

# Listening as a Constructive Process

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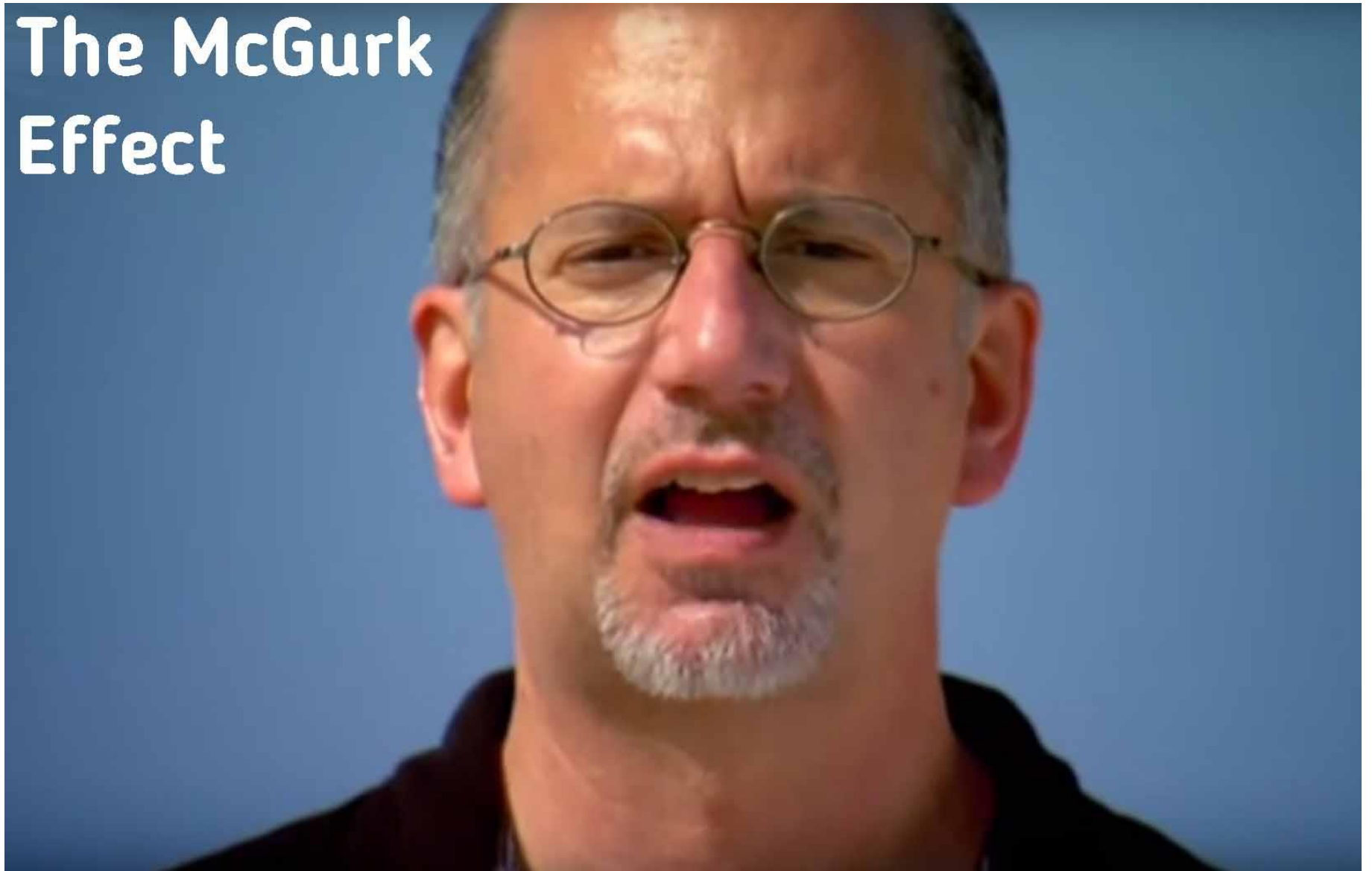
# Outline

- **The ears and the brain**
- **The expert listener**
- **The sound substance**
- **The non-expert listener**
- **Implications**

