher then feedbacks on that misunderstanding. Her approach to that feedback is to criticise the inclusion of unknown vocabulary in the passage ('You know how people make textbooks') and to reassure the student ('This is new vocabulary', 'Don't worry about this'), implying that students are not expected to cope with unknown vocabulary while listening in a second language. A different approach might have been to use the student's misunderstanding as a topic for debate: what led to the error? How could it be avoided? What lessons could be learnt for the future? That debate could have raised awareness about the importance of segmentation when listening in Spanish ('eso es todo' has 5 syllables as opposed to 'estudio', which has only three). Attention to the co-text might have also helped students realise that 'eso es todo' could not be a verb in the present tense!

The teacher goes over answers to a French listening task with a class. The teacher asks who has how many correct, then:

Teacher: *C'était facile ou difficile?*

Learners: *Facile.*

Teacher: *Facile?*

One of the boys: *C'était facile.*

Teacher asks one learner: she makes a gesture, Teacher helps: *Comme ci, comme ça.*

Where is the emphasis being placed in this feedback session?

Suggested answers

Although students are being asked to express their opinion about the listening task, there is no reflection about the issues leading to the descriptions made: why was it easy? Why was it 'so-so'? In other words, the emphasis is on descriptors devoid of justifications, which is unlikely to help learners develop their awareness of what they can do to become better listeners; nor to help teachers develop better understanding of their students' ways of listening.

Extract 3

Teacher: *We'll see how many marks you've got... It doesn't matter if you don't do very well today. This is for you, this is practice.*

T reads out answers: *Ready? The answers are.....*

No comments given apart for one task, when she stresses that they were supposed to indicate what was NOT said.

Teacher: *Can you listen please? Because we need to mark the Level 6, it's very important! The answers are...*

Students get excited because they're doing well for the L6.

Teacher: *Put your hands up if you scored a Level 5* (a few students do)

Teacher: *Put your hands up if you scored less than a 5* (nobody does)

A learner raises his hand: he is concerned that he has not scored well on the Level 5 task, but has done well on Level 6 questions. Teacher response: *It doesn't matter.*

Where is the emphasis being placed in this feedback session?

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Suggested answers

The emphasis on the feedback above is clearly ‘test performance’: all of the comments made by the teacher indicate that students were expected to listen in order to achieve a certain test result in the future. There is no concern with how that is to be done – the focus is purely on the goal (the product).

PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

Now think back to a lesson you have taught recently that included listening. How did you give feedback? Where do you seem to have placed the most emphasis in your feedback?

Does your style of feedback resemble any of the teachers above? What were the aims and objectives of your feedback?

2. One activity, different types of feedback

Consider the following two ways of presenting the same activity, based on a passage and accompanying listening activity from the French textbook *Expo 2 Rouge*. Focus particularly on the feedback element. For each version of the lesson outline, note:

- a) The aims/objectives of the feedback.
- b) What lessons pupils would learn from the feedback for subsequent listening tasks.

- c) What knowledge/skills seem to be neglected.

Textbook recording:

Learners listen to a series of interviews conducted in a busy street. The interviewer asks several people what job they do and what they think about it. Just at the point where the interviewer names their profession, traffic noise prevents the name of the profession from being heard, so learners have to work it out from the rest of the passage.

Textbook task:

For each dialogue, learners have to identify the profession and the interviewee's opinion about it. The Teacher's Book gives the answers to the task in the form of the relevant French vocabulary item (e.g. *serveuse*, waitress) and a smiling or miserable face symbol to indicate the opinion.

Lesson outline Version 1

1. The teacher prepares learners for the listening activity by asking them look at a list of key items of vocabulary in French (professions) and to match them to their definition, also in French. As feedback, s/he draws a grid on the board, giving each profession and the words associated with it.
2. The teacher advises learners they will hear five people talking about their jobs, and that they have to write down what job they do and whether they like it or not. S/he models what is required on the board, for example *professeur* 😊 and suggests that while listening, they look at the vocabulary noted in (1).

