

# 1

## Listening and Lectures

In this unit you will:

- discuss the different situations in which you have to listen;
- identify what factors influence your ability to understand;
- learn about features of lectures in different academic cultures.

### Task 1: Listening in different languages

With a partner or in groups, discuss the following questions.


- a) In your own language, which of these types of listening do you think is more difficult or requires more attention? Why?
- listening to friends as part of your conversation with them;
  - listening to the radio;
  - listening to announcements at a crowded bus station;
  - listening to an academic lecture.
- b) What experiences have you had of listening to spoken English?
- c) What type of listening in English do you find more demanding/less demanding?



### Task 2: Issues in understanding spoken English

**2.1** Look at the following factors that make it difficult to listen to and understand spoken English. With a partner, add two or three more factors to this list.

- the speed at which someone is speaking;
- background noise;
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**2.2**  **CD1-1** Listen to Part 1 of a talk in which a professor describes some of the problems of listening. Then answer the following questions.

- a) Which of the factors in Ex 2.1 did she talk about?
- b) Which other factors did she talk about?
- c) After talking about the factors that affect listening, the professor discusses two additional problems that students may have. What are they?

- 2.3** 🎧 **CD1 – 2** Now listen to Part 2 of the talk, in which the professor illustrates the two problems she has introduced. The professor asks you to write down a phrase. Do this as you listen.
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Does this example make the points clearer?

- 2.4** 🎧 **CD1 – 3** Listen to Part 3 of the talk. Complete this excerpt by writing two to six words in each blank.

So what is the solution to these two problems? Well, first you need to get as much practice listening to natural speech as possible. Listen to \_\_\_\_\_ and try to develop your understanding of how words and phrases are really pronounced, not how you \_\_\_\_\_ pronounced. Secondly, you \_\_\_\_\_ that when you listen you may misunderstand what is being said. So you need to be ready to \_\_\_\_\_ about your understanding of the meaning, if what you hear \_\_\_\_\_ compared to what you understood before. And this means taking a flexible, open-minded approach to listening.

- 2.5** Reflect on the talk you just listened to in Ex 2.2 – 2.4. Answer the following questions.

- Did you have any difficulties doing this activity?
- If so, why do you think you had problems?
- Were they the same problems the professor talked about?

## Task 3: Listening to lectures

You are going to listen to a professor talking about the differences he perceives between lectures in the US and in China.

- 3.1** With a partner, discuss your experiences of lectures in your own country and/or in the country where you are studying. Think about the following.

- what the professors did, e.g., *read from notes, used visuals, asked questions*, etc.
- what the students did, e.g., *asked questions, took notes*, etc.


- 3.2** In Part 1 of the talk, the professor describes the following:

- what his main interest is;
- where he got his information about lectures in China;
- the survey he did and the students he talked to.

- 🎧 **CD1 – 4** Listen to Part 1 of the talk and make notes about the above points.

**3.3** With a partner, compare your notes for Ex 3.2. Then answer the following questions.

- Did you record the same information?
- Could you have recorded the information in different ways using fewer words/different words? How?

**3.4**  **CD1 – 5** In Part 2 of the talk, the professor first talks about some of the characteristics of lectures in China and then compares these with lectures in the US. Listen and make notes on the main points he makes.

China	US

**3.5** With a partner, compare your notes for Ex 3.4. Then answer the following questions.

- Did you record the same information?
- Could you have recorded the information in different ways, using fewer words/different words? How?

**3.6** Now, respond to the talk. In groups, look at the following questions and discuss your reactions to what the professor said in Ex 3.2 and 3.4.

- If you are from China, do you agree with what the speaker reported about lectures in China?
- If you are from another country, are the lectures in your country more like the American system, the Chinese one, or a combination of both?
- Have you already listened to lectures in English?
- Did you take notes (in English or your own language) during the lectures you have attended?
- Was it difficult to take notes? If so, why?
- What did you do before and after your lectures to help you understand more fully and remember the content?



## Unit summary

In this unit you have discussed the different situations in which you have to listen. You have also identified the factors that influence your ability to understand, and learned about features of lectures in different academic cultures.

**1** Look at the listening issues below and decide in which circumstances they affect you. Choose from one of the circumstances below and mark F, L, R or A in the first box.

**F**—This affects me when I speak to English-speaking friends.

**L**—This affects me when I listen to lectures.

**R**—This affects me when I listen to the radio or watch TV.

**A**—This affects me if I listen to announcements.

- |   |                          |                          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) You are concentrating on something else at the same time as you listen.                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) You are nervous because missing something important will have a negative consequence.              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) The speaker is using lots of words and phrases that you don't know.                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) The speaker speaks very quickly and runs words together. Even common words are difficult to catch. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) The speaker does not do or say things in the way that somebody in your country would.              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) The speaker is talking about a topic you know nothing about.                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g) The speaker is using a lot of specialized vocabulary.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h) Other people interrupt the speaker so you can't follow the flow.                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i) The speaker doesn't tell you when you should listen especially carefully.                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| j) There is a lot of background noise.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**2** Now look again at each issue and decide whether it is a problem for you or not. In the second box, mark P if it is a problem and you need to practice or N if it is not a problem.

**3** Which of the issues did the speaker in the unit offer solutions to?

For web resources relevant to this unit, see:  
[www.englishforacademicstudy.com/us/student/listening/links](http://www.englishforacademicstudy.com/us/student/listening/links)