

# Teacher Takeaways: Practical ideas for classroom teaching

A British Council series of online events in partnership with the  
China English Teacher Professional Teachers Association (ETA)

16th September to 14th October 2021

# Welcome to Teacher Takeaways

## Session #3

### Teaching listening

#### Housekeeping:

- No microphones or video
- Please leave comments in the chat and questions in the Q and A box.
- We will try and leave 10 – 15 minutes at the end to cover questions



# Jamie Zhang



Jamie Zhang, China ELT expert. She is the current CEO of Shenzhen Gaoxian Education and Consulting Co. Ltd and founder of the E-Trend teacher training brand. Jamie has also acted as an academic consultant for the British Council, Pearson Education Group Asia, and the New Oriental Education and Technology Group. She is a member of the expert panel for the China National Teacher Training Program (NTTP) and is Chair for the national panel of judges of the “Star of Outlook” talent show. She was also an expert judge for the Sina.com Star Teacher competition national final.

Jamie was previously an academic manager for Cambridge Assessment China, and holds both a Cambridge DELTA diploma and an MBA. She has trained teachers at all levels in both China and abroad.



# Robin Skipsey

- British Council Japan since 2007
- Teacher of public ES, JHS, SHS and University classes in Japan
- Teacher-trainer on government and Board of Education projects
- Materials developer for schools English textbooks
- Academic Manager, English for Education Systems (EES) Japan



**Teacher Takeaways:**  
**Practical ideas for classroom teaching**

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# Teaching listening

**12 October 2021**

Robin Skipsey, English for Education Systems (EES)

# Today's running order

1. Motivation
2. The stages of listening
3. Dictations and the role of reading
4. Single play or double play?
5. Different accents (US, UK, Australian, etc)
6. The role of note-taking

# 1. Motivation

# Motivation

## Teachers' questions

- How do I raise my students' motivation to listen? When I play the audio, it's like playing a nursery rhyme – the students start falling asleep.
- How do I get my students to be less passive during listening activities? Are there any techniques for raising students' interest and curiosity?
- How do I help students to maintain their curiosity and motivation while listening



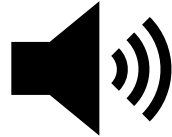
# Keys to motivation

- Having a purpose/goal for listening
- Understanding the situation before you listen
- Having curiosity

# Example 1

Example teacher talk:

- “OK, it’s listening time. Listen very carefully”



- “Now answer the questions.”
- “Who got all correct answers? Raise your hands.”

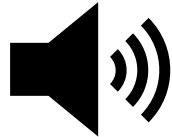
# Keys to motivation

- Having a purpose/goal for listening
- Understanding the situation before you listen
- Having curiosity

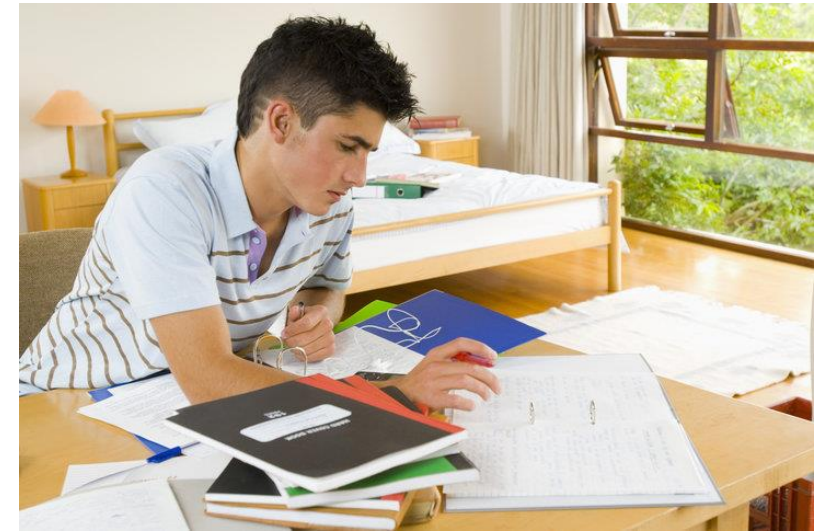
## Example 2

### Example teacher talk:

- “OK, We are going to listen to Tom talk to his mum about studying.”
- “Listen and find out what problems he has.”



- “Now discuss your answer with your partner.”
- “What problems did you hear? What did Tom say?”



