

Teaching listening skills at KS3

45 minutes

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About me

MSc ALSLA 2017 - [Dissertation](#)

DPhil 2024 - [Thesis](#)

Head of languages at [Matthew Arnold School](#)

Blogging about listening [here](#)

Fluent speaker of French, very good German, passable Spanish and Italian, smatterings of various other things I've picked up along the way



About this session

Theoretical background - turning typical classroom practice on its head 10 mins

What we know about how KS3 students are learning to listen 10 mins

Therefore: **teaching ideas!** 10 min

Questions / comments 15 minutes or so



[Link to these slides](#)

Second language listening: theoretical background

What we'll cover:

How listening works

Learning to listen or listening to learn

Measuring listening proficiency

Listening subsystems: vocabulary, segmentation, grammar, metacognition

How listening works

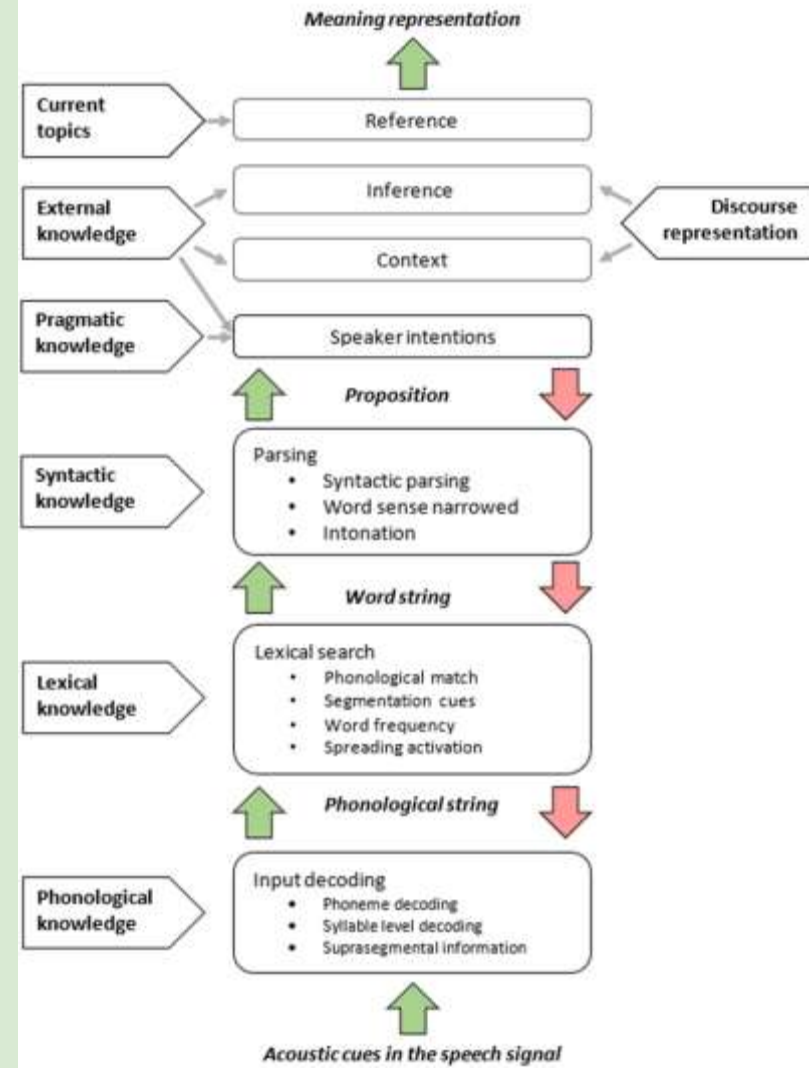
Field's model of listening (2008b, 2013:97; 2013:101)

Other models are available!

Anderson's (1990) three-phase model is made up of 'perceptual processing' (i.e. hearing a sound as a familiar language), 'parsing' (in which the listener breaks the sounds into words and chunks), and 'utilisation' (i.e. giving meaning to words and chunks). Cutler and Clifton (1999) divide same process into four operations: 'decoding', 'segmenting', 'recognising' and 'utilising' where Anderson's 'parsing' becomes the two elements 'segmenting' and 'recognising'. Field's model

Iterative!

