

Why is Listening Difficult? Reasons, Causes, Solutions.

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Listening Cherries	'The book'	'The app' (for iPad)

1.0 Introduction

- Murmur- 'say something in a low or indistinct voice'
- Mumble - 'say something indistinctly and quietly, making it difficult for others to hear'
- 'You teach us one English, then you mumble to each other in another English which we can't understand'

1.1 Ying's Dilemma, and Kezzie's worry

I believe I need to learn what the word sounds like when it is used in the sentence. Because sometimes when a familiar word is used in a sentence, I couldn't catch it. Maybe it changes somewhere when it is used in a sentence (Goh 1997, p. 366).

'I knew something was wrong, but I didn't know what, or how to fix it' (Moynihan cited in Chinn & Willoughby, 2016)

1.2 Spontaneous Speech: Greenhouse Garden Jungle

Greenhouse	Garden	Jungle
Citation forms	Connected Speech Rules	Spontaneous Speech
slow, segmentally perfect, falling tones	Steady speed, tidy, rule-governed placement of stress and tones	Fast messy unpredictable

5	4	3	2	1	speed
this is	ONE	i'm going to be looking at in slightly more	DE	tail in fact	9.3 - 400

1.3 Sound substance and perception

The three areas: Production, Sound Substance, and Perception

2.0 Reasons - inherently difficult

2.1 Dan's 'ands', 'and then', 'didn't'

01 || and I just STARTed ||
 02 || and my VOICE just went [creak] ||
 03 || and NOTHING came OUT ||
 04 || and Everyone just WENT ||
 05 || [SIGH] ||
 06 || oh POOR YOU ||
 07 || and then THAT was THAT ||
 08 || and WE ||
 08 || didn't get THROUGH ||

2.2 Karam's students

A || STUdents ||
 B || STUdents who'd WEAR ||
 C || i THINK about TEN STUdents ||
 D || a COUNcil called the student FASHion council ||
 E || WHAT the students at their SCHOOL were WEARing ||

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	WHAT	the students at their	SCHOOL	were	WEAR	ing

2.3 Drafting phenomena

UM, you KNOW, i MEAN, WELL, like, kind of

It's the second biggest city in my country I think.

2.4 Rhythmic units, not sentences

SLOW	AVERAGE	FAST
90 wpm	180 wpm	240 wpm
2.0 sps	4.0 sps	5.3 sps

01 || UM || 1.9
 02 || FOR || 1.7
 03 || aBOUT || 2.6
 04 || two YEARS || 2.9
 05 || mmHMM || 7.2
 06 || and then they FInally bought a BIG house || 7.5
 07 || a Bigger house for US || 6.5
 08 || to be Able to LIVE in || 8.8
 09 || so we MOVED || 4.6
 10 || for THAT REASON || 7.6

2.5 CSM vs SSM – Goals for Pronunciation and Listening are different

... our **goal** as teachers of listening is to help our learners understand **fast, messy, authentic speech**, ... The spoken language our learners need to comprehend is **much more varied and unpredictable** than what they need to produce ... to be intelligible. Therefore ... **the goals for mastery are different**. Celce-Murcia et al (2010: 370)

3.0 Causes of difficulty: ELT materials do not prepare us

3.1 Native speakers and expert listeners suffer from the blur gap

Production	Sound Substance	Perception
'excellent'	'exsunt'	'excellent'

3.2 They don't explore the decoding gap - Anna's anger

'I know I've made it' heard as 'I know I've married'

3.3 Questions about speech are oriented to pronunciation

We are well prepared to answer the questions:

- How do you pronounce this word?
- How do you say this sentence?

We are ill-prepared to answer the questions:

- What different sound shapes of a particular word am I likely to encounter?
- How should I prepare myself as an L2 listener to handle such alternative sound shapes?