# Key points

- Introduce who is talking and the situation.
- Give students a purpose for listening.
- Ask students to give evidence for their answers.
- If students have misheard, explore the reasons why.



## And...

Students will lose motivation if they can't understand what they are listening to. Teachers can help by:

- Pre-teaching some of the words and phrases in the listening (focus on how they **sound**, rather than just writing them on the board)
- Breaking up long audio into short sections, and checking understanding before moving on.

## 2. The stages of listening

# Teacher questions

- I would like to know if there are any steps we should be aware of when teaching listening.
- If we want to start focusing on listening early at school, what tools should we use?

# **1. Beginning listening (early Elementary school)**

# 1. Listening at Elementary School

At Elementary school, the focus is on sounds and meaning.



- Students need to hear slow, careful speech.



# 1. Listening at Elementary School

## Example listening teaching activities:

- Simon says (listen and move)
- Listen and touch
- Stories and songs
- Mini-dialogues

# 1. Listening at Elementary School

Students hear	Students' response
Dog, cat, pasta	Touch flashcard
Do you like dogs?	Reply with own opinion
On Thursday, he ate through four strawberries.	Comprehend story

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## **2. Next steps (later Elementary and Junior High school)**

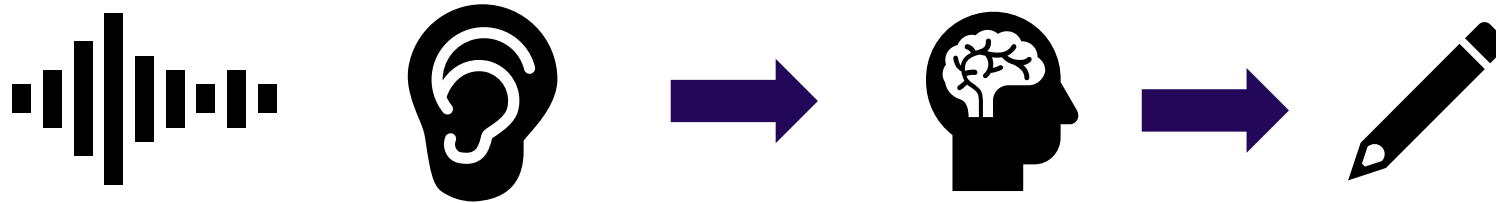
## 2. Next steps

At Junior High school, sounds and meaning are still important.



## 2. Next steps

However, students also need to start linking sounds to written forms.



- Students still need to hear slow, careful speech.



## 2. Next steps

### Example listening teaching activities:

- Classroom instructions in English
- Mini-dialogues
- Phonics and vocabulary dictations
- Comprehension activities from the textbook

## 2. Next steps

Student hears	Students' response
Dog, cat, pasta	Write words
What is your favorite subject?	Reply with own opinion
D: Hi Jenny, do you want to come to the park? J: Sorry Daisuke, I'm busy doing homework.	Answer comprehension questions Complete gap-fills

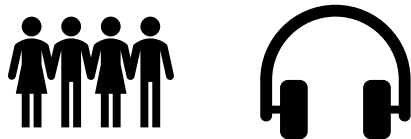
# Tips from research

## Practising speaking also improves students' listening ability.

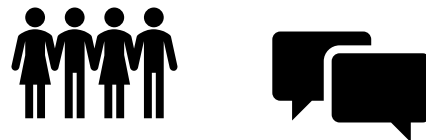
Evidence from a trial with foreign language learners (using an artificial language).

- Group A focused on listening comprehension activities
- Group B focused on spoken production with feedback

Group A



Group B



# Takeaway for teachers

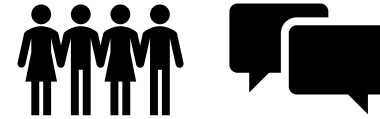
Group B was better than Group A at speaking.

Group B also outperformed Group A on:

- listening comprehension
- grammar.

