

Introduction for the Teacher

These materials have been designed for intermediate and advanced English language students who are currently or will soon be enrolled in English-medium college or university coursework but need additional listening comprehension practice as well as more effective strategies for understanding lectures. This text is accompanied by audio/visual material in DVD format (for classroom or individual use).

In the past ten years, a number of researchers have identified specific lecture characteristics that students should be aware of, and researchers have indicated the skills that students need to have to understand lectures better.¹ This textbook reflects much of the current research on academic listening, including:

- attention to both top-down and bottom-up processing strategies
- variety of video examples of naturally occurring speech from lecture situations
- a few audio examples from the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE)
- four full-length, authentic lectures for practice understanding whole lectures
- attention to patterns in lectures
- attention to speaker purpose and the structure of utterances
- attention to important aspects of academic culture that may differ from students' previous educational experiences, for example, the interactive nature of many lectures
- strategies in note taking, such as abbreviating, organizing, and compensating for what was missed
- an emphasis on awareness of one's strategies and their effectiveness
- offering students access to video materials (as a companion to the textbook)

Unit 1 begins with a description of the complexity of lecture comprehension and a diagnostic exercise to help you and the students identify areas of lecture comprehension that may be most difficult for them. Students then assess which strategies they are cur-

¹Flowerdew, *Academic Listening: Research Perspectives*.

xvi Academic Listening Strategies

rently using and which ones might be useful to try. Unit 1 draws attention to cultural aspects of lectures—such as the interactive nature of many lectures and typical student and professor behavior during lectures—and it reinforces the idea that using office hours to compensate for what is missed in a lecture can be helpful.

Unit 2 opens with a discussion of the idea that written English and spoken English are very different and then focuses on the bottom-up features (or sound and word-level patterns) present in everyday spoken English. Unit 2 addresses aspects of fast speech such as linking, reduction, and blending as they occur in spoken English. Students are taught to listen for stressed elements, to listen to whole phrases, and to focus on redundancy in naturally occurring speech to help them understand spoken English better. Unit 2 then addresses top-down processing strategies for listening to lectures, such as getting background information, processing structural cues, and focusing on introductions and summaries to understand the main ideas.

Unit 3 focuses on patterns that can be found in lectures and includes an emphasis on both top-down and bottom-up processing. First, students will look at some macro patterns commonly used to organize whole lectures. Then students will look at several common micro elements, including definitions and process descriptions. Strategies for dealing with the simultaneous presentation of spoken text with visual material are addressed as well as how a speaker's level of formality or informality may affect listeners. Other aspects of lectures that students typically have difficulties with are also addressed, including the use of humor in lectures.

The Additional Practice Unit is designed to provide students who want extra practice with more opportunities to listen to lectures and more opportunities to practice new strategies. You may assign these exercises to a subgroup of the class or you may decide to assign these as extra homework for all students. I assign the Rosenthal segments in the Additional Practice Unit to all students in the first three weeks of class because it is important to have listened to the entire lecture at the point when summary statements are discussed at the end of Unit 2. I have found that the Deardorff segment is most useful, however, as a final assignment at the end of the term.

In my classroom, I assign most of the video clips as homework (except for the diagnostic, which I do in class), to be done either on a PC/Mac at home or in a computer lab equipped with headphones. This allows more class time for pair work and whole-class discussion, and it allows time for attention to individual needs. I do show shorter clips from the DVDs in class, to reinforce the main purpose of the assignments. Be sure to watch the clips yourself before you plan to use them in class so you know exactly what is on them and so that you can better anticipate student responses. You will also want to add your own ideas to those offered in the Answer Key (available online). I

also try to augment these video lectures with a couple of live lectures, especially toward the latter half of the course, to provide students with opportunities to interact with the lecturer and to provide a richer lecture context.

Students are directed to keep a listening journal (p. 10) to help them reflect more deeply on the effectiveness of the strategies they are using and to reinforce awareness of the learning process. Student journals can provide you with important insight into student progress. They can be collected periodically, and you can give guidance directly in the journal, in class, or during office hours.

Instructions for Using the DVDs

One of the main goals of these materials is to provide students with their own access to the listening materials. Students often ask for more listening practice; they often want to listen to a single segment multiple times, and these materials are designed to allow for this kind of individual use. DVDs allow for repeated use without wear, as well as the ability to locate a specific segment quickly, which makes them superior to VHS. Students then use DVD materials for homework assignments either in a language or computer lab or at their own personal computers. We recommend that a language department purchase a class set of DVDs for students to use at home or in a language or computer lab, but students may want to purchase their own copies.

