

# RADICALLY EXPLOITING LISTENING EXERCISES FROM MARKET LEADER COURSEBOOK

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## ABSTRACT

Listening seems to be the worst skill of tertiary non-majors of English. Evidence shows that the results from end-of-term listening tests are usually lowest. Particularly, in a survey of the final test results of 129 students at UEH (K38 – Module 3), 37.17 percent got from 0 to 4 (on 10-point grading scale) for Listening- -Part one (Multiple-choice), and for Listening-Part two (Gap filling) 79.81 percent got from 0 to 4 (on 10-point grading scale). What is the problem here? The majority of the students of many classes at UEH also stated that what had been taught in classroom did not match what they had to do in the final exam. Is it true that the contents of the current English program or those of the test are problematic? A survey on the exam paper was carried out on two parts of Listening. For the former, perhaps students frequently do multiple-choice exercises in Practice Book, so over 60 percent got above-average scores. As to the latter, the number of students getting this range accounted for only 20 percent. The reason is that there are few gap-filling exercises from both Market Leader coursebook and Practice book while the coursebook has numerous good resources of listening but they have not been fully exploited.

## 1. Introduction

Although Market Leader coursebook third edition has improved its listening tasks; i.e., there are more diversified listening exercises, like Gap-filling, Note-taking, etc. than the second one, the language learning potentiality of listening transcripts has been under-used. If students come to class just for listening and completing the tasks in the coursebook, it will be a waste of useful audio resources, which are authentic or well-chosen. Thus, this article aims to share different ways to fully exploit transcripts from Market Leader coursebook elementary, depending on the contents and the language of each, in order to both interest students and meet the requirements of the final exam.

## 2. Traditional and modern techniques for developing listening exercises from coursebooks

*Traditionally*, a listening task should follow the procedure:

- Introducing the topic of the listening
- Giving students vocabulary words to listen
- Play the listening audio
- Have students answer comprehension questions

In addition to this, *recent research* also suggests the ways to use listening text for maximum learning effect, that is, teachers should take full advantage of the *meaning* (content) and the *form* (language) of the transcripts, according to Tyers (2013)<sup>1</sup>.

### *Meaning*

- What is the situation?
- Who are the characters?
- What are the characters saying?
- What are the main ideas?
- What is the purpose of this text?

### *Form*

- Pronunciation
- Vocabulary

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<sup>1</sup> Advance Consulting for Education, INC. 2013

- Grammar
- Discourse

Similarly, *English Unlimited* (2013)<sup>2</sup> recommends some helpful techniques to explore listening scripts:

### ***Listen and read***

After students have finished a listening task (with answers checked), have them look at the script at the back of the coursebook or in teacher's handout and listen once again so as to make them aware of 'how the English words and expressions really sound in **rapid connected speech**'.

### ***Intensive listening***

Teacher delivers a handout of the listening script or shows it on a slide of powerpoint with certain **lexical chunks**<sup>3</sup> (*useful expressions, collocations, idioms*), or *individual essential words* chosen and blanked out, based on the language available in each script. Students listen and fill in the blanks. This type of activity is to simply hear words and expressions in the stream of fluent connected speech.

### ***Lead-in to language focus***

Students are provided with a handout of the listening script with examples of the **grammar** (*tense, passive voice, if clause, comparison, etc.*) blanked out. After listening again to fill in the blanks, students go back to the coursebook and 'explore the meaning and form of the grammar'.

## **3. Applying the techniques to listening exercises in Market Leader coursebook**

Exploiting listening scripts has been used at UEH from K38 (by the writer) and feedback from students has been satisfactory so far. The following techniques have been employed to develop listening tasks in Market Leader coursebook third edition at elementary level:

- ***Dictation*** (for short scripts, including only some lines)
- ***Gap filling*** (for short conversations, short talks, and *Case Study*)
- ***Note-taking*** (for long talks, long conversations, especially for *Working Across Cultures*)
- ***Identifying wrong words*** (listening and correcting wrong words from a handout of the transcripts (for all kinds))

The following illustrations (from Market Leader Elementary – third edition) are provided as reference:

### **1) Dictation**

- CD1-Track 17 - Unit 2:*** Well, I'm a *product manager*, and what's important for me is a *high salary, long holidays* and *helpful colleagues*. I only have two of these in my present job.
- CD1-Track 20 - Unit 2:*** *Fast promotion, flexible hours* and some *sports facilities* are what's important for me. I work in *customer services*.