**Practising speaking also improves students' listening ability.**

Group B

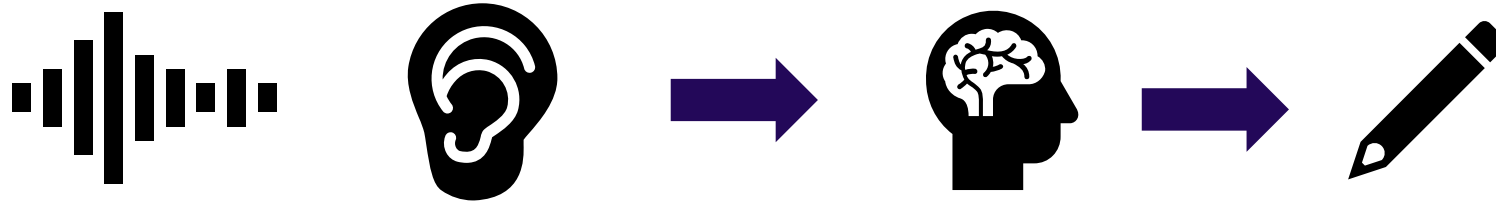


# 3. Listening at Senior High School



### 3. Listening at Senior High School

Students also need to link sound to meaning and also be able to link sounds to written forms.



- As listening texts become more authentic, students need to hear and understand examples of connected speech.

### 3. Listening at Senior High School

Example teaching activities:

- Focussed dictations
- Explicit pronunciation teaching
- Intensive and extensive listening

# 3. Dictations and reading

# Dictations and reading: Teacher questions

- Do dictations help students with listening?
- Even though I do dictations, students don't seem to get better.
- I have often heard that reading is important for listening. What do reading and listening have in common? What are the differences?

A short green horizontal line.

# Early literacy

# What does dictation teach?

- Dictation teaches students how to link sounds with spellings.
- Dictation is a technique for teaching reading and writing.

**It is possible to be an excellent foreign-language listener even if you don't know how to read and write.**

# Dictation

Dictation helps students link the sounds of words to their spelling. It links listening to reading and writing.

/f/ /r/ /aɪ/ /t/ /ə/ /n/



**f r igh t e n**

Sounds

Spelling

# Dictation

- If students are not learning the link between sounds and spellings, dictation activities won't help.
- The same is true for reading aloud.



# Example

ar

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

ow

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

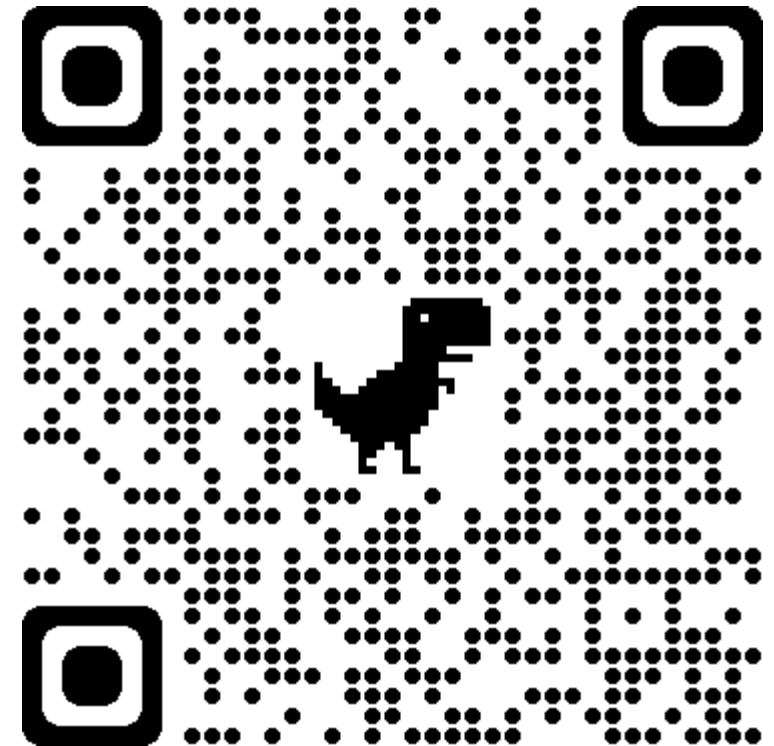
# Useful resources

The Alphabetic Code Charts website has a series of posters listing the sounds and spelling patterns of English.

For example (audience)

IPA	Easy-to use spelling	Spelling alternatives
/ɔ:/	/or/	fork, oars, .. <u>sauce</u>

<https://alphabeticcodecharts.com/free-code-charts/>



# Useful resources

The Spelfabet site has a list of common spellings and spelling patterns for the sounds of English.

