

What Do Good L2 Listeners Do? **Larry Vandergrift**

About the Author: Larry Vandergrift is Professor at the Institute of Official Languages and Bilingualism at the University of Ottawa. He teaches courses in French, English and second language acquisition. He presently undertakes research in the teaching of second language listening and his work has been published in numerous journals.

Content of this Podcast: Larry Vandergrift shares results of his research related to good listening skills among second language (L2) learners.

Facts

- ✓ Listening is a complex, active process of interpretation where listeners match what they hear with what they already know.
- ✓ There are three main types of listening strategies:
 - **Metacognitive strategies** are the most important type because they oversee and direct the language learning process. They are strategies used by learners to enhance comprehension and L2 retention. These strategies include planning, monitoring, evaluating and problem-solving.
 - **Cognitive strategies** are used by listeners to manipulate the material to be learned or to apply a specific technique, such as inferencing, to the learning task.
 - **Socio-affective strategies** are used by language learners to cooperate with classmates, to question the teacher for clarification or to apply specific techniques to lower anxiety.
- ✓ For L2 learners, a successful approach to listening involves a skilful orchestration of a number of these strategies to comprehend aural texts.

Ways to help your students develop good listening skills:

- ✓ Provide lots of listening practice, without threat of evaluation, that leads students through the process of listening (see below) and helps them develop metacognitive knowledge about L2 listening.
- ✓ Lead your students to plan for the successful completion of the task, to monitor their comprehension during the listening task, and to evaluate their approach to and outcomes of the listening task.
- ✓ Use listening diaries (with or without prompts), followed by class discussions, to encourage your students to reflect on what they actually do while listening.
- ✓ Use questionnaires, such as the **Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire** (MALQ), to help your students reflect on the listening process.

What is the MALQ?

The MALQ is a valid and reliable questionnaire designed to assess L2 listeners' metacognitive awareness. It can be used for self-assessment purposes by the student or for diagnostic purposes by the teacher.

Further Reading

Vandergrift, L. (2003). From prediction through reflection: Guiding students through the process of L2 listening. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 59, 425-440.

Vandergrift, L. (1999). Facilitating second language listening comprehension: Acquiring successful strategies. *ELT Journal*, 54, 168-176.