

Listening as a Constructive Process

Annie McDonald



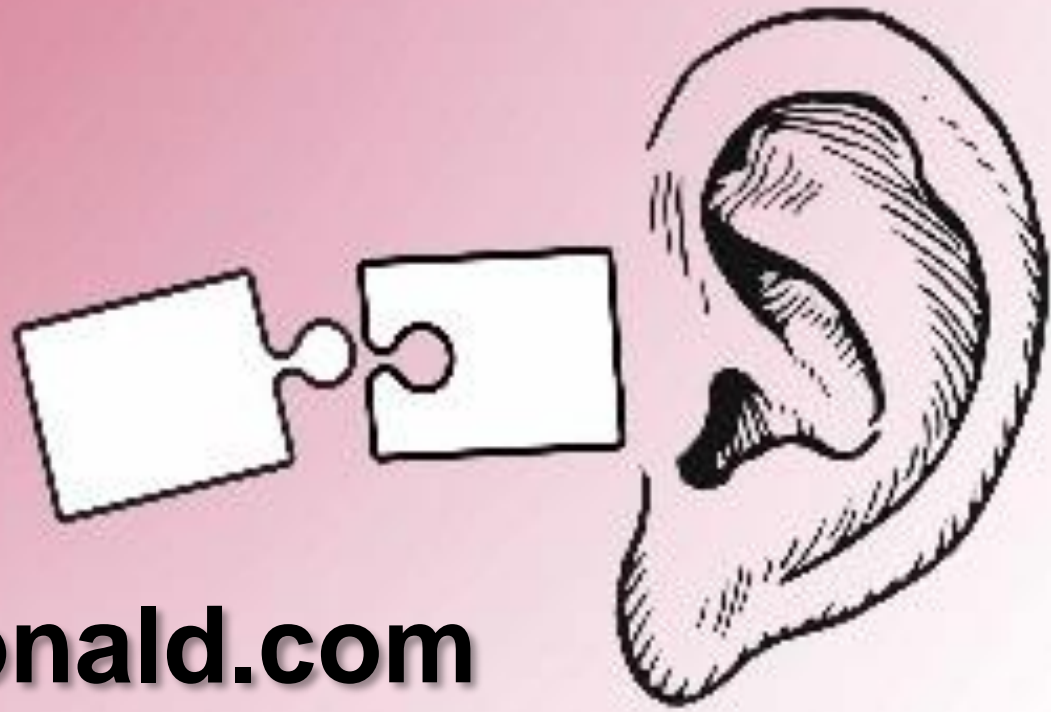
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Outline

- **Listening Processes**
- **The Sound Substance**
- **Expert and Non-expert Listeners**
- **Some Classroom Activities**
- **Implications**

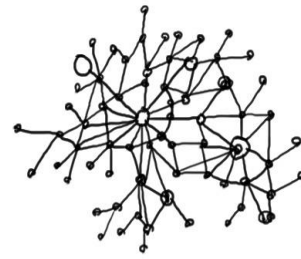


Listening Processes



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Processes



You hear a word
beginning with

lo-

What images
may be activated?



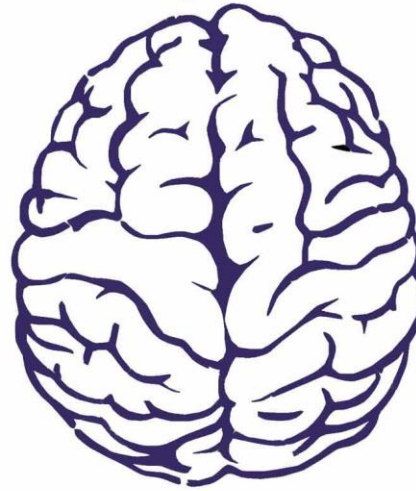
Processes

decoding



Bottom-up

meaning-building



Top-down



Some while listening tasks

- We evaluate probabilities arising from the structure of the native vocabulary
- We track information to locate the boundaries between words
- We pay attention to the way that words are pronounced
- We assess prosodic information that spans sequences of sounds ... etc

Cutler, Anne (2012) *Native Listening*. The MIT Press

**... a ‘formidable range of mental
tasks carried out with
astonishing speed and accuracy’**

Cutler, Anne (2012) *Native Listening*, The MIT Press

Context



budgie tear line

- RyanAir
- Michael O'Leary
- September 2017
- Passengers and holidays
- Pilots and holidays
- The BBC - Business Daily

