

Listening in EAP: Academic listener as interpreter and recorder

<http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/seminars/listening-eap-academic-listener-interpreter-and-recorder>



Edward de Chazal

1. Introduction
2. The context and characteristics of lectures
3. Challenges in listening to a lecture
4. Linguistic and number challenges in lectures
5. Ways and resources to help EAP students
6. Comments and questions

Edward de Chazal explains the challenges that EAP (English for Academic Purposes) learners face, and what teaching staff and lecturers need to do to make the task more manageable for them.

Session summary and objectives

In this talk, Edward de Chazal explains very clearly why academic listening skills are so challenging for international students. He explores the nature of academic listening, the roles of the listener, and the purpose of listening. He then outlines the factors that EAP lecturers need to be aware of when planning their talks and provides guidance on formulating classroom approaches to academic listening using a variety of materials.

Who is this session for?

- EAP teachers
- Teachers/students who need to cover an EAP module in an ESL (English as a second language) qualification or master's degree.

About the speaker

Edward de Chazal is an independent author, teacher and trainer specialising in EAP. He has co-authored the Oxford EAP coursebook series (Students' and Teachers' books) and the English for Academic Purposes methodology title, all published by Oxford University Press. He has spent many years teaching EAP at universities in Turkey, England and the Czech Republic, and has taught, examined or given talks in twenty countries.

Before you watch

When following a lecture you are required to be both an interpreter and recorder of information. Consider what a student actually needs to do during the lecturer and after it to fulfil these two roles well and develop into a successful tertiary level student.

Real life practice

Task: Analysing and understanding the challenge of an academic listening task

- a. What are the linguistic features of the speaker?
Consider pronunciation, level of formality, false starts, repeated words, pause length, repetition.
- b. What are the linguistic features of the passage?
Consider grammar, vocabulary, long sequences with multiple items, technical terms, words with dependent prepositions, use of numbers.
- c. What are the audibility features to consider?
Think about the speed of delivery, room sound effects, background noise.

- d. Are there challenging multimodality features of the text?
Think about any visuals or graphs that need to be interpreted, statistics, abbreviations, symbols, etc.
- e. How demanding is the content?
Would the content be challenging even for a layperson? e.g. unknown medical terms. Is the content new? Are students being introduced to this content for the first time or is it an extension of what they already know? What background knowledge do they have already to draw from?
- f. Are there culturally-specific references in the text?
e.g. people or places the students will not know.

Use a checklist like this one to deepen your understanding of the challenges that international students face with the lectures they attend. As a result, you will be able to design lectures that are easier to understand and cope with.

Top tips

1. Before every listening task, bear in mind the range of challenges that face an international student coming to the academic lecture forum for the first time.
2. Think carefully about the staging of your lecture – pay attention to logical sequencing of information, stating the aims of the lecture at the start, using signposting language to indicate transitions in content, and back and forward textual cohesion.
3. Consider the challenging content within the lecture and explain it to the students. For example, define technical terms and where possible reduce complex terms to simpler language if appropriate.
4. Link the lecture to other sources of information that can be easily sourced by students, and academic readings.
5. Add support to the lecture delivery: provide a transcript and record each lecture so the students can listen to them again in their own time.

Join the discussion!

Discuss this question with your colleagues, if you can:

We know the skill of academic listening is really difficult - it is complex, multimodal and integrated with a range of other skills. What advice can you share with other teachers about how you've helped your students deal with the challenges involved?