

Methods of Listening Instruction and Assessment in the 2011 APU English Curriculum

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Abstract

In 2011, the language curricula at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU) were updated in line with a two-year long research and consultation process. As part of this update the teaching of specific skills were standardized: speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary skills were highlighted for particular consideration, in relation to in-course teaching materials, methodologies, and assessments. This paper reports on the process of standardization of listening skills and the current state of the listening instruction and assessment that emerged from the curriculum update process. This paper will report on the pre-implementation research conducted at the university, the recommendations from that research, and how this research manifests in practice. It includes samples of course materials, course assessments, and interviews with current lecturers to present as clear a picture as possible of how the skill of listening is taught in the current English curriculum. The paper concludes with suggestions of how the courses can more closely standardize the teaching and assessing of listening in the curriculum to improve the skills of students and reduce teacher stress.

Key terms: curriculum, listening, process-based instruction, Ritsumeikan APU, English language teaching

1. Introduction

In the Spring of 2011, updated language curricula were introduced in the Center for Language Education at APU. During Academic Year 2009, lecturers, coordinators and directors of the English program at Ritsumeikan APU began proposals for the improvement of the curriculum. Two years of preparations involved the creation of curriculum development teams who worked specifically on core skills for the new courses. The background research upon which this current audit is based came from the team tasked with investigating the teaching of listening and proposing the approach for the 2011 curricula for teaching and assessing that skill. This audit collected data during the first quarter of the Spring semester 2012, and the initial findings and recommendations are presented here.

2. Relevant Background

A reform of materials in the Intermediate English II course, a lecture-based listening and reading 4 credit course, began in 2009. This reform was based on problems that had been identified with a product-oriented approach to the teaching of listening. A product-based approach necessitates the setting of questions, listening to a text, answering the questions, checking, and then repeating the process with a new text. As Field (2008) notes, “the chief problem with an approach based on one text after another is that the learning that occurs is localized and may not extend to future listening experiences” (p.29). This project was undertaken by Mr. Joseph Siegel and Mr. Christopher Haswell on the teaching of listening skills in the class with a view to increasing the transfer of skills from L1 to L2. The overall intent was to produce more confident, proficient

listeners, not only for in-course activities and assessments, but also for their daily lives on an international campus. As Field (2008) puts it “A further weakness of the [comprehension approach] lies in the lack of fit between the types of activity that take place in the language classroom and the listening that a learner might be expected to do in the real world” (p.31). The ‘real world’ for students at APU includes a campus where 50% of the population, students, office staff and faculty, comes from overseas. The ability to confidently interact using English clearly has benefits outside the classroom for students in such an environment.

The Siegel/Haswell listening methodology project ran from 2009 to 2011, and included a review of all materials prior to organizing the schedule and the design of a new method of grouping materials related to process-based instruction. This focus was based on the work of Richards (1983), Flowerdew (2005), and Field (2008). This project concluded that a process-based approach to the teaching of listening would be both beneficial to the teachers and students of the course. A process-based approach favours a focus on the teaching of the necessary skills over the assessments of the skills by isolating elements of a text that can be abstracted and practiced to assist with comprehension of other texts displaying similar features. A process-based approach was intended to make students more confident and skilled in their listening at any time: in class, in tests, out of class on campus, and after graduation, students would feel the benefit of this approach.

The micro-skills of listening identified by Richards (1983) and Brown (2001) can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B respectively. They completely encompass the range of listening skills required for a confident listening ability, and their number helps demonstrate the depth of listening as both an appreciable and teachable skill; each micro-skill can be isolated and trained, thereby providing a list of possible future foci for listening skill instruction. They are an indication of how much skill is required to be a proficient listener in a second or foreign language.

An overview of common problems with listening classes comes from Field’s 2008 review of listening instruction in EFL classrooms:

1) *The listening class is teacher-centred.*

The teacher determines the text, the questions, the organization of the task, the correct answers, and who will be asked to deliver them to the class. In short, the teacher controls the environment of the listening task. This can distance the students from the task and make them less engaged in the process.

2) *Playing a recording to a group of learners has an isolating effect.*

The task of reading questions, listening to a text, marking answers to the questions, and listening for their correctness or otherwise is a personal, rather than interactive, task. Listening in the real world is a skill that requires some level of interaction with the speaker, or productions required from the received information. Classroom listening tasks generally do not include this.

