Three Bottom-up Listening Training Ideas for the English as a Lingua Franca Classroom

ELF教室のための3つのボトムアップリスニングトレーニングの考え

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ABSTRACT

It has been suggested that second language (L2) listeners are the most under-researched group of language learners (for example, see Harding, Anderson & Brunfaut, 2015; Yeldham, 2017). This dilemma is further exacerbated by test-orientated approaches taken by teachers which, by-and-large, are more interested in assessing learners' level of comprehension (or lack of) rather than offering them specific instruction to develop their listening skills (Graham, Santos & Vanderplank, 2011; Siegel & Siegel, 2015). Recognizing these issues, and our limited skills to teach L2 listening effectively, we embarked on an action research project which began with giving listening greater prominence in our teaching. We have begun by developing original teaching materials to address bottom-up listening skills, which research has shown to be a more appropriate focus for developing lower-level learners' listening skills (e.g., Siegel & Siegel, 2015). This paper shares three ELF-informed classroom activities that have been positively received in our ELF classes.

KEYWORDS: ELF, ELF-informed pedagogy, Bottom-up listening, L2 Listening, Listening strategy training

1. INTRODUCTION

Coming into this project, the authors (experienced English as a foreign language-EFL instructors in Japan) matched the majority of classroom teachers who, according to researchers (e.g., Chambers, 1996; Field, 2008; Graham, 2006; Graham, Santos, & Vanderplank, 2011; Siegel & Siegel, 2015) do not fully understand the processes that second language (L2) listeners use nor the abilities that L2 listeners possess. To be franker, our roles when implementing listening in the classroom had resembled a DJ (who curated and controlled the audio material) and comprehension checker. It was this lack of efficacy which led us to question how we could become more effective teachers of listening, and how we could better prepare our learners to be effective users of English as a lingua franca (ELF).

Listening is an integral and fundamental part of language development (Feyten, 1991; Mendelsohn, 1994; Nunan, 1998; Siegel, 2015; Siegel & Siegel, 2015) and, at the very least, deserves a more strategic and research-based approach in classroom instruction. To this end, this paper introduces three approaches to directly develop students' bottomup (BU) listening skills that research has shown to be effective for L2 students.

2. LISTENING & ELF

The increasing frequency of ELF interactions in business, travel and social networking flag the growing importance of excellent listening skills (Richards & Burns, 2012; Rost, 2016). To prepare L2 learners for listening in ELF interactions, some methodologists in ELF have advocated including non-native speaker accents (Björkman, 2011; Björkman, 2013; Dimoski, 2016; Dimoski, Yujobo & Imai, 2016; Mackenzie, 2014; Magasic, 2016; McBride, 2016; Walker, 2010) and, as Watterson (2008) suggests, examples which involve speakers employing communication strategies to interpret and negotiate meaning. Another important consideration for listening training is Jenkins' (2000) Lingua Franca Core, long considered the cornerstone of phonological intelligibility for ELF communication. ELF Core identified key elements such as the aspiration of certain consonants, vowel length contrasts and nuclear stress placement, as important features that ELF users need to consider to maintain or enhance comprehensibility.

As ELF teacher-researchers, these considerations were at the forefront in our development and implementation of the BU listening materials to be presented herein.

3. BOTTOM-UP LISTENING STRATEGY TRAINING

Arguably, the terms bottom-up and top-down (TD) processing may be the two categories of listening instruction most familiar (even if only superficially) to L2 teachers. The former refers to a focus on linguistic, grammatical and semantic signals, while the latter to utilizing one's background knowledge, life experience, and world knowledge to help ascertain meaning. To make sense of any verbal utterance, L2 listeners generally employ a combination of both (i.e., BU and TD). And, listening teachers along with methodologists are starting to agree that balanced attention to TD and BU is fundamental for good L2 listening pedagogy (Nunan, 2002). Nevertheless, contemporary surveys of L2 listening instruction highlight a lack of attention towards BU training in most classrooms (Field, 2003; Graham, Santos & Vanderplank, 2011; Siegel, 2015; Siegel & Siegel, 2015). BU skills are also neglected in most commercial textbooks (Field, 2003; Siegel, 2015).