Transcription Fragments

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8



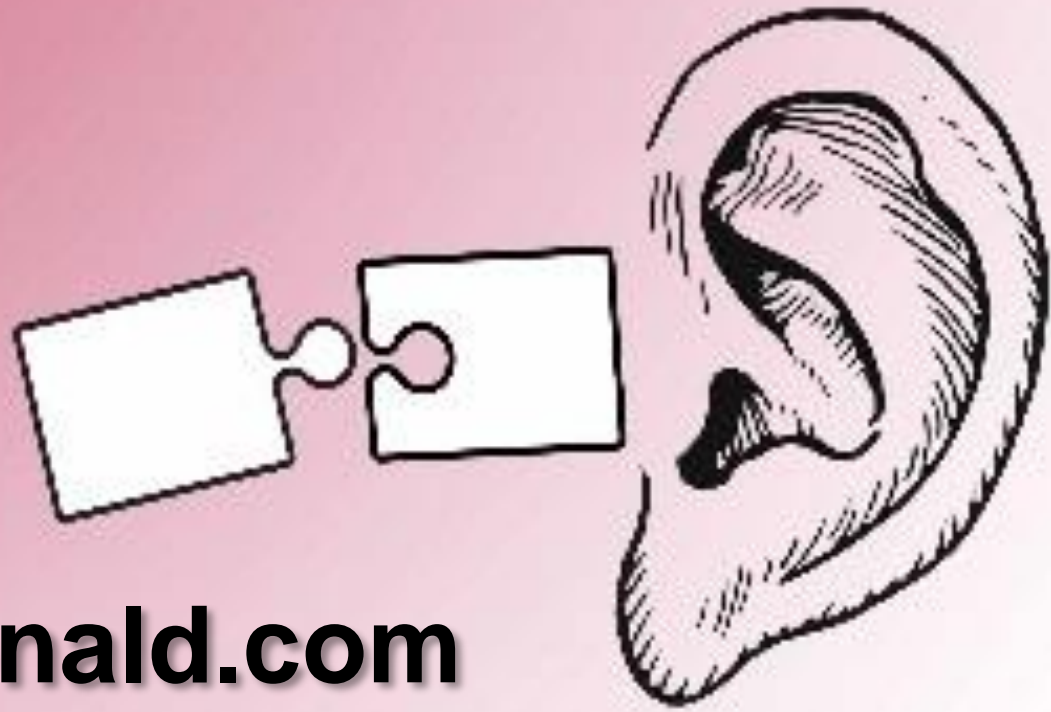
Rhine Air

Budget Air Line Transcript

¹ This is our mess up // ² When we make
a mess at RyanAir // ³ we come out with
our hands up // ⁴ we try to explain why
we made the mess // ⁵ when we will pay
compensation // ⁶ to those passengers
who are entitled to compensation // ⁷
which will be those // ⁸ flights that are
cancelled over the next two weeks.



The Sound Substance



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Sound substance

“A term used to refer to the spoken language – the **invisible** form of language that **passes by very quickly** and is gone. It is **not available for the listener’s inspection** – it has to be **processed** by the listener at **speeds which are beyond his or her control.**”



(Cauldwell, R. (2018) *A Syllabus for Listening – Decoding, Speech in Action*)