These exercises help students (1) remember spelling of *work partnerships* (words in italics), (2) learn *how to express oneself* what one wants from work, (3) grasp the usage of the *structure*: "what's important for me is ..." / "... are what's important for me.", and (4) how to pronounce *-s* and *-es* endings.

### **2) Gap-filling**

#### ***CD1-Track 29 – Case study - Unit 2***

A: I'd like to ask you a few questions about your work. (1) \_\_\_\_\_ is your job?

B: I'm a (2) \_\_\_\_\_

A: Ok, so what do you do at work?

<sup>2</sup> *English Unlimited Teaching Tips*, by Cambridge University Press, 2013

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/lexical-exploitation-texts>

B: Well, (3) \_\_\_\_\_, I decide the media we use for our advertising campaigns. I (4) \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of time each day (5) \_\_\_\_\_ to people in radio, television and the (6) \_\_\_\_\_, as well as with internet companies. We use all kinds of (7) \_\_\_\_\_ for our advertising campaigns.

A: Ok, thank you. (8) \_\_\_\_\_?

B: (9) \_\_\_\_\_. If we're working on a big advertising campaign, I start (10) \_\_\_\_\_ and often don't leave the office much before nine or ten in the evening.

**Answers:**

1. What exactly      2. media planner      3. to put it simply      4. spend      5. talking  
6. press      7. modern media      8. what hours do you work      9. it depends      10. at 8

This exercise aims to make students notice (1) some popular expressions like “What exactly is ...?” / “To put it simply”, (2) common idiom “It depends.”, (3) structure “spend (time) doing something”, (4) a type of question about working hours “what hours do you work?”, (5) some essential words “media planer/ press/ modern media), and (6) final sounds and linking “at eight”.

**3) Note-taking**

**CDI-Track 46 – Working Across Cultures - Unit 3**

Understanding dining habits in different cultures is important if you want to build strong (1) \_\_\_\_\_. The (2) \_\_\_\_\_ is preparation. So before you go to another culture, (3) \_\_\_\_\_ about their dining habits.

In this (4) \_\_\_\_\_ we are going to look at (5) \_\_\_\_\_ that you should (6) \_\_\_\_\_ before you travel abroad.

1. Arrival	in Denmark, you shouldn't (7) _____	in Italy, you can arrive at dinner up to (8) _____
2. (9) _____	in Germany, you should wait until you are (10) _____	
3. How much to eat?	in (11) _____, Malaysia and Singapore, it is (12) _____ to leave food on your (13) _____	in (14) _____ and China, leave a little food on your plate to show (15) _____
4. What you use to eat	in Arab cultures, you shouldn't eat with your (16) _____	
5. Drinking	in some cultures, (17) _____ isn't allowed	in Korea, Japan, and (18) _____, it is rude or unlucky to (19) _____
6. (20) _____	in Germany, it is (21) _____ to rest your (22) _____ on the table	
7. (23) _____	in China, it is (24) _____ to leave (25) _____	in Columbia, it is polite to stay (26) _____ after the meal.

**Answers:**

1. business relationships      4. workshop      6. research  
2. key      5. seven areas      7. arrive late  
3. find out

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|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 8. 30 minutes late     | 15. you're full         | 22. elbow           |
| 9. seating             | 16. left hand           | 23. leaving         |
| 10. shown where to sit | 17. alcohol             | 24. common          |
| 11. Norway             | 18. Russia              | 25. after your meal |
| 12. rude               | 19. pour your own drink | 26. for a while     |
| 13. plate              | 20. body language       |                     |
| 14. Egypt              | 21. bad behavior        |                     |

It is interesting and helpful for students to learn from an informative recording of a workshop about dining habits around the world. With attractive contents like this, students are always ready or even eager to listen to. This re-designed exercise causes students to take the initiative in getting information, so they intently and naturally take notes of it.

