



# Teaching Listening and Speaking

Based on "*Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed*" by Brown, H. D. (2001).

## Listening Comprehension Model

The first thing to take into consideration while preparing a listening lesson is that listening is not merely the reception and decoding of spoken language, it is rather a complicated process. Furthermore, it is interactive in nature and requires the collaboration of the speaker and listener. Brown (2001) identifies eight steps for any successful listening activity based on the work of Clark & Clark (1977) and Richards (1983):

- 1.** The hearer processes what is called ‘raw speech’ and holds an ‘image’ of it in short-term memory. This image consists of the constituents (phrases, clauses, cohesive markers, intonation, and stress patterns) of a stream of speech.
- 2.** The hearer determines the type of speech event being processed (for example, a conversation, a speech, a radio broadcast) and then appropriately ‘colors’ the interpretation of the perceived message.
- 3.** The hearer infers the objectives of the speaker through consideration of the type of speech event, the context, and the content. So, for example, one determines whether the speaker wishes to persuade, to request, to exchange pleasantries, to affirm, to deny, to inform, and so forth. Thus the function of the message is inferred.
- 4.** The hearer recalls background information (or schemata) relevant to the particular context and subject matter. A lifetime of experiences and knowledge is used to perform cognitive associations in order to bring plausible interpretation to the message.

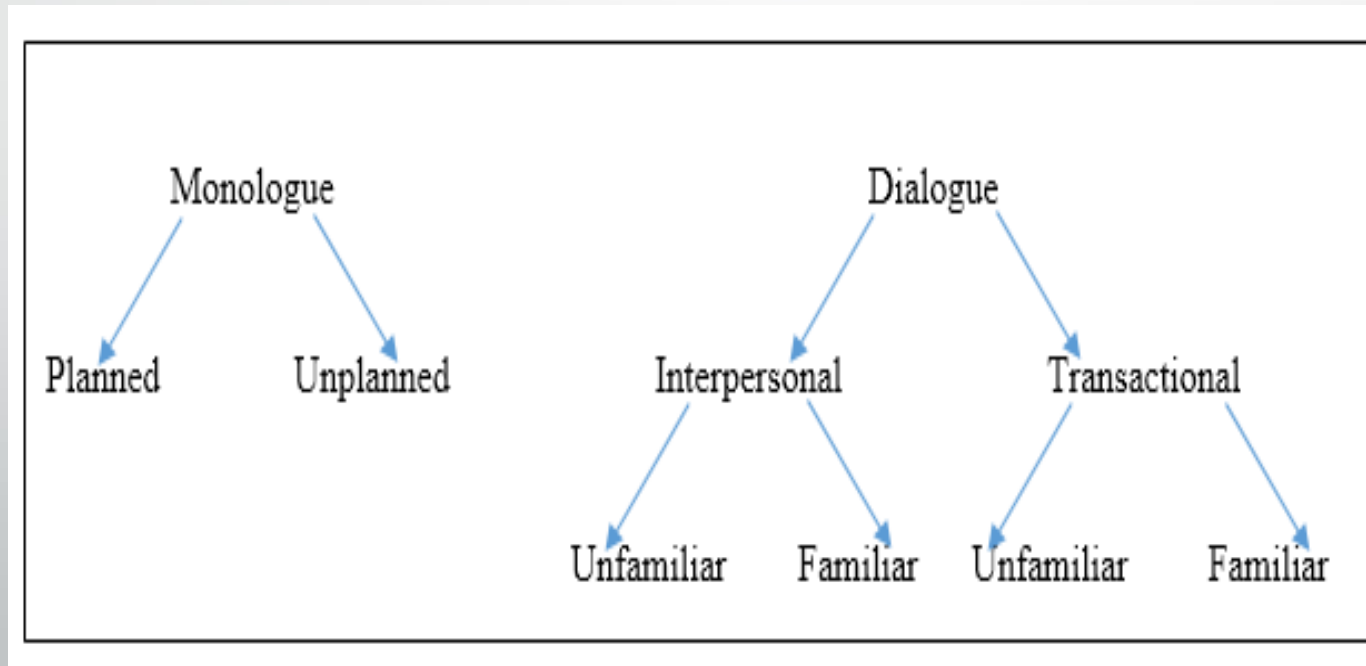
## Listening Comprehension Model

5. The hearer assigns a literal meaning to the utterance. This process involves a set of semantic interpretations of the surface strings that the ear has perceived. In many instances, literal and intended meanings match.
6. The hearer assigns an intended meaning to the utterance. A key to human communication is the ability to match perceived meaning with intended meaning.
7. The hearer determines whether information should be retained in short-term or long-term memory. Short-term – a matter of few second – is appropriate in contexts that call for a quick oral response from the hearer. Long-term memory is more common when, say, you are processing information in a lecture. There are, of course, many points in between.
8. The hearer deletes the form in which the message was originally received. The words, phrases, and sentences are quickly forgotten. Instead, the important information, if any, is retained conceptually (**Brown, 2001, p. 249-50**).