L1 and L2 the same - but much more automatic in L1



Learning to listen, or listening to learn?

Why do we do listening in L2 classes?

'Listening is the principal means by which learners expand their knowledge of the spoken forms of the target language. It opens up access to language used in natural contexts. It also is a much more effective and efficient channel for picking up grammar and vocabulary.'

Field, 2008:334

What's typical classroom practice in your setting?

Learning to listen, or listening to learn?

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Is it, though?!

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Input Hypothesis (Krashen 1985)

Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt 1990 2001)

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You can't listen to learn, until you have learned to listen!

Learn

arn?

Why do we do l

*'Listening is the pri
of the spoken form:
used in natural con
channel for picking*

Input Hypothe
Noticing Hypo



ough?!'

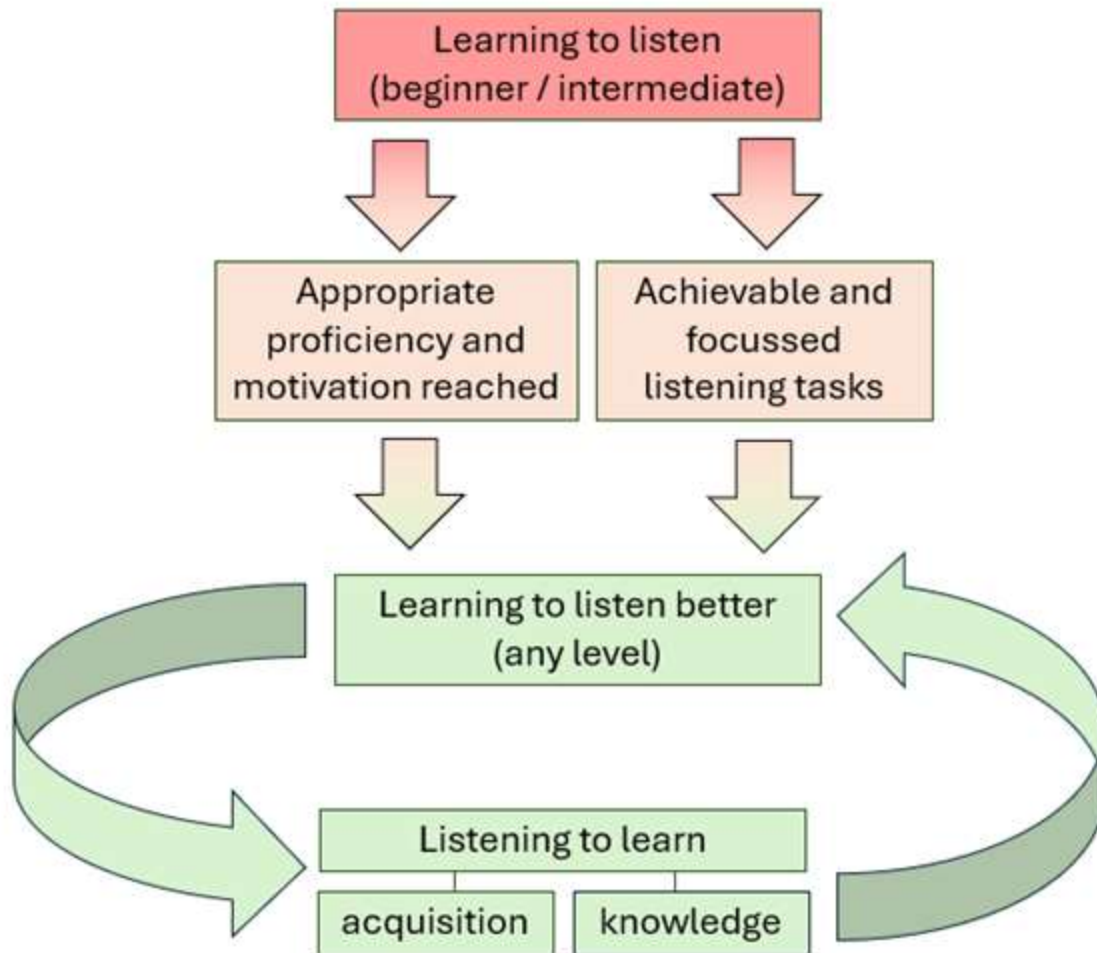
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rough?!