3) *Listening takes place in real time*

Listening class tasks are abstracted from context: a single conversation or announcement, with a set of questions either set before listening or displayed after. This is unlike the circumstances that are usually expected of listening performance. The artificial nature of the classroom environment is exacerbated by unrealistic task design.

These problems formed the basis of our efforts to make listening a skill that could be taught within our new curriculum.

Ahead of the 2011 curriculum reform, teams were formed to cover the individual skills. The proposal for the listening section of the curriculum was for the skills to be taught, rather than merely tested. The listening skills material research was conducted by Mr. Christopher Haswell, Mr Joseph Siegel, and Mr. Richard Lee, research that included yearlong longitudinal surveys of student opinions followed by focus group interviews with students from the courses. For more detailed analysis of the background literature, rationale for updating materials, and account of the changes made, see Siegel and Haswell 2010.

The Haswell/Siegel project proposed a materials development cycle, whereby any audio or visual text could be adapted for use in classroom listening exercises. The audio or visual text was first transcribed and then analysed for complex linguistic elements relating to vocabulary, organization, clause length, intonation, and stress. These elements were then introduced, practiced, and the text used as an example. Other texts with similar features were also introduced, and finally the original text was re-used in a different task. The overall intent was to make any text approachable by reducing listener anxiety and increasing listener experience. Especially important was the use of the same text in multiple activities, to break the cycle of listen, question and check, before then moving on to a new text.

The project included the reform of listening materials in the course of Intermediate English 2, a lecture skills preparation course provided for classes of up to 65 students studying video-based materials in lecture rooms.

The named skills included:

- Identifying genre
- Listening for details
- Inferring from context
- Identifying the subjects of pronouns
- Identifying patterns in speech
- Inferring meaning from words and sentence stress
- Organizing speech using discourse markers

The motto adopted for this process-based approach came from Earl Stevik (Helguson & Brown, 2007): the classes were to “teach, then test, then get out of the way” (p.147-148), but they were to take the issue of teaching seriously, and address skills that could be transferred from the students L1 into their foreign language studies. Echoing Richards, the project attempted to reorient classroom teaching practices away from product-based classroom activities, those that focused on the answering of set questions, and focusing more on the process of listening, the receptive skills that make up the activity of discerning meaning from aural input.

The research concluded that a process-based approach to the teaching of listening was, according to survey results and focus group discussions, desirable for students and was a form of instruction that could be standardized across all courses.

This was presented at a faculty development (FD) meeting in the Spring of 2012. The overall message of this FD session was that listening was a teachable skill that should be given equal attention in class time.

3. Domain of the current investigation

The intent of the 2011 English curriculum reform was two-fold: firstly, to standardize the courses by use of a series of textbooks, and thereby allow the students to work for four consecutive semesters in the program; secondly, the curriculum was to be reoriented to be skills-based over content based. The skills selected for and assessed were divided between the four-credit and two-credit courses. The four-credit courses were to teach the skills of speaking, writing, listening and grammar, with the two-credit courses covering the teaching of reading and vocabulary.

This report covers the standard track of the English curriculum, from Elementary English through to Upper Intermediate English. If its aims are met, which is to say, if the standard track courses can be reoriented to give appropriate priority to the teaching of listening, due consideration will subsequently be given to the elective and advanced track courses.

The courses are structured as follows:

	Stage	A Course (4 Credit) - (Skills)	B Course (2 Credit) - (Skills)
ST	(ELE) Elementary	Vocabulary, Grammar, Writing	Speaking, Listening
	(PIE) Pre-Intermediate	Speaking, Writing, Listening , Grammar	Reading, Vocabulary
	(IE) Intermediate	Speaking, Writing, Listening , Grammar	Reading, Vocabulary
	(UIE) Upper Intermediate	Speaking, Writing, Listening , Grammar	Reading, Vocabulary
Standard Track elective courses			
AT	(AE1) Advanced English 1	Speaking, Writing, Listening , Grammar	Reading, Vocabulary
	(AE2) Advanced English 2	Speaking, Writing, Reading, Vocabulary	Writing
	Advanced Track elective courses		

In terms of assessment, the models of assessment available are those of the major standardized tests of TOEFL, TOEIC, IELTS, and BULATS. While all use mainly multiple choice questions, the BULATS test and the updated TOEFL iBT (internet based test) both have gap-fill or form-fill exercises designed to better replicate actions required from listening comprehension in the real-world. Therefore, to prepare students for other listening assessments they may choose to take outside their regular studies, course designers might choose to include tasks that are non-multiple choice assessments of skills.