3. The teacher plays the recording, twice.
4. After the final playing of the recording the teacher asks, in French: *Number 1 is what job ?* A learner replies: '*serveuse*' (*waitress*). The teacher praises the learner and asks (in French): *And what about the opinion? Positive or negative?* A learner replies: *Positive*, followed by teacher praise. For number 2, a learner incorrectly identifies the job as *secrétaire* (*secretary*), and the opinion as *negative* (the speaker in fact says he is out of work, and spends all his time phoning and writing letters in order to try to find work). The teacher says (in French): *Well done, you got the opinion! But the job is wrong. Who can give me the correct answer?* Another learner correctly says *au chômage* (*out of work*), followed by teacher praise, and so on, for all passages.
5. The teacher tells the class to give themselves one point for each job correctly identified, one point for the opinion for each passage. S/he asks who got 10 out of 10, 8, and so on. Learners raise their hands to indicate their score.
6. The teacher says: *Well done class, if you got all the opinions right, that's a Level 4 for listening!* (using the assessment system in force in England at the time of writing).

Lesson outline Version 2

1. The teacher prepares learners for the listening activity by asking them look at a list of key items of vocabulary in French (professions) and to match them to their definition, also in French. As feedback, s/he draws a grid on the board, giving each profession and the words associated with it. S/he asks learners to think about how these words might be pronounced, and any alternative words or phrases they might expect to hear. For example, *au chômage* – *cherche un emploi*, *reste à la maison* (*unemployed – is looking for a job, stays at home*).

2. The teacher advises learners they will hear five people talking about their jobs, and that they have to write down what job they do and whether they like it or not. S/he models what is required on the board, for example *professeur* 😊 and suggests that while listening, they look at the vocabulary noted in (1), including the definitions. S/he also reminds them to focus on phrases rather than just individual words, and to look for clues about opinions, for example, in the speaker's tone of voice, from adverbs, negatives, marker phrases.

3. The teacher plays the recording for the first time.

4. Learners discuss in pairs what answers they put and why, and how those answers were in line with or contradicted what they expected to hear.

5. The teacher plays the recording a second time. Individually and then in pairs, learners look at their answers again, discussing conclusions and reasons for any changes from what they thought the first time round.

6. After the final playing of the recording the teacher asks, in French: *Number 1 is what job?* A learner replies: '*serveuse*' (*waitress*). The teacher asks the learner why he/she gave this answer. The learner lists the main clues – *je travaille dans le café* (*I work in a café*), food items. The teacher praises the learner and asks (in French): *And what about the opinion? Positive or negative?* A learner replies: *Positive*, and adds that the tone of voice sounded calm. The teacher praises the identification of this clue. For number 2, a learner incorrectly identifies the job as *secrétaire* (*secretary*), and the opinion as *negative* (the speaker in fact says he is out of work, and spends all his time phoning and writing letters in order to try to find work). The teacher says (in French): *Well done, you got the opinion! But the job is wrong. Let's listen to Number two again. What clues were in the verbs that we heard? What did we hear?* This is followed by a discussion of pupils'

hearing *lettres* (letters) and *famille* (family) and assuming that the speaker was a woman talking about home life and office work; the teacher reminds them to also listen to verbs and to keep an open mind about meaning – does all the evidence support their initial assumption? Feedback continues thus for all passages.

7. The teacher tells the class to give themselves one point for each job correctly identified, one point for the opinion for each passage. S/he asks who got 10 out of 10, 9, 8, and so on. Learners raise their hands to indicate their score.

8. The teacher asks learners to tick on a checklist (see examples from previous sections) which strategies they used when completing the task, and to underline those which seemed the most helpful. A short class discussion about those strategies follows. The teacher says: *Well done class, we used a range of strategies there, and that seemed to help many of you get most of the answers right. You were working at Level 4 but also showed you can make good use of the knowledge you have, and use clues to work out the meaning of words you don't know.*

9. The teacher sets listening homework and asks learners to use some of the strategies discussed today on the task, plus one new one that they did not use in today's lesson.

10. The teacher takes the ticksheets in the next lesson and gives feedback on the range of strategies used, in some cases suggesting that the learner tries a different strategy if they seemed to have understood very little of the passage.

