Lecture listening and note-taking: developing an efficient approach

Academic Skills and Language Workshop
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Aims

1) Raise awareness of and practise:
   • note-taking techniques
   • lecture listening strategies

2) Highlight sources of further help and practice

Based on material from *Study Listening* by Tony Lynch (Cambridge University Press, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition 2004)
Difficulties in lectures

Have you ever had difficulty listening to lectures in your own / a foreign language?
Difficulties in lectures

With a partner, list the things which might make it difficult to hear or understand what a lecturer is saying.

Use the four headings below:

• Physical setting
• Speaker
• Subject
• Language
• Physical setting
  size / acoustics of room
  noise from outside / inside

• Speaker
  accent
  poor delivery (e.g. too quiet, boring intonation)
  speed of speaking – lack of adequate pauses
  lecturing style (scripted / based on brief notes)
  jokes

• Subject
  unfamiliarity
  lack of interest / relevance
  complexity / abstractness

• Language
  colloquial English
  technical vocabulary / familiar vocabulary used in an unfamiliar way
  foreign words and phrases (*sine qua non*, *de rigueur*)
Note-taking in lectures

The listener has to decide...

• Step 1  what is being **said**

• Step 2  what it **means** (how it relates to what has been said)

• Step 3  whether it is **important** and whether to note it down

• Step 4  how to write it **in note form**
Q: which step is the most important?

• Step 1 what is being said

• Step 2 what it means (how it relates to what has been said)

• Step 3 whether it is important and whether to note it down

• Step 4 how to write it in note form
Note-taking in lectures

A: the most important step:

• Step 1  what is being said

• Step 2  what it means (how it relates to what has been said)

• **Step 3**  whether it is important and whether to note it down

• Step 4  how to write it in note form
Note-taking techniques

From “This is how modern students take notes” by Jeff Dunn (Edudemic, 2012).
Note-taking techniques

Discuss in pairs:

• How is note-taking different from dictation?

• What is the purpose of making notes?

• Who are notes written for?
3 basic rules

• Rule 1: Be selective
decide what’s important

• Rule 2: Be brief
use abbreviations and symbols

• Rule 3: Be clear
show the interrelationship between the speaker’s points
Rule 1: Be selective

A first-year undergraduate and a first-year postgraduate studying the same subject attend the same lecture.

What differences would you expect to see in their notes?
Rule 2: Be brief

What abbreviations, symbols or other techniques do you use to represent

example
important point
causes / leads to
is caused by
more than
international

problem
solution
is the same as
goes up / raises
I don’t understand
Is this right?
Rule 3: Be clear

common formats:

- linear
- mind map
- Cornell notes
linear notes

Food Irradiation

Consumers

- long-term consequences/health?
- irradiation → breaks food molecules
  → cancer
- irradiation & nutritional content
  vitamin B by 26%

risks > benefits

Agriculture industry

- shelf-life ↑
- longer distances, transport
- outsource production to cheaper countries
  + profit
mind map
(a.k.a. spidergram, key word pattern, branching notes...)

PROTEINS
(SK 277 Book 1 p.122-)

FUNCTION
p.122

STRUCTURE
p.122

DISORDERS

DEFICIENCIES
p.126

DIET: DAILY NEEDS

Additional needs (p.125)

'Replacing' tissue

- injury
- burns
- cancer
- pregnancy
- breastfeeding

S > T (biggo, more muscle)

Building tissue - exercise/training

Source - digestion of peptide residues

from meat etc

Maize (lacks tryptophan)

Variation - R, R₁, R₂ sequence

Polypeptide chain formation (p.126)

Condensation reaction

Peptide

N and C end

Possible 20

NH₂-C-COOH

R

PKU

C (genetic)

- babies screened
- blood phenylalanine?

Enzymes
- antibodies
- membrane proteins

Mobile carriers eg. Hb.

Skeletal support (eg. collagen)
- fibrous

Muscle damage

Brain damage

PKU

C (genetic)

- babies screened
- blood phenylalanine?

Enzymes
- antibodies
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Mobile carriers eg. Hb.

Skeletal support (eg. collagen)
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Muscle damage

Brain damage

Krabbe's

Cerebroside

atherosclerosis

organ/immune mobilised

jet inefficient

muscle wasting

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Mind Map: Proteins (detailed) based on p.122-127, Book 1, SK277, Human Biology
Cornell notes

Phylum arthropods
Subphylum Chelicerata

Chelicerata examples

Prosoma
Sensory, feeding, and locomotor tagma

Opisthoma

Chelicerae
- Pincerlike or chelate
- Used for feeding
- First pair of appendages

Pedipalps
- Second pair of appendages
- Used for sensory purposes

Phylum arthropods is made up of subphylum Chelicerata. Subphylum Chelicerata is characterized by two parts called prosoma and opisthoma. The prosoma and cephalothorax are sensory, feeding, and locomotor tagma. The chelicerae is the first appendage and refers to the pincerlike. The pedipalps are the 2nd pair of appendages, and they are used for sensory purposes: feeding, locomotion, and reproduction.
Discuss with a partner:

- What might be the advantages (or disadvantages) of these methods?
- What method(s) of note-taking do you normally use?
- Why?
- Have you tried any other methods?
- Do you make notes by hand or on a laptop / tablet? Have you used note-taking software?
- Do you ever record lectures? Is this helpful?
Note-taking practice 1

You are going to practice taking notes from an audio-recording of a short (4 minute) talk:

Two functions of listening

Tony Lynch
Emeritus Professor of Student Learning, University of Edinburgh

Try a note-taking method you don’t normally use.
Comparing notes: content

Compare your notes with another student’s:

• Have you included the same information?
• If you missed any points, has your partner made notes on them?
• If there were points (or words, or sections) that neither of you could understand, see whether others in the class can help.
Comparing notes: form

• How did you get on with the method you used?