#### 4) Identifying wrong words

##### *CDI-Track 62 - Unit 4*

A: Hello, Capri Hotel. How can I help you?

B: Hello. I'd like to book a room from Sunday the 12<sup>th</sup> to the Wednesday the 20<sup>th</sup> of this month.

A: Right. Let me check. Yes, we have five rooms then. Do you want a single room or double room?

B: Double, please.

A: With a bed or a towel?

B: A bath, please.

A: Fine.

B: How much is it per night?

A: £112

B: OK.

A: So that's a single room with a bath for tonight. And you're arriving on the 12<sup>th</sup> and leaving on the 20<sup>th</sup>?

B: Yes, that's right.

A: What time do you think he'll arrive?

B: About 6:30 a.m.

A: That's five. Can I take your business card details, please?

##### **Answers:**

A: Hello, Capri Hotel. How can I help you?

B: Hello. I'd like to book a room from **Sunday** (Monday) the **12<sup>th</sup>** (**10<sup>th</sup>**) to the Wednesday the **20<sup>th</sup>** (**12<sup>th</sup>**) of this month.

A: Right. Let me check. Yes, we have **five** (**a**) rooms then. Do you want a single room or double room?

B: Double, please.

A: With a **bed** (**bath**) or a **towel** (**shower**)?

B: A bath, please.

A: Fine.

B: How much is it per **nine** (**night**)?

A: **£112.** (**£120.**)

B: OK.

A: So that's a single room with a bath for **tonight** (**two nights**). And you're arriving on the **12<sup>th</sup>** (**10<sup>th</sup>**) and leaving on the **20<sup>th</sup>** (**12<sup>th</sup>**)?

B: Yes, that's right.

A: What time do you think **he'll** (**you'll**) arrive?

B: About **6:30 a.m.** (**6 p.m.**)

A: That's five. Can I take your **business** (**credit**) card details, please?

#### 4. Findings

Students have found those types of exercise more interesting and helpful, which really meet their need of improving English listening because of some reasons:

- They learn a large body of vocabulary and grammar in specific contexts as they are easier for them to understand and remember as well as they can catch and imitate the way English is used by native speakers.
- They themselves recognize what the obstacles for their listening are: their wrong pronunciation (lack of word stress, word stress misplacing, final sounds, connected speech), speaker's speed and accent, and lack of vocabulary.
- And more crucially, their listening gradually gets better. Nonetheless, they need encouraging to regularly practice more at home with a wide range of English sources. With about one hour per week for listening in classroom the state of affairs cannot be changed.

#### 5. Recommendations

It may not take much time for teacher to design these types of exercise, but if it is impossible to implement all the re-designed exercises due to time limited in classroom, the rest can be assigned as homework for students after each unit.

The purpose for building the exercises beyond a listening task in a coursebook is to both facilitate and reinforce students' learning. Depending on level or high classes, what is intended to be asked for each script should be congruously adjusted.

Besides, there are also many different ways of mining listening texts that are time-saving and easy to carry out such as identifying the stress pattern of lexical chunk and drilling the whole chunk, matching the speed and intonation of the audio as they read the script, and so forth.

#### 6. Conclusion

Although this kind of task development requires much time and labor investment from teachers as facilitators, it is rewarding by reason of students' step-by-step improvement and their eagerness in English learning in general and listening practice in particular as Morley<sup>4</sup> asserts: "... in the longer term, working in this way can not only increase your students' vocabulary, and the degree of accuracy with which they use it, but it can also develop their abilities to 'notice' patterns in language and so become more autonomous learners."

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<sup>4</sup> Catherine Morley, Teacher, Teacher trainer, Mexico (<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/lexical-exploitation-texts>)