The curriculum began in April 2011, and has therefore been running in its current form for three complete semesters at the time of this paper's publication. In total, twenty new courses were prepared, from the lowest level of Elementary English through to Advanced English 2, including eight elective courses produced for both the standard track and advanced track students. This study focuses on the standard track courses of Elementary English (ELE), Pre-Intermediate English (PIE), Intermediate English (IE), and Upper Intermediate English (UIEA). With the exception of ELE, these cover listening as part of their 4-credit 'A' courses, combined with speaking, writing and grammar. Elementary English covers listening in its 2-credit 'B' course combined with speaking.

4. Audit process

The research began by collecting the listening assessments and samples of the listening materials from each course.

The teachers were asked three questions:

1) *What is listening?*

This question was intended to investigate the underlying assumptions about listening upon which teachers base their ideas regarding the teaching and assessing of the skill.

2) *Which of these listening skills are attended to in the current materials of the courses you teach?*

The participants were then shown the following list of skills. They come from the work of Penny Ur (2002) and her stalwart text “Teaching Learning Comprehension”. These are the seven skills that Ur suggests are the most difficult to transfer from L1 to L2. These are therefore the skills in connection to the materials development cycle that should be in mind when preparing in-class listening comprehension materials, summarized from Ur’s overview:

Sounds

Individual sounds that may not exist in the students’ L1 that cause miscomprehension or lack of comprehension

Intonation and stress

The system of intonation, stress and rhythm that may be different from the students’ L1

Coping with redundancy

The ‘noise’ that we have to cut through in order to discern the content that carries the speaker’s message

Predicting

Being able to make guesses from context and prior knowledge that assist comprehension

Vocabulary

Vocabulary that may be known, but not familiar to the listener (This could involve context-specific or colloquial vocabulary)

Fatigue

Tiredness that comes from the cognitive load of listening to an L2 for extended periods of time

Accents

Differences in production relating to the background of the speaker - perhaps even more relevant at APU than at other universities

Visual and aural clues

Things listeners see and hear that provide extra-linguistic assistance to comprehension

5. Results

5.1 Teacher interviews overview

In total nine teachers were interviewed. Of these, three of the teachers taught ELEB, three taught PIEA, three taught IEA, and three taught UIEA (three of the teachers were teaching more than one of these courses). The responses garnered from the

teachers in response to the question “What is listening”, provided me with evidence that the teachers recognized listening as a skill that could be improved through practice. One responded that it was the ‘interpreting and deciphering’ of the language that people hear. Another said it involved ‘giving attention and applying thoughts and senses to determine meaning’ while another echoing this sentiment, said listening was ‘auditory impact on the brain that is noticed’. Two teachers mentioned that, as a skill, listening has some case for primacy of attention, one stating that listening was ‘input before we produce’, another saying it was our ‘first skill’ and that it allowed for later ‘mapping from context’. Finally, the comment that listening was ‘not a skill that can be developed only from a book’ and that it was ‘intertwined with speaking’ was directly in line with the process approach, in that just listening to predetermined texts and answering questions, with no opportunity for practice or production, was not conducive to effective learning.

In response to the skills recommended for focus by Ur, the teachers were asked to indicate which of the non-content based listening comprehension foci were employed in the levels they taught. The results are summarized in the table below:

Level	Sounds	Intonation and Stress	Redundancy	Predicting	Vocabulary	Fatigue	Accents	Visual/Aural Cues
ELEB	X	X	X	O	O	X	O	O
PIEA	X	O	X	O	O	X	O	O
IEA	X	O	X	O	O	X	X	X
UIEA	O	O	O	O	O	X	O	O

X = not covered; O = covered (from the reports of the teachers in the courses)

The widest coverage came in UIEA, which covered all the areas apart from fatigue. The teachers on the course were generally happy with the approach taken in UIEA, but did note the lack of accents in the textbook audio and test audio. The accents heard in the class came from additional listening materials produced by Haswell and Siegel in preparation for the 2011 curriculum.

The joint second widest coverage were ELEB and PIEA, with ELEB receiving praise from the teachers for the materials provided for teachers and students, especially in regard to accents. As the listening texts were produced in-house using faculty members, they feature Japanese, American, English, Canadian, and Czech speakers of English. This is a wider range of accents than occurs in UIEA, and with a more consistent approach as the texts are arranged like a textbook with a variety of texts per chapter.