## Types of Spoken Language

Most of the focus in foreign language classrooms is devoted to conversations. However, there are plenty of other spoken language forms that require similar attention. The following figure summarizes the general types of oral language to be considered while designing a listening comprehension curriculum.

Figure 1. Brown's 2001 adaptation of Nunan's (1991) types of oral language



# Types of Spoken Language

## Monologues

A monologue is when one uses spoken language for a period of time as in speeches, lectures, and news broadcasts. In this case, the hearer has to process somewhat extended stretches of speech without much interruption. **Planned monologues** (speeches for instance which usually have a prewritten form) are relatively difficult to comprehend because they manifest little redundancy. **Unplanned monologues** (lectures for instance) exhibit more redundancy which makes them easier to understand (Brown, 2001, p. 251).

## Dialogues

A dialogue involves two or more speakers. It can be subdivided into exchanges that promote social relationships (**interpersonal**) and those for which the purpose is to convey propositional or factual information (**transactional**). In each case, when participants have shared knowledge, this means it is a **familiar** exchange and will result in more assumptions, implications, and other between the lines meanings. In conversations between participants who are **unfamiliar** with each other, references and meanings have to be made more explicit (Brown, 2001, p. 251).

# What Makes Listening Difficult?

Items suggested by Brown (2001) based on adaptations from Dunkel (1991), Richards (1983) and Ur (1984)

## Clustering

In spoken language and due to memory limitations, we have to process speech in chunks or clusters. Clustering in this context refers to breaking down speech into smaller groups of words

## Redundancy

Spoken language, unlike most written language, has a good deal of redundancy. Rephrasings, repetitions and elaborations are natural features of oral language

## Reduced Forms

Spoken language contains a good deal of reduced forms at phonological, morphological, syntactic and pragmatic levels

## Performance Variables

Hesitations, false starts, pauses, and corrections are common in spoken language

# What Makes Listening Difficult?

## Colloquial Language

Learners who have been exposed to standard written language sometimes find it difficult to deal with colloquial language with its idioms, slang, reduced forms and shared cultural knowledge

## Rate of Delivery

“Virtually every language learner initially thinks that native speakers speak too fast!” Unlike reading where a person can always go back to the manuscript, in listening the hearer does not have this chance

## Stress, Rhythm and Intonation

Intonation and stress patterns are very significant not just for interpreting straightforward elements such as questions, statements, and emphasis but also for understanding some elusive elements like sarcasm, insult, solicitation, praise, etc.

## Interaction

The participants in any interaction need to know the rules of interaction: negotiation, clarification, turn-taking, and topic nomination, maintenance, and termination

# Principles for Designing Speaking Techniques

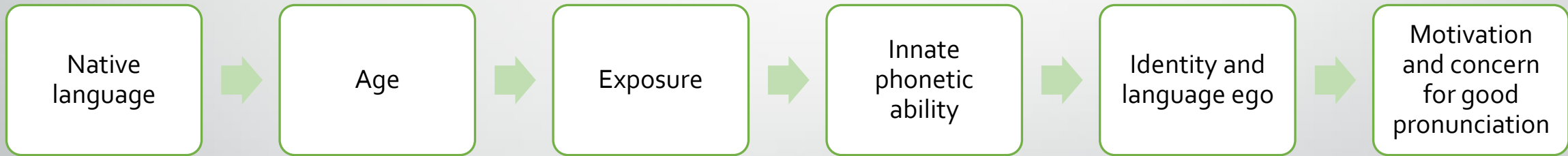
As proposed by Brown (2001, pp. 275-76)

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- Using techniques that cover the spectrum of learner needs, from language-based focus on accuracy to message-based focus on interaction, meaning, and fluency.
  - Providing intrinsically motivating techniques.
  - Encouraging the use of authentic language in meaningful contexts.
  - Providing appropriate feedback and correction.
  - Capitalizing on the natural link between speaking and listening.
  - Giving students opportunities to initiate oral communication.
  - Encouraging the development of speaking strategies.



# Factors Within Learners that Affect Pronunciation

In Brown (2001, pp. 284-85) as first suggested by Kenworthy (1987)



## References

- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Longman: New York.

### **Further readings**

- Dunkel, P. (1991). Listening in the native and second/foreign language: Toward and integration of research and practice. *TESOL Quarterly* 25: 431-57.
- Kenworthy, J. (1987). *Teaching English Pronunciation*. Longman: London and New York.
- Nunan, D. (1991) *Language Teaching Methodology: A Textbook for Teachers*. Prentice Hall: New York.
- Richards, J. C. (1983). Listening comprehension: Approach, method and procedure. *TESOL Quarterly* 17: 219-39.
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