For example (oxygen)

- y:    yes    my    baby    gym

<https://www.spelfabet.com.au/spelling-lists/sorted-by-spelling/>

www.britishcouncil.org





# More advanced

# Understanding spoken English

With a few exceptions, spellings don't change. Once a student has learned one spelling for a word, they should be able to recognise it every time they read it.

**However, the sounds of words can change. The sound of words changes because of:**

- sentence stress
- characteristics of the speaker.

# The sounds of spoken English: Sentence stress

1. The sounds of words can change.      /kæn/
2. The sounds of words can change.      /kən/

# The sounds of spoken English: function words

In speaking, articles and prepositions are often not stressed.

Students may not easily catch these unstressed words. Let's see why:

Stressed and clear	Unstressed and faint
to	/tə/
from	/frəm/
the	/ðə/

# The sounds of spoken English: other changes

Other sound changes in spoken English include:

1) Soft pronunciation of word endings

- **start**
- **moved**

2) Words that “run together”

/təstɑ:/      /ðədeɪjæftə/



# Spoken English: student challenges (第1問A: 問3)

## 第1問A      Question 3

Audio (as students may hear it):

- “/təstɑ:/ working in Hiroshima next week Yuji moved ???  
Chiba /ðədeɪjæftə/ graduation”



## 問3

- (1) Yuji is living in Chiba
- (2) Yuji is studying in Chiba
- (3) Yuji will begin his job next week
- (4) Yuji will graduate next week

# Spoken English: student challenges (第1問A: 問3)

## 第1問A

Text:

- “To start working in Hiroshima next week, Yuji moved from Chiba the day after graduation.”



## 問3

- (1) Yuji is living in Chiba
- (2) Yuji is studying in Chiba
- (3) Yuji will begin his job next week
- (4) Yuji will graduate next week

# Teaching techniques

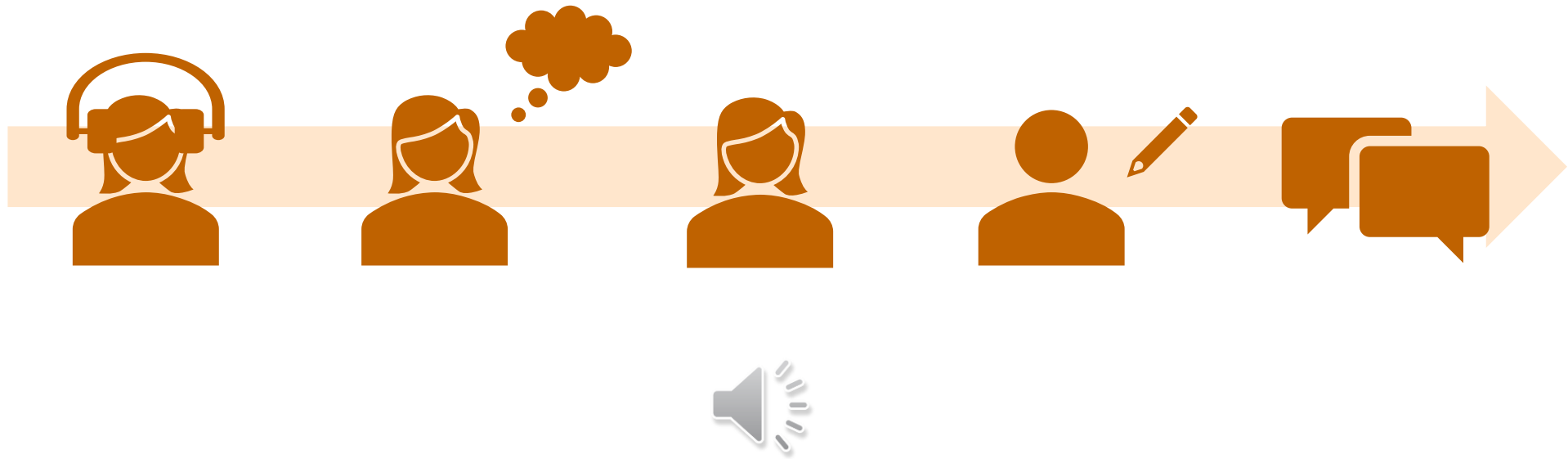
## Ear-training

1. Play a very short extract of an audio.
2. Students write what they hear.
3. Play the extract several times. Get students to compare their answers.
4. Say the same extract yourself, slowly and clearly.
5. Students discuss how the sounds changed.