Just making the obstacle course higher each time, without teaching the students how to jump the obstacles



What does the research say contributes to listening success?

Vocabulary!

Grammar (but less than vocabulary!)

Segmentation (hearing the gaps between words)

Metacognition / strategy use

But the research is generally on L2 English high intermediate learners. Can it be transferred to the UK MFL classroom?

I don't think it can, necessarily...

What I found...

Findings about segmentation

Analysing word boundary difficulties isn't easy! Overlaps with vocab.

If a short stream of speech appeared to contain an English word or a French-English cognate, that was a trigger for a segmentation error.

Eg? 'Book' within *beaucoup* /boku/ / 'thank you' for 'mais c'est' *merci* /mɛksi/ - phonologically similar to /mɛsɛ/

French *bouteille d'eau* /butɛj do/ ('bottle of water') being mistaken for the English word 'potato' /pəteto/

Over time, there were more segmentation errors stemming from French vocab interference, but English still dominated

More examples where segmentation and vocabulary interact...

il y a plein d'espace pour tous mes vêtements

/il ja plɛ̃ dɛspas puʁ tu me vɛtmɑ̃/

(‘there is plenty of room for all my clothes’)

More examples where segmentation and vocabulary interact...

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x18



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mais la salle de bains est loin de la chambre

/mɛ la sal də bɛ̃ ɛ lwɛ̃ də la ʃɑ̃brɔ/

(‘but the bathroom is far from the bedroom’)



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Notre chambre est au quatrième étage

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(‘our room is on the fourth floor’)



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x4



Findings about vocabulary



Findings about vocabulary

Consonant pairs



Consonants versus vowels

Metathesis

Active knowledge doesn't guarantee receptive recognition

Findings about vocabulary

Consonant pairs

parce que /paʁsə kə/ ('because') is translated as 'basket'

bouteille d'eau /butɛj do/ as 'potato'

pain grillé [1] /pɛ̃ gʁijɛ/ ('toast') was translated as 'pancake'