The horticultural metaphor

Greenhouse



citation forms

Garden



connected speech

Jungle



spontaneous speech

tidy ←————→ *messy*

Richard Cauldwell

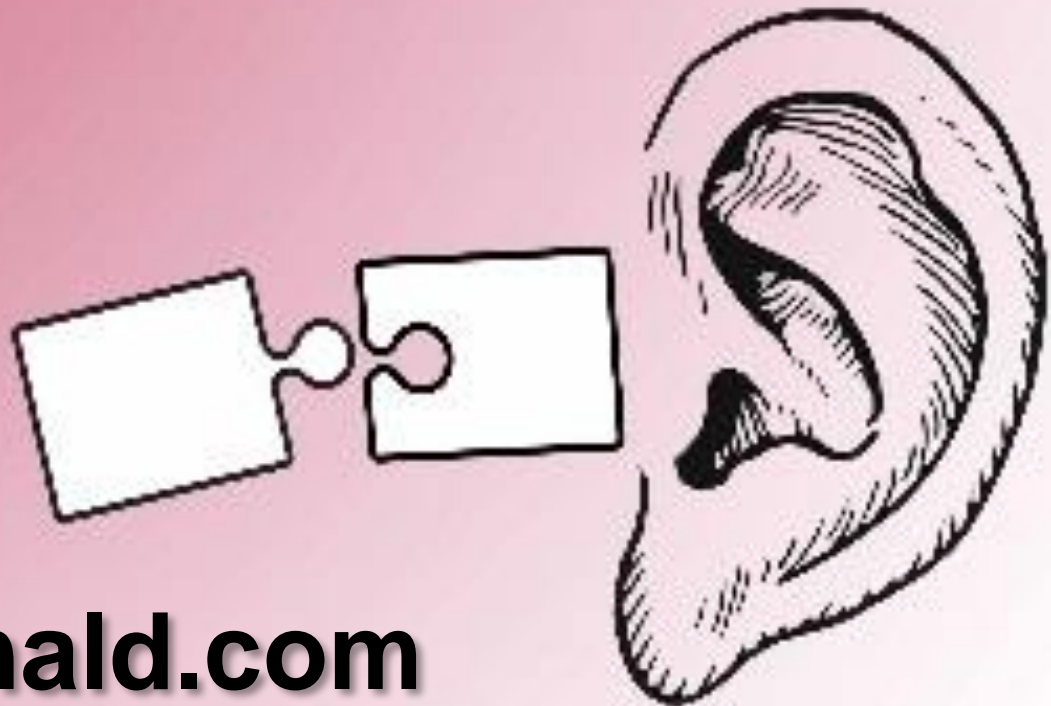
The consequences

Squeezing together of words (eg the dropping of sounds, the lack of clarity around positive and negative ...) = **mush**

The expert listener's ability to understand meanings **deafens** them to the realities/true nature of spontaneous speech ...

(Cauldwell, R. (2018) *A Syllabus for Listening – Decoding, Speech in Action*)

Expert and Non-expert Listeners



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Spoken English: Slips of the Ear



Spaghetti car bananas
There's a bathroom on
the right.

Completely sober
We can't be ***ed to
teach ...

Products rip in plastic
I was nice girl

Spaghetti carbonara
There's a bad moon on
the rise.

Complete this over
We can be asked to
teach ...

Products wrapped in plastic
I was a night owl

‘Understanding speech in our native tongue *seems natural and effortless* but listening to speech in a **non-native language is a different experience’**

Cutler, Anne (2012) *Native Listening*, The MIT Press

Sonia's transcript

Michael O'Leary 1: This is hour _____ when messages me Ryan
We can hang out. We try to explained why
We did the message when will pay compensation
to the passage _____ compensation with we'll
be the flight to canceled over the next two
Weeks





More slips the ear



Sonia

1. a long holiday = **on holiday**
2. the errors = **the area**
3. pilot's holidays = **on holiday**
4. that, in short, is what = **that, insure it's was**
5. we're not short of = **when not sort of**
6. weather disruptions = **weather instructions**