# Micro-listening example task 1

You will hear an audio extract.

Some sounds you may be able to shape into words, others maybe not.



# Micro-listening example task 1

words
that was the
MAIN attraction.
It was <b>VE</b> ry COLD though.

sounds
(wə)zə
MAInəttræktʃən.
It̪əz <b>VE</b> ry COLD thə.

- What sounds were the same?
- What sounds were different?
- What sounds were missing?



## 4. Single play or double play?

# Teacher question: single play or double play?

What should I do to improve listening in lessons. In some tests (and real life) students only listen once. Should I imitate this in lessons?

# Single play versus double play

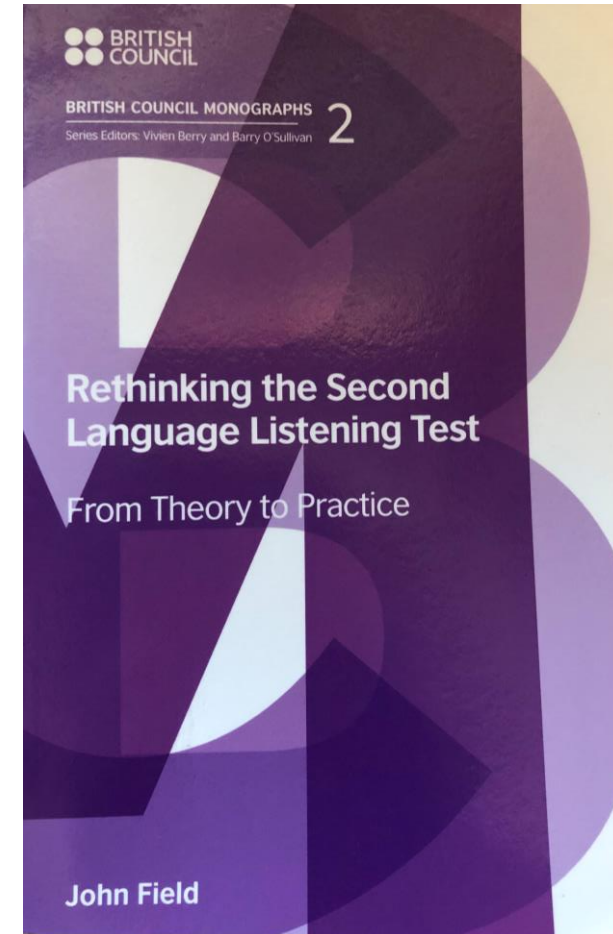


# Single play versus double play

A study\* into double-play versus single-play showed:

- Double-play reduces test anxiety.
- Single-play slightly reduces overall scores.
- The difference between lower and higher proficiency test-takers doesn't change.