IEA teachers reported that they set listening activities from the textbook mostly as homework, although some did review the materials in class afterward. They commented that they felt the textbook had a number of practice activities that were beneficial to the students in relation to intonation and stress, however they felt there was not a large enough range of accents in the listening texts.

5.2 Overview of course materials / assessments

5.2.1 Elementary B

The listening materials available to the students on the course are interactions between faculty members playing a number of roles, working from a script. These scripts and the questions asked of students are provided along with the audio in the Blackboard course. The questions asked from the texts are mainly detail questions (“Where is Kris from?”, “What is Kris studying?”), although there are some questions that require the students to make inferences about the speakers (“Who is Yoko *probably* talking to?”).

The listening texts are performed by teachers with Japanese, Chinese, U.S., U.K., Canadian, Romanian, and South African-accented English, with several teachers from the U.S. providing different regional accents of that variety. It is by far the most widespread range of accents available to students in their regular listening materials. By using examples of spoken English by performers with different accents, the course is able to provide input that is closer to the experience of English being used on APU’s campus.

The listening assessments in Elementary B have a number of different formats. There are multiple-choice questions, but there are also true/false binary response options, and also items that require students to type their answers into short response boxes in the online test. All the questions, regardless of type, relate to details in the texts.

Teachers from this course reported that the course allowed for teachers to attend to several of the ‘difficult skills’ noted by Ur, including predicting, vocabulary, accents and visual/aural clues. Teachers reported spending class time on these skills, and also praised the materials in the class for being flexible and capable of being integrated with other skills in the class such as speaking, as there were good examples of ‘turns’ and ‘set phrases’ in the transcripts that students could utilize in their speaking tasks. The transcripts were noted as good examples for students to use, and were praised for having a variety of accents, including Asian-accepted English.

5.2.2 Pre Intermediate A

The listening materials available to the students on the course are the textbook’s CD, which is also made available through links in the Blackboard course, and links to external listening skill sites such as ESL Lab, specifically activities linked to tasks such as “Self-introduction” and “Dates” and “Times”. Although they are not assessed texts, the reading texts for PIEB are provided as additional spoken texts, voiced by current course lecturers. This provides a wider range of accents that the students on the course will be exposed to.

The listening assessments in Pre-Intermediate English A are all multiple-choice questions relating to details from conversations and longer lecture texts. They are produced in collaboration with the textbook publisher’s materials so that they are similar to the texts in the textbooks in content, length, organization, and speakers’ accents.

Teachers from this course reported that they could cover similar skills to those used in ELEB, but that the textbook also included exercises relating to intonation and stress in conversational speech. Teachers did report feeling that the textbook had some good activities relating to listening, but that they were often too short (‘1 to 2 minutes maximum’) for students to gain experience of longer texts, such as those that would be similar to sitting in lectures in English. There were also comments from some teachers who felt that they personally, and the courses, were ‘not doing enough’ to both encourage and

support the study of listening by their students. This led to teachers questioning how they could do so, and if there were other materials and approaches that could be utilized.

5.2.3 Intermediate English A

The materials made available to the students are the textbook CD, which is also made available to the students through links in the Blackboard course. The listening assessments in Intermediate English A are all multiple-choice questions. They cover detail and main idea question in the tests, and the shorter quizzes include some inference items. As with the PIEA assessments, they are derived from the texts provided by the publisher, and therefore have a similar appearance and approach to PIEA. This can be viewed as a positive in orienting students quickly to the expectations of the course when they move between levels. This is especially important in the 2011 curriculum where students are expected to complete their required language credits within the first 2 years of their studies at APU, meaning consecutive enrolment from semester to semester. Anything that students are familiar with from one semester to the next is a bonus for the next teacher.

Teachers from this course reported not covering much listening instruction in class, preferring to set listening activities as homework and to grade them as textbook ‘spot-checks’.

5.2.4 Upper Intermediate English A

The materials made available to the students are the textbook CD, which is also made available through links on the Blackboard site. The assessments in Upper Intermediate English A are divided into two parts. The first is a multiple choice listening test similar to PIE and IE, using conversations and lectures from the publisher’s materials. The second stage is a repeat of the lectures from the multiple-choice section with students required to take notes. The UIE textbook has an example 5-10-minute lecture for each chapter, which is covered with a pre-organized note-sheet contained in the textbook. Pre-organized note-sheets are provided for each UIE test with students required to complete the missing sections. The tests’ note-sheets contain progressively less information as the semester continues, with the last listening test requiring students to take and organize their own notes on a blank sheet of paper. Details from the lectures are then required to be entered into text boxes in the note-taking test.