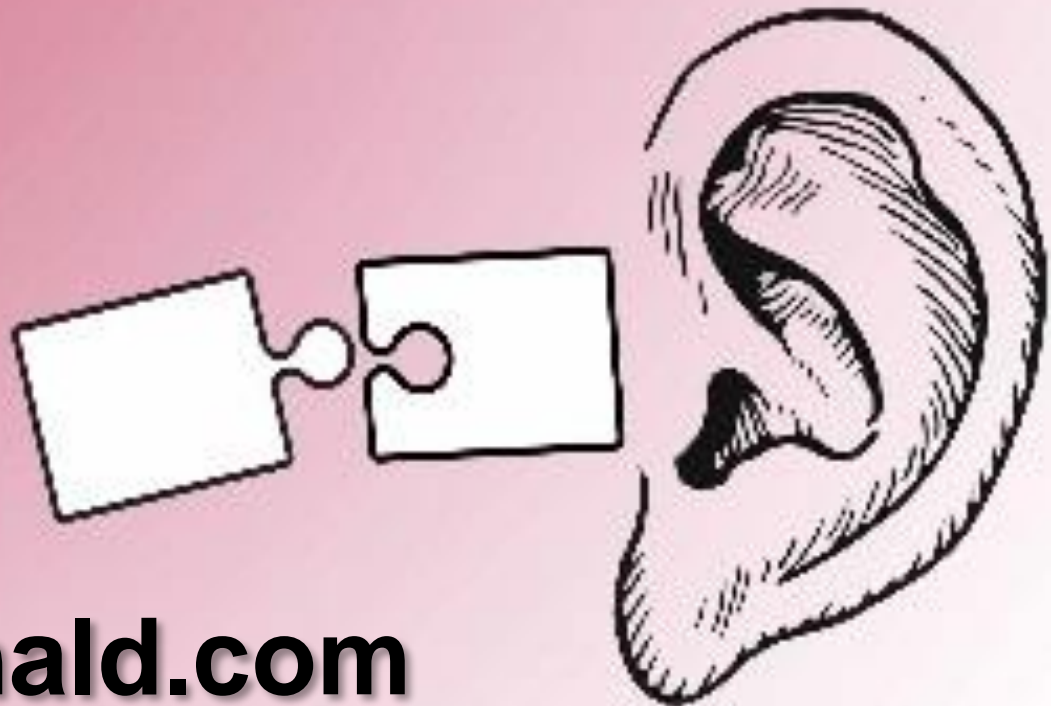
**Other
sts**

7. seminar = **cinema**
8. a lot smaller than = **lot more than**
9. what the whole = **what the hell**
10. a lot smaller than = **lot more than**
11. The UK and Norway = **The UK and North Wales**
- 12 Float planes = **flute planes (?)**

Some L2 problems

- Sounds (consonants, vowels – short / sort; we'll be / will be)
- Sounds/word boundaries (in short > insure)
- Similar-sounding structures/words (we'll be / will be; hour/our)
- Remembering word meaning quickly enough
- Knowing the word (mess)
- Hearing unstressed function words
- Hearing final consonants (I won't go / I want to go)
- Recognising a variation of a known word
- Not hearing not!

Some Classroom Activities



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Dictations and transcripts

Paused dictation
(text / snippets)

‘Now I understand why I don’t understand’

Make listening accessible to inspection

Awareness-raising to *Mush*



Rhine Air

- | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. we may come S | 1. ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | |
| 2. rye near week | 2. ___ | ___ | ___ | | |
| 3. pastures who were tight | 3. ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | |
| 4. doze flight sitter can | 4. ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 5. the neck's too weak | 5. ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | |



Awareness-raising to *Mush*



Rhine Air

- 1. we make a mess**
- 2. RyanAir we**
- 3. passengers who were entit(led)**
- 4. those flights that are can(celled)**
- 5. the next two weeks**



Explicit work on decoding

Classroom decoding with a B1 group

Olya Sergeeva

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94KG2Kw1jh](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94KG2Kw1jhM)
M

Micro-listening www.tubequizard.com

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level ☒ A2 ☐ B1 ☐ B2 ☐ C1 ☐ C2

type ☒ Grammar for listeners ☐ Pronunciation for listeners ☐ Vocabulary in context ☐ Grammar in context

category ☒ Business ☐ Educational ☐ Entertainment ☐ Film & animation ☐ Information Technology ☐ News ☐ People & society ☐ Talks & interviews ☐ Music

variety ☒    



Pronunciation for listeners

Film & animation 14 items 

☐ B1 ☐ B2 ☒ C1

Word focus: OF. Practice catching expressions that contain 'of'.



Grammar for listeners


Talks & interviews 13 items 

☒ A2 ☐ B1 ☐ B2

Present Continuous Watch the story of how Jill Bolte Taylor realized she was having a stroke and type phrases in Present Continuous.



Grammar for listeners

Talks & interviews 12 items 

☐ B1 ☐ B2

Questions. Watch extracts from the performance of 'the greatest pickpocket in the world' and type the questions that he asks the audience.



Grammar for listeners


Film & animation 5 items 

☐ B1 ☐ B2

Past Simple. Watch an interview with Amy Adams and type questions in Past Simple.



Grammar for listeners


Film & animation 7 items 

☒ A2 ☐ B1 ☐ B2

Imperatives. Listen and type verbs in the imperative form.



Grammar for listeners


Film & animation 9 items 

☒ A2 ☐ B1

Present simple. Listen and type expressions in Present Simple with frequently used verbs.



Grammar for listeners


Film & animation 5 items 

☒ A2 ☐ B1

Future simple. Listen and type future expressions with 'will' and frequently used verbs.