My experience playing the DVDs in class has shown me that TV/DVD players and remote controllers operate slightly differently from each other. As a result, I strongly recommend that instructors become familiar with the *exact machines* that they will be using in class. Advance planning strategies—such as practicing playing the appropriate clip before class and locating the position of the **Pause** and **Rewind** buttons on the remote control that you will use—will make playing the clips in class much easier. One important feature you will need to operate is the **Counter**. DVD remotes allow you to put a counter on the screen so that you can start and stop very precisely. You will need to know how to operate this feature before using the equipment in class. Times indicated are total running time from the beginning of each DVD. The text includes segments for those exercises requiring precision timing so that if you don't have a counter available, you can still do the exercises easily. Also, if you are timing from the beginning of the clip, text is provided to assist you in locating the particular point of interest. Note also that the textual material that appears on the DVD during lectures represents material originally written on the board or OHP.

xviii Academic Listening Strategies

Instructions for Computer Users

For Users with a PC:

1. Open your DVD software application.
2. Insert the DVD.
3. Use the mouse to select "play."
4. To return to the DVD menu, select the DVD button with the mouse and select "DVD menu."
5. Double-click on the title of the lecture you want to play.
6. Two numbers appear at the bottom of the screen. The first number is the counter that shows where you are on that DVD; the second number is the total playing time of that DVD.

For Users with a Mac:

1. When you insert your DVD, your DVD application should automatically open.
2. Use the mouse to select "play."
3. To return to the DVD menu, select the DVD button with the mouse and select "DVD menu."
4. Double-click on the title of the lecture you want to play.
5. Two numbers appear at the bottom of the screen. The first number is the counter that shows where you are on that DVD, the second number is the total playing time of that DVD.

Some Comments about the Video and Audio Material

Every effort has been made in the creation of these materials to include a variety of authentic academic speech events and speakers. Included are formal lectures, interactive lecture segments, informal "talks," an academic advising session, and brief interview segments. Though the majority of professors are from North America, two British English speakers are featured, as well as one professor and three students for whom English is a second language.

Four audio-only MICASE segments are also included because it has always been my goal to prepare students to deal with the real-world demands of lecture comprehension through exposure to lecture situations that come as close as possible to

real-world events. As is typical for instructors of lecture comprehension courses, I have in the past typically invited live lecturers to visit my classes, I have taken classes on excursions to listen to lectures, and have used a variety of videotaped material. I was, in fact, strongly prejudiced against material that was audio-only, maintaining that academic listening commonly involves a visual of some kind. I did not use audio-only material in my earlier teaching because I thought it was less representative of the real situations students face.

However, when the MICASE project began down the hall from my office in 1998, I began to read lecture transcripts from the corpus and discovered that the lectures I had been using in class had some striking differences from the ones recorded on audio from actual class situations found in the MICASE corpus. I realized that the speakers who came to lecture for my classes showed a degree of sensitivity to their audience that I did not find common in MICASE; they often slowed their speech, used clear examples, and often refrained from using a lot of idiomatic expressions or jokes. They couldn't refer to other texts beyond the assigned reading for that lecture since students did not have any other texts in common. The MICASE corpus data, on the other hand, revealed more complex and difficult lecture listening scenarios—such as more rapid delivery of information, more references to historical events that were not within the students' knowledge base, and more frequent use of idioms. I realized that my videos and lectures had brought a *simplified* real-world to my classroom. And while some simplification can be helpful initially, exposing students only to simplified lecture texts certainly does students a disservice. Exposing students to a fuller range of complex discourse that they will most likely encounter in their academic careers is, in my opinion, of great value. Clearly, preparing students for the challenges they will face with the Next Generation TOEFL® or iBT® lecture comprehension section will require instructors to be aware of the complexity in academic lectures, and students will need to practice with texts of equal complexity.

I still consider the visual component to be a vital part of academic lecture listening instruction, as is demonstrated in the inclusion of 19 video segments. However, I have come to see great value also in the audio-only material available in the MICASE corpus. The four audio segments and their transcripts included in this text demonstrate some very rich and complex authentic uses of academic English. For example, the academic advising session, Clip 7, is valuable as an eye-opener and helps students begin to see why they have such trouble understanding some of the casual speech spoken around them. The richness of the text, the false starts, the incomplete utterances, the slang and blending of sounds speak volumes—even without a dynamic visual component. It is my view now that the authentic and rich nature of the interactions more than compensate for the lack of a video component.

xx Academic Listening Strategies

Note also that in authentic lectures, material is sometimes included, such as a joke, that could only be understood by the original audience. Therefore, some very minor editing of three or four clips became necessary. In Clips 10 and 11, for example, you may notice a few edits. We believe these edits do not interfere with the overall usefulness of the material.