\* <https://www.britishcouncil.org/rethinking-second-language-listening-test-0>

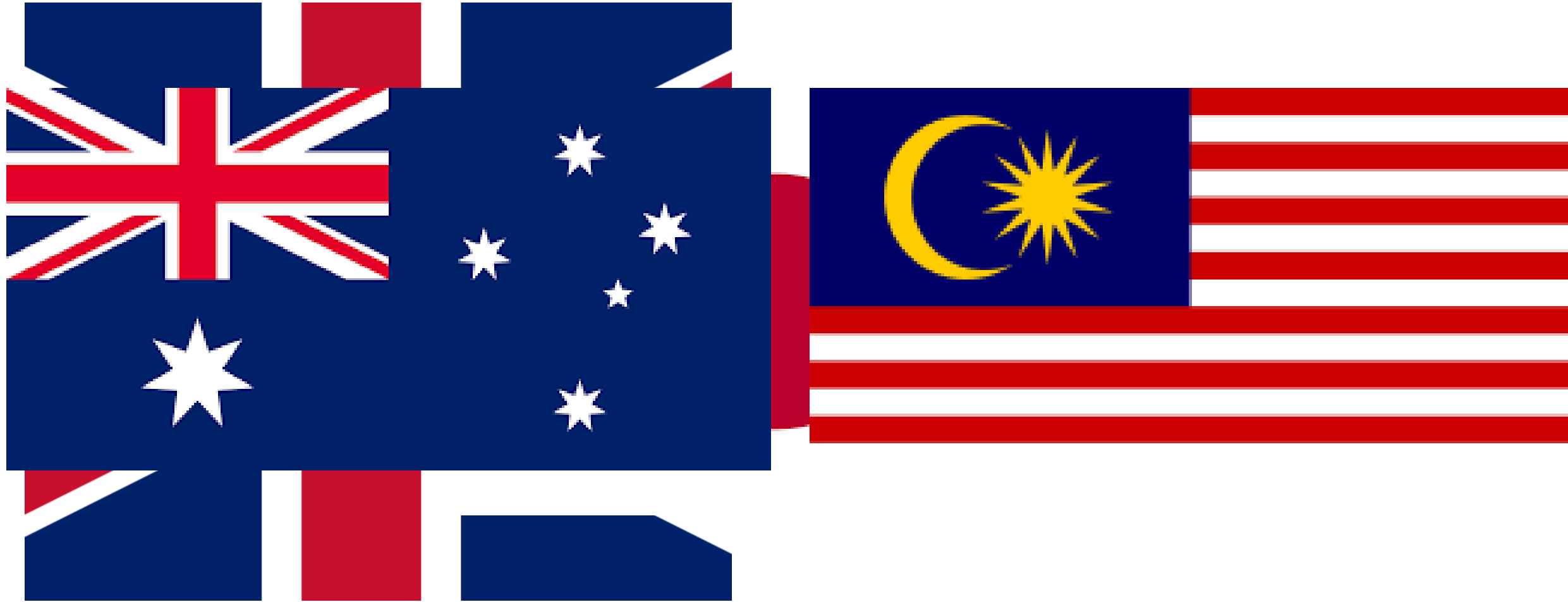


# 5. Different accents

# Teacher questions: different accents

- Most of my teaching materials are in US English. How should I help students handle other accents?
- I find it easy to understand UK English, but struggle with US English. Are there any strategies to help with this?

# Different accents



# What challenges do students have with accents?

When we listen to English, we often recognise words by their stressed vowel sounds.

- The biggest difference between varieties of English is the pronunciation of vowel sounds.

US	UK
bath	bath
water	water
coffee	coffee

# Different accents in high-stakes tests

“...encountering an unfamiliar accent is likely to have a disproportionate effect on word recognition” - John Field

# Familiarity with accents

There is good news:

- Your ear can adapt to different accents
- Experiments show that this can occur very rapidly
- In lab tests, listeners adapted after hearing only two – four sentences in an unfamiliar accent.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/8072143\\_Rapid\\_adaptation\\_to\\_foreign-accented\\_English](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/8072143_Rapid_adaptation_to_foreign-accented_English)

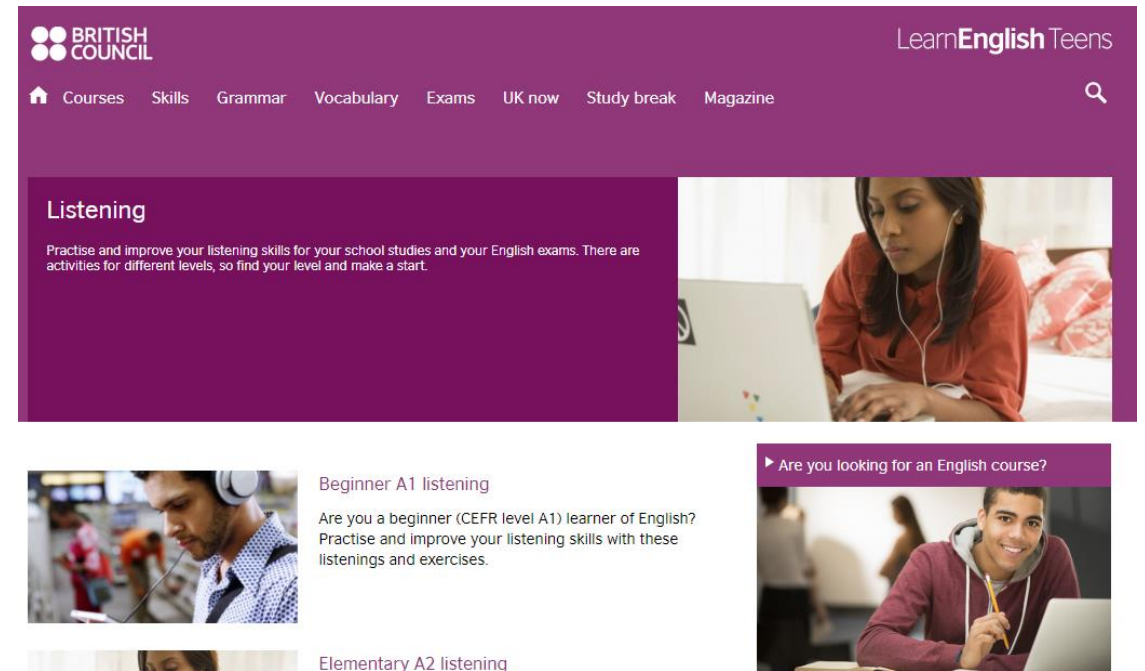
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.3758/s13414-015-0987-1>