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Findings about vocabulary

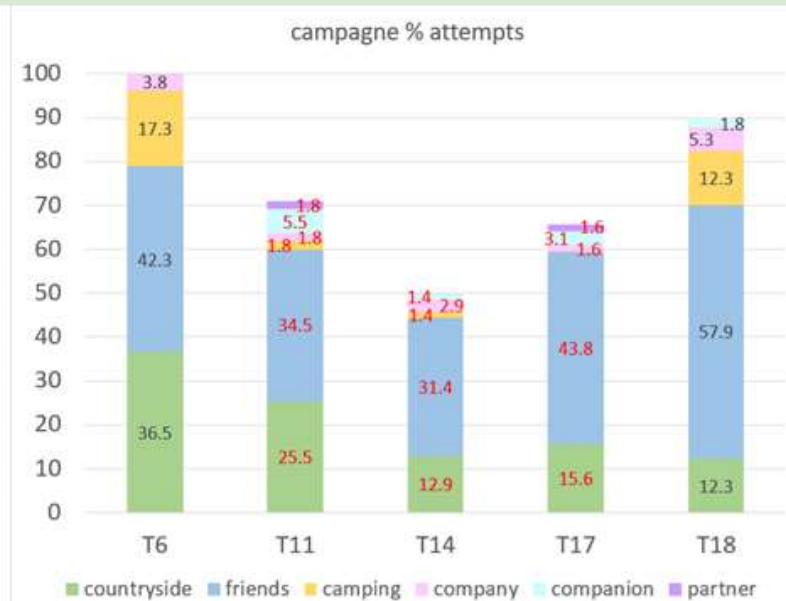
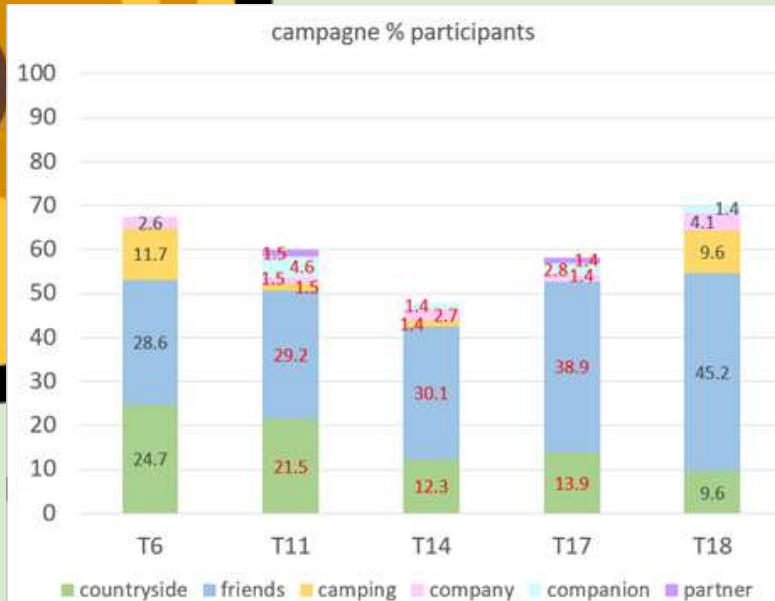
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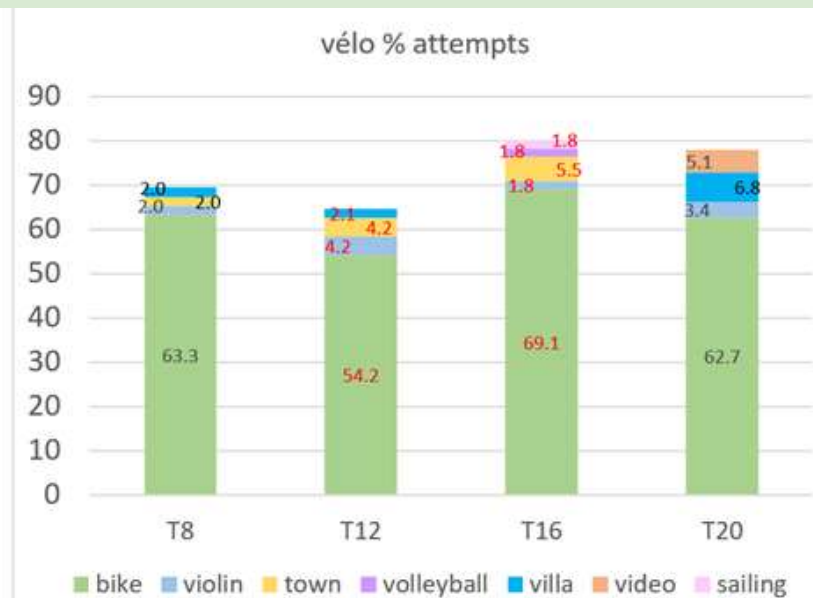
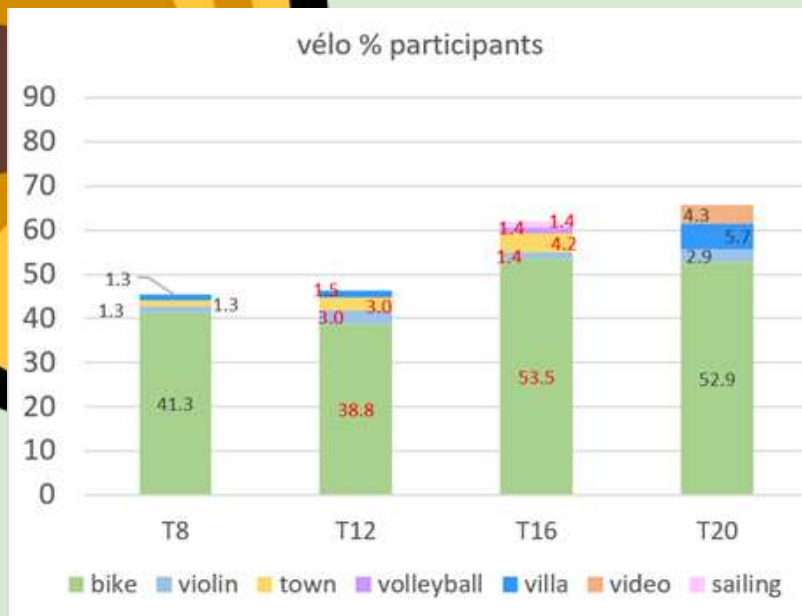
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Consonants versus vowels

Copain / *campagne* / *camping*

Vélo / *violin* etc

Metathesis and doubling up

On est allés = *we went to Italy*

D'argent = *jardin*

Active knowledge doesn't guarantee receptive recognition

'Alors William'...