3.4 Experts warn us off rapid speech forms

... there are some **uncommon** reduced forms which are heard **only in rapid speech** and **these should not be imitated by foreign learners**. Cruttenden 2014: 333

- **uncommon** = very likely to happen - **only in rapid speech** = very commonly in normal speech
- **these should not be imitated** = these need to be learned for listening

3.5 Rules of connected speech are too genteel

these are enormous sums of money for people to actually invest in cough cold remedies

3.6 Stress timed, or teasingly irrhythmic?

01 || it's PRObably || 4.1
 02 || i MEAN || 4.1 [creak]
 03 || MILEagewise || 2.4
 04 || ...square mile ... || 5.2 (it's where my)
 05 || ...i mean ... || 3.6
 06 || it's PRObABLY || 4.4
 07 || the COUNTY is like maybe || 3.9
 08 || FIFTy SEventy five MILES wide || 3.9
 09 || AND || 2.4
 10 || the City is ONLY || 5.9 [pause]
 11 || a a CERTain proPORTion of THAT || 5.2

4.0 Solutions: Goal, Murmur, Savour, Handle, Mouth and match

Goal: to help learners become familiar and comfortable with the realities of everyday speech.

4.1 Do the botanic walk

Greenhouse	Garden	Jungle
be able	be yay bull	baybull
go away	go wa way	gway

5	4	3	2	1
sorry i	WON'T	_____ to	DO	that today
they	WON'T	_____ until to	MOR	row

4.2 Word Crusher

	5	4	3	2	1
1	ə	səʊ	si	eɪ	ʃ ⁿ
2	as	SO	ci	A	tion
3	you should	JOIN	the associ	A	tion
4	in a	SO	ciation with the	GREEN	party
5	it was	DONE	in association with the	SPORTS	council
6	the association is	LOOK	ing for another	CAN	didate
7	but it was op	POSED	by the british	MED	ical association

5	4	3	2	1

4.3 Word clouds

1	2	3
ebbler	able to	awol
evil	abler	abler
able to	awol	ebbler
awol	ebbler	able to
abler	evil	evil

4.4 Matching words and mush

A	4	and that	1	inner
B		and then you	2	kanna
C		in the	3	a Corsican
D		in this	4	annat
E		kind of	5	battersea
F		of course he can	6	annen you
G		back to see	7	innis

	5	4	3	2	1
1	he	WENT	_____ his	FAM	ily
2	she	MET	him _____	CLASS	room
3	it	WAS	_____	HARD	to see

4.5 Savouring: Absolutely - æb.sə.lu:t.li æbs.li æb.si

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|| ABsoLUTely ||
|| ABsolutely SOLid ||
|| he says THAT'S absoLUTely true ||
|| his CAR'S absoLutely FABulous ||

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	5	4	3	2	1
01		AB	so	LUTE	ly
02		AB	solutely	SOL	id
03	he says	THAT'S	abso	LUTE	ly true
04					

4.6 Ear worm 1

Greenhouse	Garden	Jungle
ABsoLUTely FABulous	ABsolutely FABulous	apsli FABulous
æb.sə.lu:t.li fæbju:ləs	æb.sə.lu:t.li fæbju:ləs	æps.li fæbju:ləs

4.7 Ear worm 2

	1	2	3	4
Greenhouse	AB so LUTely	FABulous	AB so LUTely	FABulous
Garden	ABsolutely FAB	ABsolutely FAB	ABsolutely FAB	ABsolutely FAB
Jungle	apsli FABulous	apsli FABulous	apsli FABulous	apsli FABulous

4.8 Survival tips

	Greenhouse	Garden	Jungle	
Speakers remove final [t] & [d] before both consonants and vowels	East end	Eas tend	easend	IN the easend of LONdon
Remove the initial [ð] of <i>that, this, the</i> after both consonants and vowels	realize that		realize_at	I realize that she'd GONE
- 'and then' 'and the' are commonly 'annen' and 'anna'	and then	an then	annen	annen THAT was THAT

5	4	3	2	1
and then i	REA	lised that i'd left my	PURSE	at home

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