This unbalance is particularly concerning as L2 listeners tend to lack BU processing skills (Field, 2003; Lynch, 2006, as cited in Yeldham, 2017), and fundamentally speaking,

L2 listeners need to master BU processing (i.e., decode spoken input) before they can even start to call upon TD strategies to support comprehension. Therefore, BU training is reported to be most beneficial for lower-level L2 listeners, and as Goh (2000) notes, BU training activities enable learners to overcome phoneme, word recognition and segmentation problems, which tend to frustrate learners at the lower levels.

In recognition of this research and our ELF-informed classroom teaching focus on lower level ELF learners, we have set out to create a catalog of activities that promote BU processing skills. In the following section, we present three activities that have been well received and effective at promoting our students' listening fluency.

4. THREE LISTENING ACTIVITIES FOR THE ELF CLASSROOM

4.1 Discriminate between phonemes: A & ER /a:/ & /3:/

This activity was drawn from a minimal pairs approach to teaching pronunciation (see Milliner, 2012 for a detailed description). Therefore, this activity can be used to promote intelligible pronunciation as well as listening fluency. Pronunciation research in ELF (e.g., Jenkins, 2000; Walker, 2010) has revealed that vowel quality does not need to be focussed on when promoting learner's intelligibility, thus many minimal pairs' drills may not need to be practiced in the classroom. However, the/ 3: / (er) sound is an exception as it can affect intelligibility in ELF interactions (see Jenkins, 2000). To address this sound, we designed the following worksheet. In total, the activity can take anywhere between 10 and 20 minutes to complete.

Figure 1 below is an example of the worksheet provided to students either as a print or PDF file embedded in the Blackboard content management system. Students are first introduced to the two sounds. In this case, they are A/α :/ and / 3: / (er) sounds. Teachers can then consider the following activities.

- 1. Listen and repeat: teacher reads ~ students repeat.
- 2. Listen and repeat: student A reads ~ student B repeats.
- 3. Distinguish between phonemes activity: teacher or students read one word from the pairs ~ student(s) responds which group this is from. To promote physical movement, students could be asked to perform a movement to share their response. For example, students create the A or U letters with their arms or raise their left or right arms to indicate which word was read.
- 4. Tongue twister dictation: Either the teacher or student (A) reads the sentence and student (B) transcribes the exact words they hear. This activity is effective in demonstrating to students (a) how intelligible their pronunciation is, and (b) how accurately they can decode the incoming sounds.
- 5. Listening test. To conclude the activity and reinforce the focus on listening fluency development, stage a short listening quiz. The teacher randomly reads one word from each pair, and students mark which word was read. Some variations could include the teacher using a recording made by another ELF speaker or asking students to create a listening test for a partner.

A & ER - /a:/ & /3:/ birth bath carve curve hard heard heart hurt pass purse far fur farm firm barn burn stir star first fast Tongue Twister Dictation: Although in his heart the hurt remained, Kurt let his mind return to the first day the barn on the farm burned down. Tongue Twister: Stars burn hard far from the heart of the earth I have heard.

Figure 1. Example of a worksheet that is shared with students (n.b., all detailed worksheets are shared in Appendix A)

This concludes the discriminate between phonemes: A & ER $/\alpha$:/ & /3:/ activity. The activity can be repeated for other minimal pair groups to develop BU listening skills, but this example focuses on students effectively creating and distinguishing a sound identified as being crucial for intelligibility. The activity has proved to be a very efficient, active and enjoyable approach for developing listening fluency and raising awareness of intelligibility when using ELF.

4.2 Note-taking

Bjorkman (2011, p. 94) states that "authentic recordings can be turned into course materials in which students test their listening comprehension and note-taking skills" based on realistic situations that expose them to a variety of non-native accents. Since the number of non-native users of English greatly exceeds that of native speakers in the world (Graddol, 2003), and being aware that learners in higher education settings are, for the most part, preparing to enter a globalized workforce, it follows that an awareness of such

accents and note-taking skills will be beneficial, and thus, worthwhile in ELF-oriented pedagogy. To this end, the aim of the following activity is to expose learners to non-native accents and develop their note-taking skills in a structured, yet realistic, ELF-type setting.

The note-taking activity described below is based on two Youtube video clips (See 1. <youtube.com/watch?v=ovdzy1ShKJ4> and 2. <youtube.com/watch?v=-n2KpS6Pykc>) consisting of mock situations in which non-native (i.e., Indonesian) users of English engage in giving and taking messages over the telephone in business settings. Teachers should note that both of the videos (1. less challenging and 2. more challenging) are accompanied by closed captions, which appear at the bottom of the screen, and cannot be turned off. Also, we recommend playing the video through good quality speakers, as the quality of the audio is low.

