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**Anglo**®

Teachers'  
Conference 2018



The Anglo Mexican Foundation

# How can you make listening comprehension less challenging for students?

Listening, as it is seen by many teachers and course books, is reduced to listening comprehension exercises and as Field (2010) maintains, "Students may have well-developed test-wise strategies enabling them to guess the correct answer", which ultimately does not mean they have developed the strategies to cope with listening in the real world.

\* Field, J. (2010). Listening in the language classroom. ELT journal



Accent, speed, jargon, context, lexical limitations and lack of awareness of listening strategies are some of the most common challenges students face when listening in English. Additionally, the very nature of spoken English as a stress-based timed language, as opposed to Spanish for example (syllable-based timed), makes it even more difficult. However, helping learners overcome these pitfalls is just a matter of following some of the tips listed below:



ISSUE	TIP
1. Students find it difficult to identify “where a word begins and where it ends”.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raise awareness of how in spoken English some words are pronounced longer, shorter, weaker or stronger, as it usually happens in stressed-time languages by drilling chunks from the recording.</li><li>• Role-play conversations.</li><li>• ‘Chunking’ sections of a transcript and listen to where small pauses are made.</li></ul>
2. Students have different needs when it comes to pausing and repeating a section of a recording. It is usually the teacher the one in control of the recordings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Let students take control of the recording. Instead of whole class listening, ask students to carry out tasks in groups.</li><li>• Share the recording and let them use their own devices to listen to the recording.</li></ul>
3. Most tasks focus on correct or incorrect answers. It is not something that happens in real-life listening.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Change test-like tasks to more natural tasks. Shift students’ attention from language to the sheer action of listening at their own level. Ask them to share what they identify from the recording: context, attitude, words, expressions, etc.</li><li>• Ask reflection questions to help students identify how they answer the tasks.</li></ul>
4. Students are not aware of the listening strategies they already use in L1 and how to transfer them to L2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plan for pre-, while and post- listening activities.</li><li>• Encourage students to ‘prepare’ for a listening activity (predict).</li></ul>