Teachers from this course reported that the courses attended to most of the recommended skills from Ur, with only fatigue not being covered by the provided materials. Teachers also mentioned the additional materials, such as audio and video materials, provided in the courses that give a wider range of listening texts than the standard textbook materials.

5.2.5 Online materials overview

All courses in the standard track have materials available online for students to review listening work. All courses using the McGraw Hill ‘Interactions’ series have the audio from that textbook available in locked audio-player format (i.e. students cannot download the audio files, only play it back while on the Blackboard course page. This is important for textbook review as only the first section of each textbook chapter is contained on the CD bundled with the textbook. Students have to use the Blackboard pages for the audio to the other sections of the book.

6. Conclusions

This initial audit of listening instruction approach in the 2011 English curriculum standard track led to two conclusions:

- 1) The teachers are open to teaching listening as part of the curriculum, some of them eager to do so, but lack direction of how this is to be done.
- 2) The materials available in the books, although limited in genre and accent, have enough content to make them useful. The genres of text, conversations and lecture, are also relevant to the context of these students' study.

The audit of the materials and assessments came to two conclusions:

- 1) The standard approach has a resemblance to the standardized tests that students can expect to take outside of APU. However, the assessments do not go far enough to present teachers with an understanding of what students can genuinely be expected to achieve in the real world. Only ELEB and UIEA attempt to expand from multiple-choice assessments.
- 2) The materials available to teachers and students, due to their drawing from a single American publisher source, are limited in their scope. The limited range of accents being demonstrated in both in-class materials and assessments, reported by the teachers themselves, is a concern. There should be much more attention paid to the different accents of English. Certainly, they contain no Asian-derived English in their class or classroom materials. They should first be worked with to make them fit a process approach, and if supplemented this should be done with materials from non-American sources to increase exposure to accents.

7. Discussion of findings

The intent of the listening curriculum update was to make the teaching of listening more accessible to teachers in all courses. The findings of this audit were that the teachers in the curriculum were interested in the teaching of listening. However, the materials made available to the teacher were the minimum required to assist in this task. What is required is a recommitment to the teaching of listening in the classes to match the teaching of other skills. The examples given by Penny Ur demonstrate that there are activities that can be used in classrooms without a large amount of new materials being produced.

It was also intended to standardize the approach towards in-class tasks and assessments to reduce the stress on instructors as they move between courses. This appears to be the case with regard to the use of multiple-choice assessments in the courses. This is of assistance to the students who can therefore have an expectation of the format to be approached in the courses. However, there are alternative methods of assessing comprehension than multiple-choice that are more conducive to assessing how these students would perform in the real world. These include note-taking, gap-filling, performing speaking tasks from received aural input, and these methods should be investigated. The listening materials and assessment techniques currently in use by the standard track of the English program would best be viewed as the first stage of implementation. The materials are not yet wide-ranging enough to cover the recommended focus on the skill of listening. However, there is

untapped potential in the textbooks being used in the current courses, and materials such as transcripts and audio texts that are not being used at this time.

Elementary English B provides a fine example of how the courses can be developed from here. This course has both a wide range of voices being heard by the students and several varieties of English accent on display. Their assessments also test a wider range of skills. The consideration of accents in listening materials and assessments is, for the moment, only in regard to additional materials that are being sourced to assist with in-class listening tasks. PIEA, IEA and UIEA all use the publisher-produced texts for their listening assessments, and these texts match the practice activities in the textbooks. While the exposure to a wider range of accents would be desirable for students to feel more confident in future interactions with other Asian users of English, both on and off campus, this is perhaps an issue for a later time.

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Appendix A:

J.C. Richards (1983) Taxonomy of Listening Skills (p.228)

Listening micro-skills for conversational listening:

