

Introduction for the Student

Some Things to Think about Before You Use This Text

Given the importance of lectures as a means of instruction in your academic coursework, it is critical for you, the student, to be aware of *what* is being conveyed, *how* it is conveyed, and *what* you can do to improve your comprehension. Yet understanding lectures is indeed very difficult, and your understanding probably varies depending on the context and the speaker. Why is this so true? What characteristics of lectures and speakers influence your comprehension? And what can you do to improve your lecture comprehension?

This textbook is designed to help make the comprehension process more manageable. As you work through this text and the video material, you will begin to see features of lectures that can aid your understanding. In addition, you will become familiar with a variety of comprehension strategies and be given opportunities to practice strategies for:

- preparing for lectures
- listening better during lectures
- recognizing what information you have missed
- compensating for information you missed with methods other than reading and rereading the assigned texts

You begin by taking an inventory of the strategies you have used to understand lectures in your previous educational experiences to take advantage of what you already do well. You will then be introduced to a wider variety of strategies so that you can practice using those that are most effective for you. You will also begin to better understand how lecture culture can vary and will examine the expectations you have about lectures based on your previous educational experiences.

In Unit 2, you will be introduced to some key features of spoken English. Understanding these features will help you to unscramble the stream of language that you hear. You will practice some helpful strategies such as listening to key words and using lecture introductions to predict lecture content.

xiv Academic Listening Strategies

In Unit 3 you will have a detailed look at common patterns in lectures, and you will practice some strategies to help when you encounter definitions, opinions, and jokes. In the Additional Practice Section, you will have an opportunity to apply what you have learned to other lecture material.

The exercises in this text, together with the lectures and short talks on the DVDs and your classroom instruction, will provide you with many lecture-listening opportunities to practice effective listening strategies. The video component includes four entire lectures, as well as several lecture segments and shorter informal talks. Also included are short audio selections of academic speech from the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE). For additional information see *www.lsa.umich.edu/eli/micase/index.htm*. These selections demonstrate actual and authentic academic speech in university lectures.

By becoming aware of the characteristics of academic lectures featured in this text and by practicing new strategies while listening to the many audio and video segments provided on the DVDs, you will be able to improve your comprehension of academic lectures.