Prior to commencing the activity, teachers may wish to pre-teach the points below <www.northshore.edu/support_center/pdf/listen_notes.pdf> to help develop students' note-taking skills:

How to take notes:

- Illegibility: Write quickly. Do not be concerned with neatness the notes are for you (i.e., in the first section only).
- Missed points: Leave spaces in case you need to add information.
- Spelling: Do not be concerned with correct spelling (i.e., in the first section only). You can check and correct it later.

How to distinguish important information:

Pay particular attention when a speaker:

- Repeats information.
- Raises his/her volume or pitch of voice.
- Spends more time on a particular point.
- Uses certain body language.
- Uses direct statements (e.g., It's very important because...) or signal words (e.g., have to, must, etc.) to indicate importance.

The worksheets (see Appendix B) consist of two sections. The first part provides students with instructions and space below to take notes in a quick and ad hoc manner. To create a sense of realism, we designed and added a letterhead of the fictional company that the videos are based on (Figure 2). For basic level students who may be overly challenged, a more scaffolded version of this worksheet was also created for video clip 1.



Figure 2. Worksheet designed for student's note taking purposes

The next section requires students to review their notes and make them more comprehensible. This means, after reviewing their notes, selecting information that is most relevant and, in a concise and organized manner, transferring it to a 'While You Were Out' form designed specifically for taking telephone messages (see Figure 3). For the convenience of teachers, the transcript of video 1 is provided as an answer key.

4.3 Nuclear Stress

Nuclear (or tonic) stress refers to the emphasis a speaker places on a particular syllable within a tone unit. An utterance can be made up of one or a string of words produced to convey meaning. As such, it may consist of multiple syllables, which together as a whole form a tone unit. Depending on the intention of the speaker, different meanings can be conveyed by placing prominence on certain syllables. Typically, with the word 'Japanese' (/dʒæpəˈnizz/), a speaker would place minor word stress on 'Jap' and greater stress on 'ese'. In a longer unit such as 'Actually she's Japanese', 'Ac' would carry the secondary stress while 'ese' would bear the primary stress (Patsko, 2014). While placing stress on syllables can enhance intelligibility, misplacing it can potentially confuse the listener and result in negative outcomes. Given this, Jenkins (2000) describes the misplacement of nuclear stress as one of the "greatest phonological obstacles to mutual intelligibility" (p.

FOR		Urgent
		A.M
While Yo	u Were	Out
0F		
PHONE	NUMBER E	XTENSION
TELEPHONED	PLEASE CALL	
CAME TO SEE YOU	WILL CALL AGAIN	
RETURNED YOUR CALL	WANTS TO SE	EYOU
MESSAGE		
		a adam

Figure 3. Form for taking telephone messages Retrieved from <www.freepik.com/free-photo/message-pad_335772.htm>

155), and thus warrants attention in ELF-informed pedagogy. The activity below (see Appendix C) was designed by the researchers to address this need.

The listening text for this activity is based on a Youtube video clip (Retrieved from Elllo website: <elllo.org/video/M001/M017Introduction.htm>) in which a speaker from Nigeria introduces himself. The clip was selected due to the speaker's rhythmic speech patterns. The activity contains the listening transcript in which we underlined certain word items (see below). These items represent what we considered to be the locations of nuclear stress. For the purpose of the activity, we also incorporated false items (i.e., items that did not receive primary stress). While listening to the speaker, students must select only the items which, they believe, bear the prominent stress and circle them.

He<u>llo</u>. <u>I'm</u> from Nigeria and I'm <u>Mi</u>ckey. Today I <u>want</u> to introduce myself to <u>you</u> guys. (Excerpt from nuclear stress worksheet)

After playing the video, multiple times if needed, students compare their results and discuss their choices. We wish to acknowledge that some items we identified as nuclear stress in the transcript may be subjective, and thus, based on our own interpretations.

