

English for
Academic Study

New edition

Listening

Course Book

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Listening and lectures

In this unit you will:

- discuss the different situations in which you have to listen
- identify what factors influence your ability to understand
- learn about features of lectures in different academic cultures

Task 1 Listening in different languages

1.1 Discuss the following questions with another student.

1. Which of these types of listening do you think is more difficult or requires more attention in your own language? Why?
 - a. Listening to friends as part of your conversation with them.
 - b. Listening to the radio.
 - c. Listening to announcements at a crowded railway station.
 - d. Listening to an academic lecture.
2. What experiences have you had of listening to spoken English?
3. What type of listening in English do you find more demanding/less demanding?



Task 2 Understanding spoken English

2.1 Look at the following factors which make it difficult to listen to and understand spoken English. Add two or three more factors to this list and compare your ideas with your partner.

- The speed at which someone is speaking.

- **Background noise.**

- _____
- _____
- _____

2.2 ▶ **CDI: 1** Listen to Part 1 of a talk in which a lecturer describes some of the problems of listening. Then answer the following questions.

1. Which of the factors listed in Ex 2.1 does she talk about?
2. Which other factors does she talk about?
3. After talking about the factors which affect listening, the lecturer discusses two additional problems that students may have. What are they?



2.3 ▶ **CDI: 2** Now listen to Part 2 of the talk. The lecturer asks you to write down a phrase. Do this as you listen.

Does this example make the points in Ex 2.2 question 3 clearer?

2.4 ▶ **CDI: 3** Listen to Part 3 of the talk. Complete this excerpt by writing two to six words in each space.

So what is the solution to these two problems? Well, firstly, you need to get as much practice listening to natural speech as possible. Listen to _____ and try to develop your understanding of how words and phrases are really pronounced, not how you _____ pronounced. And secondly, you need to accept that when you listen you may misunderstand what is being said. So you need to be ready to _____ about your understanding of the meaning, if what you hear _____ compared to what you understood before. And this means taking a flexible, open-minded approach to listening.

2.5 **Reflect on the talk you listened to in Ex 2.2–2.4. Answer the following questions.**

1. Did you have any difficulties doing this activity?
2. If so, why do you think you had problems?
3. Were they the same problems the lecturer talked about?

Task 3 Listening to lectures

You are going to listen to a lecturer talking about the differences he perceives between lectures in the UK and in China.

3.1 Discuss with another student your experiences of lectures in your own country and/or in the country where you are studying. Think about:

- what the lecturers did, e.g., read from notes, used visuals, asked questions, etc.
- what the students did, e.g., asked questions, took notes, etc.



3.2 ▶ CDI: 4 In Part 1 of the talk, the lecturer describes the following:

1. what his main interest is
2. where he got his information about lectures in China
3. the survey he did and the students he talked to

Listen to Part 1 of the talk and make notes about points 1–3.

3.3 Compare your notes for Ex 3.2 with your partner. Then answer the following questions.

1. Did you record the same information?
2. Could you have recorded the information in different ways using fewer words/different words? How?

3.4 ▶ CDI: 5 In Part 2 of the talk, the lecturer first talks about some of the characteristics of lectures in China and then compares these with lectures in the UK. Listen and make notes on the main points he makes.

China	UK

3.5 Compare your notes for Ex 3.4 with your partner. Then answer the following questions.

1. Did you record the same information?
2. Could you have recorded the information in different ways, using fewer words/ different words? How?

3.6 Now respond to the talk. Look at the following questions in groups, and discuss your reactions to what the lecturer said in Ex 3.2 and 3.4.

1. If you are from China, do you agree with what the speaker reported about lectures in China?
2. If you are from another country, are the lectures in your country more like the British system, the Chinese one, or a combination of both?
3. Have you listened to lectures in English before?
4. Did you take notes (in English or your own language) during the lectures you attended?
5. Was it difficult to take notes? If so, why?
6. What did you do before and after your lectures to help you understand more fully and remember the content?



Unit summary

You have discussed different situations in which you have to listen. You have identified factors that influence your ability to understand, and learnt about features of lectures in different academic cultures.

1

Look at listening issues a–j and decide in which circumstances they could affect you. Choose one of the circumstances below and write F, L, R or A in the first box.

F – This affects me when I speak to English-speaking friends.

L – This affects me when I listen to lectures.

R – This affects me when I listen to the radio or watch TV.

A – This affects me if I listen to announcements.

- a. You are concentrating on something else at the same time as you are listening.
- b. You are nervous because missing something important will have a negative consequence.
- c. The speaker is using lots of words and phrases that you don't know.
- d. The speaker talks very quickly and runs words together. Even common words are difficult to catch.
- e. The speaker does not do or say things in the way that somebody in your country would.
- f. The speaker is talking about a topic you know nothing about.
- g. The speaker is using a lot of specialized vocabulary.
- h. Other people interrupt the speaker so you can't follow the flow.
- i. The speaker doesn't tell you when you should listen especially carefully.
- j. There is a lot of background noise.

2

Now look again at each issue and decide whether it is a problem for you or not. In the second box, write P if it is a problem and you need to practise, or N if it is not a problem.

3

Which of these issues did the lecturer in this unit offer solutions to?

For web resources relevant to this book, see:
www.englishforacademicstudy.com

These weblinks will provide you with further practice in listening to lectures and information about issues concerning cultural differences.