- 1) ability to retain chunks of language of different lengths for short periods
- 2) ability to discriminate among the distinctive sounds of the target language
- 3) ability to recognize the stress patterns of words
- 4) ability to recognize the rhythmic structure of English
- 5) ability to recognize the functions of stress and intonation to signal the information structure of utterances
- 6) ability to identify words in stressed and unstressed positions
- 7) ability to recognize reduced forms of words
- 8) ability to distinguish word boundaries
- 9) ability to recognize typical word order patterns in the target language
- 10) ability to recognize vocabulary used in core conversational topics (high frequency)
- 11) ability to detect key words (i.e., those which identify topics and propositions)
- 12) ability to guess the meanings of words from the contexts in which they occur (see strategies)
- 13) ability to recognize grammatical word classes (parts of speech)
- 14) ability to recognize major syntactic patterns and devices
- 15) ability to recognize cohesive devices in spoken discourse
- 16) ability to recognize elliptical forms of grammatical units and sentences
- 17) ability to detect sentence constituents
- 18) ability to distinguish between major and minor constituents
- 19) ability to detect meanings expressed in differing grammatical forms/sentence types (i.e., that a particular meaning may be expressed in different ways)
- 20) ability to recognize the communicative functions of utterances (speech acts), according to situations, participants, goals (pragmatic competence)
- 21) ability to reconstruct or infer situations, goals, participants, procedures
- 22) ability to use real world knowledge and experience to work out purposes, goals, settings, procedures
- 23) ability to predict outcomes from events described
- 24) ability to infer links and connections between events
- 25) ability to deduce causes and effects from events
- 26) ability to distinguish between literal and implied meanings
- 27) ability to identify and reconstruct topics and coherent structure from ongoing discourse involving two or more speakers
- 28) ability to recognize markers of coherence in discourse, and to detect such relations as main idea, supporting idea, given information, new information, generalization, exemplification (discourse competence)
- 29) ability to process speech at different rates

- 30) ability to process speech containing pauses, errors, corrections
- 31) ability to make use of facial, paralinguistic, and other clues to work out meanings
- 32) ability to adjust listening strategies to different kinds of listener purposes and goals
- 33) ability to signal comprehension or lack of comprehension, verbally and non-verbally

Richards's (1983) micro-skills for listening to lectures:

- 1) ability to identify purpose and scope of lecture
- 2) ability to identify topic of lecture and follow topic development
- 3) ability to identify relationships among units within discourse (e.g., major ideas, generalizations, hypotheses, supporting ideas, examples)
- 4) ability to identify role of discourse markers in signalling structure of a lecture (e.g., conjunctions, adverbs, gambits, routines)
- 5) ability to infer relationships (e.g., cause, effect, conclusion)
- 6) ability to recognize key lexical items related to subject/topic
- 7) ability to deduce meanings of words from context
- 8) ability to recognize markers of cohesion (discourse competence)
- 9) ability to recognize function of intonation to signal information structure (e.g., pitch, volume, pace, key)
- 10) ability to detect attitude of speaker toward subject matter
- 11) ability to follow different modes of lecturing: spoken, audio, audio-visual
- 12) ability to follow lecture despite differences in accent and speed
- 13) familiarity with different styles of lecturing: formal, conversational, read, unplanned
- 14) familiarity with different registers: written vs. colloquial
- 15) ability to recognize irrelevant matter: jokes, digressions, meanderings
- 16) ability to recognize function of non-verbal cues as markers of emphasis and attitude
- 17) knowledge of classroom conventions (e.g., turn-taking, clarification requests)
- 18) ability to recognize instructional learner tasks (e.g., warnings, suggestions, recommendations, advice, instructions)

Appendix B:

Brown's (2007) listening comprehension micro-skills (for conversational discourse) (p. 308)

- 1) Retain chunks of language of different lengths in short-term memory
- 2) Discriminate among the distinctive sounds of English
- 3) Recognize English stress patterns, words in stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure, intonational contours, and their role in signalling information.
- 4) Recognize reduced forms of words.
- 5) Distinguish word boundaries, recognize a core of words, and interpret word order patterns and their significance.

- 6) Process speech containing pauses, errors, corrections, and other performance variables.
- 7) Process speech at different rates of delivery.
- 8) Recognize grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralisation), patterns, rules, and elliptical forms.
- 9) Detect sentence constituents and distinguish between major and minor constituents.
- 10) Recognize that a particular meaning may be expressed in different grammatical forms.

Brown's (2007) macro-skills (for conversational discourse)

- 1) Recognize cohesive devices in spoken discourse.
- 2) Recognize the communicative functions of utterances, according to situations, participants, goals.
- 3) Infer situations, participants, goals using real-world knowledge. (pragmatic competence)
- 4) From events, ideas, etc., described, predict outcomes, infer links and connections between events, deduce causes and effects, and detect such relations such as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification.
- 5) Distinguish between literal and implied meanings.
- 6) Use facial, kinesic, body language, and other nonverbal cues to decipher meanings.
- 7) Develop and use a battery of listening strategies, such as detecting key words, guessing the meaning of words from context, appealing for help, and signalling comprehension or lack thereof.