In the follow-up, students are asked to read the transcript aloud to their partners, once by placing emphasis on the correct items (i.e., as in the answer key) and once on the false items. Then, in order to raise students' awareness of how misplaced nuclear stress

could potentially interfere with intelligibility, they can discuss how the two versions differ. As a closing exercise, students form pairs and speak for one minute each, during which they place nuclear stress on certain items they believe would enhance their intelligibility. During this time, their partners must signal (e.g., by raising their hand) each time they perceive the use of nuclear stress contributed to greater comprehensibility.

5. REFLECTIONS

Findings from Siegel and Siegel's (2015) study of Japanese university English learners showed that "learners not only thought that all of the [BU] activities were valuable in terms of their listening development, but they also reported that they were enjoyable" (p. 655). Although there was no formal collection of student feedback to ascertain the effectiveness of the activities presented in this paper, based on classroom observations, we can report that students were engaged and appeared genuinely interested in developing their listening skills, pronunciation, and becoming more intelligible.

The more proficient students, for example, appeared to enjoy the challenges that the core objectives of the skill training provided, while less confident students appeared to appreciate the challenges associated with pronunciation during the minimal pairs' activity and comprehending the accents of speakers in the video clips.

All in all, the observed outcomes were encouraging and motivate us to continue our development of materials and practical approaches to promoting students' listening skills from an ELF-oriented perspective.

6. CONCLUSION

This concludes our introduction of three ELF-informed BU listening activities for the ELF classroom. All handouts are shared in the Appendix, and we urge teachers to try these out in their own classrooms. We are also looking forward to the next stage of our research where we plan to solicit student perceptions and measure changes in students' listening self-efficacy after explicit listening training.

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APPENDIX A

Discriminate between phonemes: A & ER /a:/ & /3:/

A

A & ER - /α:/ & /3:/			
bath	birth		
carve	curve		
hard	heard		
heart	hurt		
pass	purse		
far	fur		
farm	firm		
barn	burn		
star	stir		
fast	first		

Tongue Twister Dictation:

It is hard not to cry but he is firm in his belief that if he had heard the fire he could have stopped it as it started.

Tongue Twister: Stars burn hard far from the heart of the earth I have heard.

A & ER - /a:/ & /3:/

birth	
curve	
heard	
hurt	
purse	
fur	
firm	
burn	
stir	
first	

Tongue Twister Dictation:

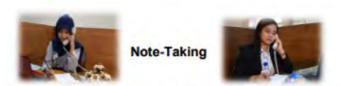
Although in his heart the hurt remained, Kurt let his mind return to the first day the barn on the farm burned down.

Tongue Twister:

Stars burn hard far from the heart of the earth I have heard.

APPENDIX B

Note taking activity



Imagine you are Nila, a secretary for a company named 'Rajawali Global Group' in Indonesia.

You receive a call from Ms. Inneke from 'Sakura Jaya Company'. She wants to speak with Mr. Javier, the General Manager, however, he is not available at the moment.

Listen to her message and write it quickly on the pad below. Remember, you only need to write the most important points. Don't worry about neatness. Just write quickly.

RAJAWALI GLOBAL GROUP 267 Koe Bahany Drive, Jarkata, Indonesia 205–763.
Ph: (76)+09+8663-2297 / Fax: (76)+09+8663-2240

Note: Stage 1 (Higher levels)



Note-Taking



Imagine you are Nila, a secretary for a company named 'Rajawali Global Group' in Indonesia.

You receive a call from a woman who works for 'Sakura Jaya Company'. She wants to speak with Mr. Javier, the General Manager, however, he is not available at the moment.

Listen to her message and write it quickly on the pad below. Remember, you only need to write the most important points. Don't worry about neatness. Just write quickly.

Caller	RAJAWALI GLOBAL GROUP
ood morning Ms <mark>. Nila</mark> . Can I speak o Mr. Javier, the General Manager, please?	267 Koe Bahany Orive, Jarkata, Indonesia 205–763. Ph: (76)+09+8663-2297 / Fax: (76)+09+8663-2240
When will he be back?	
es, please. My name is () from Sakura Jaya Company.	
Alright. () for 'XXXX'. () for 'XXXX'. () for 'XXXX'. () for 'XXXX'. () for 'XXXX'.	
My phone number is, ()	
want to discuss the grand opening of new () in () And please ask Mr. Javier to () when he's back.	
Yes, that's right.	
Alright, Ms. Nila. Thank you.	