Possible answers:

	Version 1	Version 2
The aims/objectives of the feedback	<p>To ascertain and to feedback to learners how many jobs and opinions they have correctly identified;</p> <p>To record a level in the teacher's mark book based around being able to identify opinions.</p>	<p>To ascertain and to feedback to learners how many jobs and opinions they have correctly identified;</p> <p>To ascertain and to feedback to learners how they are listening, in order to reinforce strategies previously introduced;</p> <p>To reinforce to learners that there is a link between the strategies they use and how well they understand, and that thus their understanding is within their control.</p>
What lessons pupils would learn from the feedback for subsequent listening tasks	<p>Indication that the main objective of a listening task is to 'get answers right in a listening task';</p> <p>Indication that listening perception is either 'right' or 'wrong';</p> <p>Suggestion that the end is more</p>	<p>Greater awareness of how to use strategies applied in the lesson to subsequent tasks;</p> <p>Greater sense of control over the listening process; greater insight into how meaning is conveyed not just through nouns but also through verbs and also through tone of voice, through paraphrase.</p>

	important than the means and hence that everybody should listen in the same way.	
What knowledge/skills seem to be neglected.	The process of listening; the focus is wholly on the product of listening (the 'correct' answer).	There is less emphasis on the 'demonstration' of certain aspects of linguistic knowledge, such as the identification of job nouns and opinion phrases.

To sum up, while ‘feedback on product’ gives learners and teachers insights into how well they have done (and school ‘systems’ usually require some kind of ‘record’ of performance), it does not tell learners anything about how effective their listening approach is: they do not learn anything about how to listen more effectively next time, and it thus deprives them of an important sense of control over their own learning. Furthermore, as Version 1 above illustrates, it does not exploit the listening very effectively as a piece of language – the language itself is under-analysed. It may leave learners with the impression that ‘listening in a second language’ is a comprehension test only, and not a dynamic process in which learners have to participate actively.

Pedagogical procedures

1. Be clear in your own mind what information about listening you are seeking when assessing and giving learners feedback

Structure your assessment and feedback procedures around the following questions:

- What did learners understand and what did they misunderstand?
- How did they go about the listening task, and was that effective (what strategies did they use and how well did they use them?)
- What further help do they need to improve how they are listening?

Learners need answers to the same questions, but above all they need to know:

- How can they listen better next time?

2. Giving more effective feedback on listening

Version 2 of the lesson outline given earlier in this section provides an outline of what more effective listening feedback might look like in a classroom situation. Take this outline and for your next lesson that includes a listening task, try to incorporate some of the feedback steps outlined. These might include:

- Paired/class discussion of answers and any suggested changes on subsequent playing of the recording (steps 4 and 5 in the outline)
- When learners offer answers, ask learners to justify why they put the answer that they did, with a focus on a maximum number of clues to be exploited (step 6)
- When feeding back on answers and on learners' justification for their answers, remind learners to employ key strategies when listening, to really check out all the evidence (step 6);
- Incorporate class discussion of the language of the text and strategies that could be used to understand it (step 6)
- As well as taking marks in, ask learners what strategies they used, which ones were helpful, and remind them to use these or alternatives on subsequent tasks (step 6)
- Praise strategy use as well as getting correct answers (steps 6 to 8)
- Draw learners' attention to the link between strategy use and listening outcomes (steps 8 and 10)
- Ask learners to apply strategies discussed in the feedback to subsequent listening tasks (step 9)

Key Ideas

The effective assessment of and feedback on listening needs to include these elements:

- Provide insights for teachers and learners into what their listening difficulties are – for example, are they mishearing known items of vocabulary because of lack of sound discrimination skills? Are they

discriminating word boundaries properly? Are they neglecting repetition/paraphrasing in the passage? Are they failing to attend to the global context?

- Give learners feedback on the effectiveness of the listening strategies they have used and make further suggestions as to how they can improve these
- Reinforce to learners that how well they listen depends to a large extent on the effectiveness of the strategies they employ, rather than on any less uncontrollable factors such as the speed or difficulty of the recording
- Incorporate some analysis of the passage as 'language' and for its linguistic elements