[www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

# Takeaway for teachers: listening resources

Teachers and students can adopt a positive mindset for listening to speakers with different accents.

1. Students should hear different varieties of English **before** they take important tests.
2. There are plenty of listening resources available online (BBC, British Council, ABC).
3. Teachers do not need to make big changes in their teaching for different accents. Students will adapt with exposure to different accents.



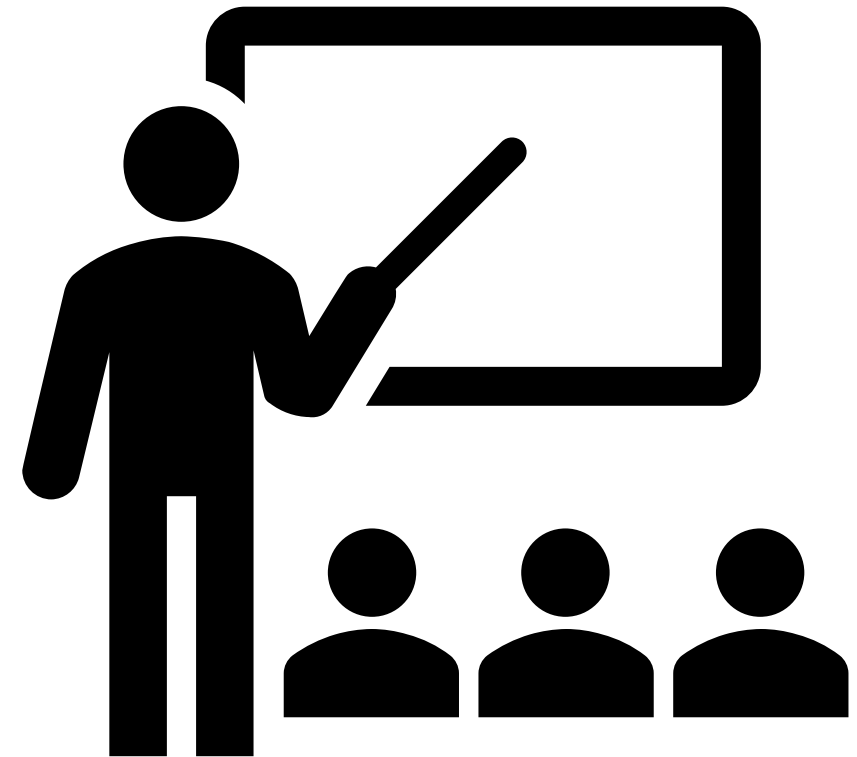


# Takeaway for teachers: teaching tip

It can be helpful to demonstrate how sounds change in different accents. This does **not** require complicated explanations or drills.

## Example:

- Robin is from Kent, in the UK. Notice how he says “castle”.
- Erik is from Colorado, in the US. Notice how he says, “castle”.



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## 6. Note-taking

# Teachers' questions: note-taking

- Some people have told me that taking memos during listening is helpful, while others say that it is not a good idea. What should I do?
- How should students deal with listening tasks in tests? Should they take notes? If they should take notes, how should I teach them to do this?

# Listening and note-taking

Taking notes in academic lectures is a useful technique which can help boost memory of the contents of the lecture.

- However, there is little evidence that note-taking makes a difference to listening comprehension in a second language test.
- One reason may be that speakers don't usually pause in tests to allow time for listeners to write their notes.
- In one study, when students were urged to take notes in a test, it had a negative impact on their listening comprehension.

# Note-taking task

Here is an example test task that requires note-taking. It has the following difficulties:

- rapidly reading and understanding the situation and the demands of the task
- making notes while listening (multi-tasking).