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Findings about vocabulary

False friends

Lexical sets



Teaching-dependent errors

Findings about grammar

Content and function words

Code / sub code	Number of files	Number of references
word missing	60	3401
content word missing	60	1735
function word missing	46	1666
word wrong	60	5216
content word wrong	60	4991
function word wrong	42	225

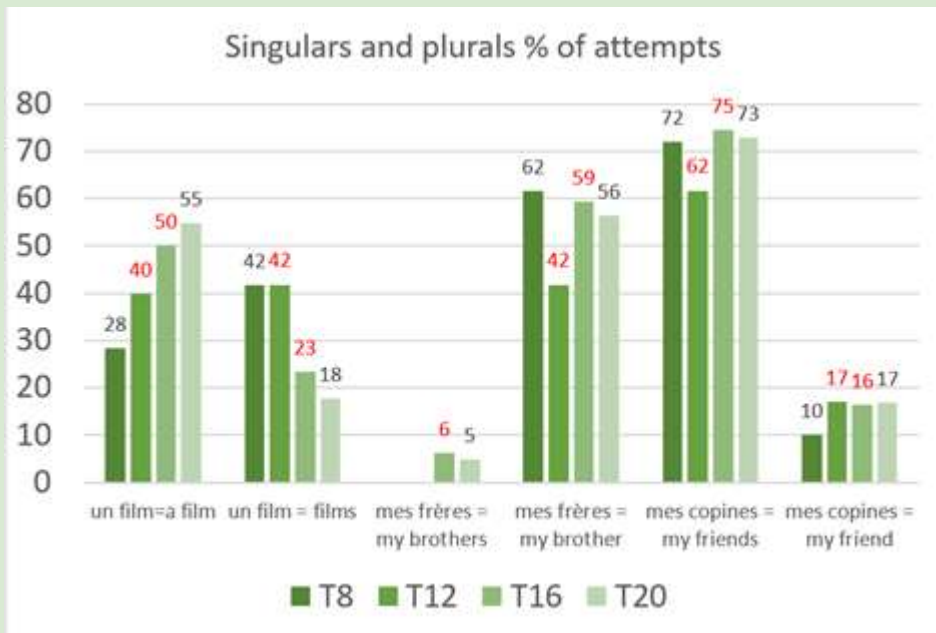
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Given this, what might one expect about noticing / dealing with grammatical morphemes?

Noticing morphemes



Je regarde un film d'épouvante avec mes frères ('I watch a horror film with my brothers') is a sentence which tests plurality twice. Translating *un film* as 'films' demonstrates a failure to recognise the word *un* ('a') as well as a failure to grasp that this article denotes singularity and would not be correct in the case of plural 'films' (where *des* would be used instead). It is notable that although more participants note the singular *un film* correctly over time, the number who continue to mistranslate *un film* in the plural does not fall until Time 16. In other words, the percentage of correct translation does not change in direct proportion to the percentage of incorrect.

The difference in translation of *mes* ('my' [plural]) between track 3 (*avec mes frères*, cited above) and track 7 (*je fais du vélo avec mes copines* ('I go cycling with my girlfriends')) suggests that the driver for correct plural use is more founded in context or participants' life experience than it is in noticing the difference between *mon*, *ma*, and *mes*: I hypothesise that participants' choice of plural is based on an unconscious assumption that a speaker is more likely to have multiple friends than multiple brothers.

What are the classroom implications for this?

What do you think?

My ideas

Adapt resources we have

Lots of paused translation will give you heaps of insight.

Ask the students HOW they came to the answer

Don't just move on after a book-based comprehension exercise

Keep listening to and learning from your students

Beginner listeners are very unlikely to get any 'grammar' out of listening.

What questions do you have?