# The ears and the brain



# The McGurk Effect







<https://youtu.be/G-IN8vWm3m0>

**Just let me  
staple the  
vicar**



**Peter Kay**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMYorpYNMKc>





Children's  
Mishearings

crooks and grannies

daddad

peas and noodles

firstable

spaghetti car bananas

forthhead

strangled eggs

cornob



# The expert listener



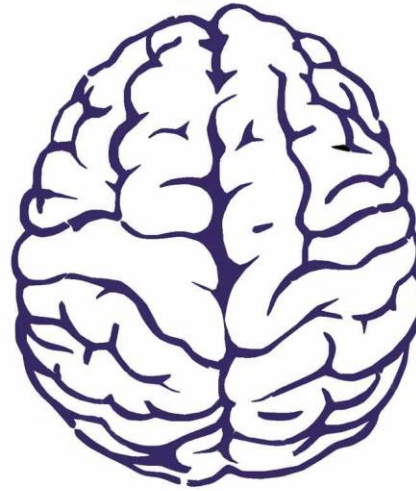
# Processes

decoding



**Bottom-up**

meaning-building



**Top-down**



# Bottom-up primacy: potential word candidates

You hear a word  
beginning with  
**lo-**  
What images  
may be activated?



# Some listening techniques

- 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



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

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



# Slips of the Ear

There's a bathroom on  
the right.

There's a bad moon on  
the rise.

I'm completely sober

I'll complete this over

We can't be \*\*\*ed to  
teach ...

We can be asked to  
teach ...

# The sound substance





## Greenhouse



**citation forms**

## Garden



**connected speech**

## Jungle



**spontaneous speech**

*tidy* ←————→ *messy*

*Richard Cauldwell*

# Consequences

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

# Context



**budgie tear line**



budgie tear line

# Background

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

# What went wrong at RyanAir?

Situation – in September, thousands of RyanAir passengers were left stranded.

People who had booked flights as far ahead as Christmas started to worry that their holidays might be affected. The BBC interviewed the boss of RyanAir, Michael O’Leary, and discussed the situation in more detail.



(19<sup>th</sup> Sept 2017 BBC Business Daily)

# The non-expert listener





# Some general L2 problems ...

- Sound (consonants, vowels – short / sort; we'll be / will be)
- Sounds into words (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!

# Sonia's transcript

Michael O'Leary 1: This is hour \_\_\_\_\_ when messagen time Ryanair  
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 fligh to cancelled over the next two  
Weeks

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





## L2 mishearings



- a long holiday = **on holiday**
- the errors = **the area**
- pilot's holidays = **on holiday**
- that, in short, is what = **that, insure it's was**
- we're not short of = **when not sort of**

# **Dictations and transcripts**

Paused dictation  
( text / snippets / clusters)

‘Now I understand why I don’t understand’

**Make listening accessible to inspection**



# More slips the ear



- seminar = **cinema**
- a lot smaller than = **lot more than**
- what the whole = **what the hell**
- The UK and Norway = **The UK and North Wales**
- Float planes = **flute planes?**
- Brain damage = **vein damage**

# Folk fonetics

## 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.    ___  ___  ___  ___      |





# Mush



Rhine Air

- we may come S
- rye near week
- pastures who were tight
- doze flight sitter can
- the neck's too weak
- we make a mess
- RyanAir we
- passengers who were entit(led)
- those flights that are can (celled)
- the next two weeks

# Micro-drilling: French nursery rhyme Frère Jacques

Pears and peaches  
Figs and dates  
Oranges and kiwis  
Plums and grapes



Break phrases down  
into smaller segments  
These may include  
words or only parts of  
words. Call out the  
following segments for  
the class to repeat.

- 1 chiz
- 2 peachiz
- 3 am peachiz
- 4 zam peachiz
- 5 pear zam peachiz
- 6 pear zampear zampear zampear
- 7 chizampea chizampea chizampea



‘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

# Implications





# For classroom practice

- Be aware of deafness!
- List carefully to / for mush!
- L2 comprehension is affected by L1 language features, so use your knowledge of the learner's L1 and the audio-script to identify potential problem areas for L2 listeners (eg. possible minimal pairs, initial and final consonants clusters, etc)
- Devise pre- and post-listening activities which focus on potential problem areas
- 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**

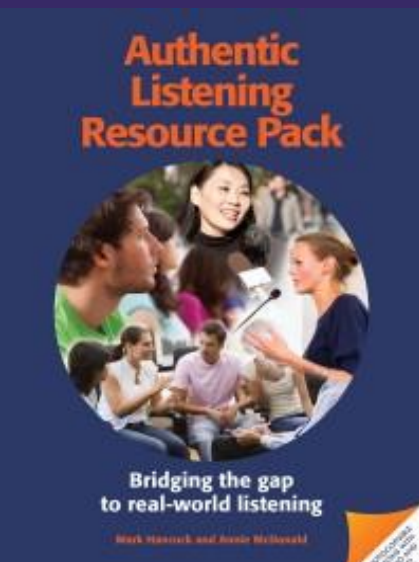
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**PronPack**



**Thank you!**



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