• Would you use it in the future? Why (not)?
Strategies for efficient listening

6 general ‘macrostrategies’ for successful listening:

Internal
- Predicting
- Monitoring
- Inferencing
- Evaluating

Interactive
- Responding
- Clarifying
Internal strategies

Predicting

Thinking about the possible content of the lecture before you listen
Predicting

Use 2 types of information:

Background
• general knowledge of the world
• knowledge of local culture
• specific subject knowledge

Context
• situation (who is speaking, where, when)
• the co-text – what has been said so far
Internal strategies

Monitoring

Noticing your problems as you listen and identifying areas of uncertainty
Monitoring

Involves asking yourself questions, e.g:

- Have I heard that correctly?
- Have I understood what was meant?
- Have I understood why s/he said it? (e.g. jokes, cultural references)
- Has the lecturer changed topic?
- Where is this leading to?
Internal strategies

Inferencing

= guessing!

Making hypotheses when you aren’t sure of something. e.g. the meaning of an unfamiliar word or expression
Inferencing

Helps us to cope with situations such as:

• the information we get is **incomplete**
• we **don’t know the expressions** the speaker is using
• we hear a familiar word, but used in an **unfamiliar** way
• we **can’t hear** what someone is saying
Internal strategies

Evaluating

Assessing how well you have understood the lecture
Evaluating

Evaluating your success in listening can help you to:

• identify which **areas of knowledge** you need to work on
• identify which **listening skills** to practise more
• compare your listening skills in **different subject areas** of your course
• assess your **progress** in listening over time
Interactive strategies

Responding

Giving your own opinion on the ideas presented by the lecturer
Responding

Responding involves asking yourself questions such as:

• Do I accept that what the lecturer is saying is true and relevant?

• Can I think of other examples that support – or don’t support - what the lecturer has said?

• Do I think the lecturer’s opinions are reasonable?
Interactive strategies

Clarifying

Preparing **questions** that you can ask the lecturer to get a clearer understanding
Clarifying

When you ask a question, you can help the lecturer to give the information you need by making clear whether the problem was due to:

• not hearing what the lecturer said
• not understanding what the lecturer meant
• not seeing the connection between different parts of what was said
More practice

Your opportunity to practice these strategies and your note-taking techniques.

You are going to watch a video recording of a TED talk by a psychologist about working memory:

*How your working memory makes sense of the world* by Peter Doolittle (professor of educational psychology in the School of Education at Virginia Tech).

The talk lasts about 10 minutes.
Predicting

*Before you watch, discuss with a partner:*

- Have you watched any TED talks before? In what ways might you expect this talk to differ from a normal university lecture?

- How much do you know about ‘working memory’? If you don’t know the term, guess what it could refer to. If you have studied psychology, you may be able to explain!

- How relevant do you expect the content of the talk to be to the task of listening and note-taking?

- Do you think it might offer advice that could be helpful to you in your academic studies?
As you watch and listen, **take notes** on the talk using any method you like.

http://www.ted.com/talks/peter_doolittle_how_your_working_memory_makes_sense_of_the_world
Comparing notes

Show another student your notes and compare:

• the **content** – do you agree on what the main points were?

• the **form** – what method did you use? How well did it work?
Post-listening discussion: internal strategies

• Predicting  How accurate were your predictions?
• Monitoring  Were you aware of any difficulties as you listened?
• Inferencing  Did you have to guess what the speaker said / meant at any stage? Did you understand why the audience laughed?
• Evaluating  How much (%) would you say you understood? How does that compare with listening to your subject lectures – better / worse / the same?
Post-listening discussion: interactive strategies

Responding

• How effective was the presentation?
• How useful did you find the content?
• How did it relate to our advice on listening and note-taking?
• Did it give you any ideas on making your studying more effective?
Post-listening discussion: interactive strategies

Clarifying

• Write down **one question** you would have liked like to ask the lecturer.

• Discuss it with your partner. What would you predict the answer to be?
Where next?

TV and radio are very useful resources for listening practice.

Which do find more useful? Explain your answer to another student.
Look at the list below and decide which types of TV / radio programme you think are (a) **most useful** and (b) **least useful** for improving your listening to English. Discuss the **reasons** for your choice.

**local news**
**political discussion**
**quiz show**
**science programme**
**drama**

**international news**
**cartoon**
**American sitcom**
**film**
**weather forecast**
ELSIS (English Language Support for International Students)

- **ELSIS** course *Lecture Listening and Note-taking* (focus on Predicting, Monitoring & Responding) – Semester 1 dates
  
  From week beginning 23 October 2017:
  Mondays or Wednesdays 16.10-18.00 (4 weeks).
  Paterson’s Land, Holyrood Road.

- **Independent Study** materials (download):
  
  *Lecture Listening and Note-taking*
  *Effective English Learning*: unit on *Listening*
Summary

Note-taking: 3 basic rules

1. Be selective
2. Be brief
3. Be clear

Try different methods

Strategies for efficient listening:

• Predicting
• Monitoring
• Inferencing
• Evaluating
• Responding
• Clarifying
Any questions?
Feedback survey

• https://edinburgh.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/english-language-education-student-workshops