Grammar for listeners

Talks & interviews 15 items 

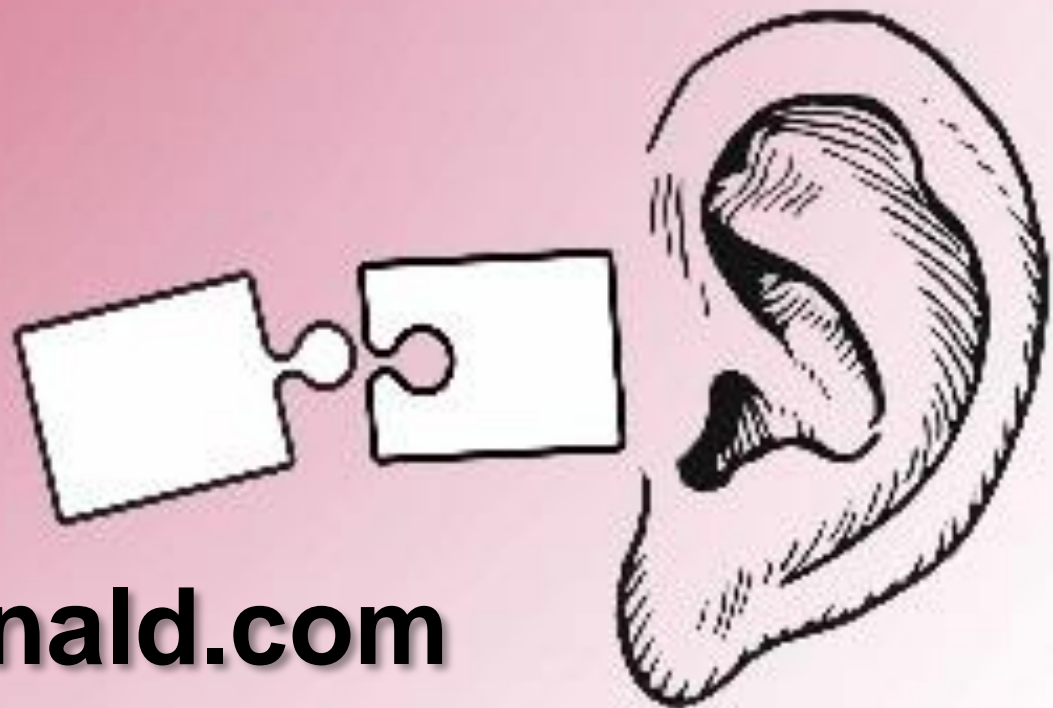
☒ A2 ☐ B1 ☐ B2

Past simple (regular and irregular verbs)
Watch the first 2 minutes of David

Useful resources

- <https://eltgeek.wordpress.com> - Olya Sergeeva
- www.tubequizard.com
- <https://youglish.com/search>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/features/pronunciation/tims-pronunciation-workshop-ep-1>
- Listening cherries – Richard Cauldwell's blog
<https://www.speechinaction.org/listening-cherry>

Implications

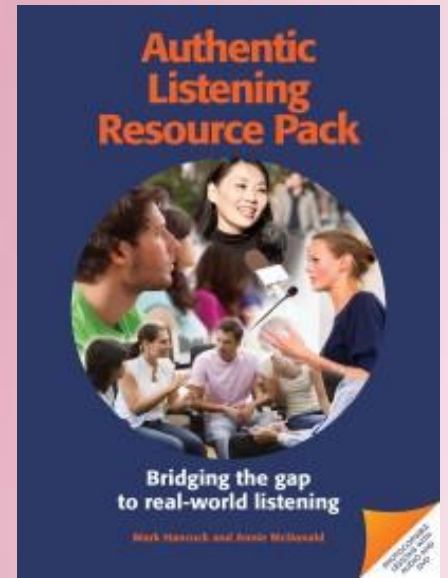


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- Be aware of deafness and listen carefully to / for mush!
- Use your knowledge of the learner's L1 and the audio-script to identify potential problem areas
- Devise pre-listening activities which focus on potential / known problem areas
- Direct attention to chunks
- Use variations on dictation activities to help learners develop sound/word recognition (decoding skills)
- Set time for learners to compare their understanding with the text (audio-script) and discover reasons for listening difficulties ...

Make listening accessible to inspection

Listening as a Constructive Process



Annie McDonald



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