The most effective notes for this task are symbols, rather than words.

## 状況

四人の学生 (Yasuko, Kate, Luke, Michael) が、店でもらうレシートについて意見交換をしています。

Yasuko	?
Kate	○
Luke	×
Michael	×

問36 会話が終わった時点で、レシートの電子化に賛成した人は四人のうち何人でしたか。四つの選択肢(①～④)のうちから一つ選びなさい。

36

① 1人

② 2人

③ 3人

④ 4人

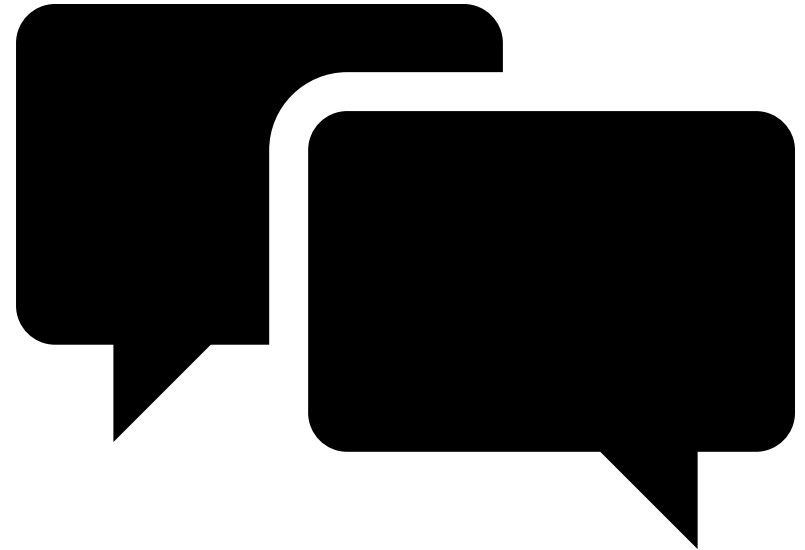


# Discussion

# Discussion

## Questions to think about

- What was your key takeaway from today's session?
- Is there anything you want to change as a result of today's session?



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## Q&A Session

Now, let's take some questions from the Q and A.



You can also use the chat box to leave your comments and share ideas!





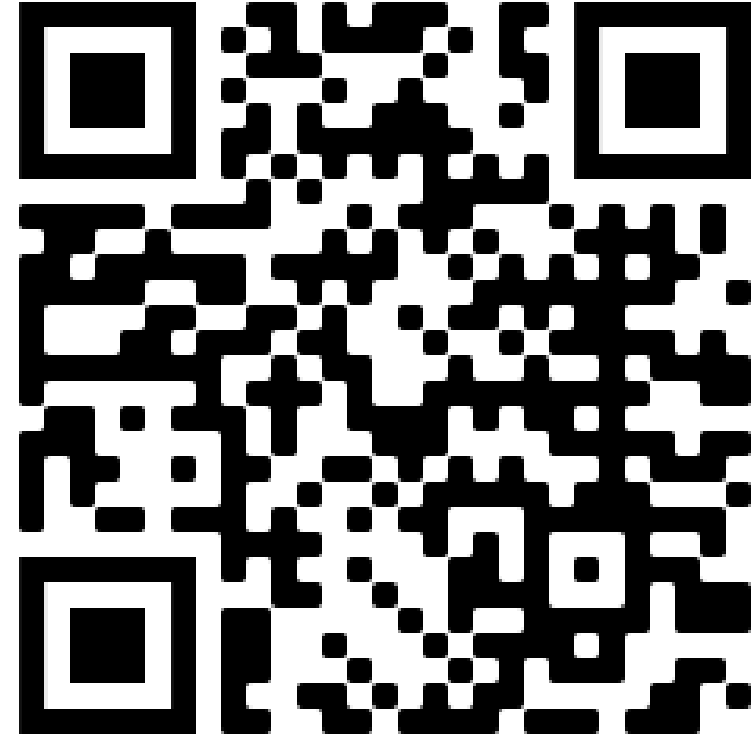
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# Thank you!

## Any questions?

Also, find out more about the next event (and register) through the QR code: Using product and process approaches to teach writing effectively (October 14th)

Certificates, recordings and downloads will also be made available here [within 7 days!](#)



# Thank you