Note: Stage 1 (Lower levels)

While You Were Out

After you finish, write your notes neatly on the "While You Were Out" form for Mr. Javier. Finally, watch the video again with subtitles to check your information.



FOR		Urgent
DATE	TIME	A.N
While Yo		
OF		
PHONE	NUMBER	EXTENSION
TELEPHONED	PLEASE CA	LL
CAME TO SEE YOU	WILL CALL AGAIN	
RETURNED YOUR CALL	WANTS TO	SEE YOU
MESSAGE		
SIGNED		a adam 971

Note: Stage 2

Answer Key

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovdzy1ShKJ4

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-n2KpS6Pykc

Secretary for Rajawali Global Group	Ms. Inneke from 'Sakura Jaya Company'.		
Good morning, Rajawali Global Group. Nila speaking. How can I help you?	Good morning Ms. Nila. Can I speak to Mr. Javier, the General Manager, please?		
I'm sorry, he is unavailable. He is in a very important meeting, now.	When will he be back?		
Mr. Javier should be at the office again at 1:00 pm. Would you like to leave a message?	Yes, please. My name is Inneke from Sakura Jaya Company.		
Would you like to spell your name, please?	Alright. 'l' for India. 'N' for Nancy. 'E' for Echo. 'K' for Kilo. 'E' for Echo.		
Got it. Where can Mr. Javier contact you?	My phone number is, 7713111.		
/hat is the call regarding? I want to discuss the grand opening of new office in Jakarta. And please ask Mr. Javier back when he's back.			
Alright. So, you want Mr. Javier calls you and grand opening of new branch office in Jakarta.	Yes, that's right.		
I'll give Mr. Javier message as soon as possible.	Alright, Ms. Nila. Thank you.		
You're welcome and have nice day.			

Note: Answer key (Video 1)

APPENDIX C

Nuclear stress activity & Answer key

Nuclear Stress

While You Watch

Watch the video below. While watching, read the transcript and circle any of the underlined items that you think the speaker places extra stress. Then compare your answers with a partner.

Mickey / Nigeria



http://www.elllo.org/video/M001/M017Introduction.htm

Hello, I'm from Nigeria and I'm Mickey. Today I want to introduce myself to you guys.

I'm Miki Babalola from Nigeria and those states in particular.

Actually I grew up in Lagos and I love sports and activities, besides I love lifting weights and anything that has to do with the gyming. I love playing soccer. I love wrestling. I love anything that has to do with physical sport but not only combat aspects because I really (....) to combat.

I like studying but I don't like reading that's the funny aspect of it too that I would like to see but we all read studies for our education aspect of it, but reading I'm no good at it.

<u>Videos</u>, oh <u>my</u> goodness. I <u>love</u> watching <u>mo</u>vies especially car<u>toons</u> and again I <u>love</u> things <u>that</u> I like doing <u>singing</u>, <u>dancing</u> is my hobby. I <u>love</u> doing those. I can <u>dance</u> for like, ..<u>twenty</u> <u>four</u> hours every day, <u>sing</u>ing and enjoying <u>myself</u> listening to <u>music</u>. Thank you very much.

After You Watch

- Try reading the transcript aloud to your partner two times. Once by placing stress on the items the speaker stressed, and once by stressing the other highlighted items. How different do the two versions sound to you?
- Talk to your partner for one minute, and use nuclear stress while you speak. Your partner should signal each time that you do

Note: Main activity & follow-up

Answer Key

Hello, I'm from Nigeria and I'm Mickey. Today I want to introduce myself to you guys.

I'm Miki Babalola from Nigeria and those states in particular.

Actually I grew up in Lagos and I love sports and activities, besides I love lifting weights and anything that has to do with the gyming. I love playing soccer. I love wrestling. I love anything that has to do with physical sport but not only combat aspects because I really (....) to combat.

I like studying but I don't like reading that's the funny aspect of it too that I would like to see but we all read studies for our education aspect of it, but reading I'm no good at it.

<u>Videos</u>, oh my goodness. I <u>love</u> watching <u>mo</u>vies especially car<u>toons</u> and again I <u>love</u> things that I like doing <u>sing</u>ing, <u>danc</u>ing is my hobby. I <u>love</u> doing those. I can <u>dance</u> for like, <u>twen</u>ty <u>four</u> hours every day, <u>sing</u>ing and enjoying myself listening to music. Thank you very much.