
Listening Tasks: For Intermediate Students of American English

Review by Nobuo Tsuda, Brigham Young University

LISTENING TASKS: FOR INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS OF AMERICAN ENGLISH. Sandra Schecter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 1984. pp. 41, \$4.95. Student Book \$7.95. Teacher's Manual \$13.95. Cassette.

Listening Tasks offers a variety of task-centered listening exercises for low-intermediate to intermediate ESL/EFL students. The author states that students often find it difficult to understand natural spoken English "because they try to comprehend every word that they hear and miss the overall message as a result." For that reason, the primary purpose of this text is to help the students learn how to listen effectively and get important information from the context.

Listening Tasks contains twenty different units (topics) such as leaving a message, making travel plans, apartment hunting, sightseeing, etc. In each unit, there are

topic-related reading and writing tasks. The teacher's manual has tapescripts, pre-listening suggestions, reading and writing task procedures and follow-up activities. This manual has flexible suggestions on how to teach efficiently in a variety of classes. Key functions, vocabulary, and structures are listed in each unit.

The main strength of this text is that speakers on the tape use natural spoken English. Many of them use rejoinders (*Yeah, Oh*), hesitations (*Uh, Um*), disagreement (*Uh-uh*), acknowledgement (*Mm*) etc.

Another important strength is that the text is very attractive. Its many pictures and photographs create interest for students and make them feel that the listening comprehension exercises can be active. I also like the variety of meaningful activities such as filling in information, choosing the

correct picture or photograph, writing the numbers according to the sequence of the oral instruction, etc.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of teaching with this text is knowing how to implement it in a classroom. Each unit has only one listening passage (which lasts less than three minutes), and one exercise, thus making each unit quite short. It would be difficult to use more than one unit in each class period because of the different vocabulary and situations in each. The teacher's manual does offer suggestions for oral and written activities/assignments that can round out a 50-minute period, if one is not adverse to spending time during a listening class on other skills.

The author also suggests that students can listen to the material as many times as they desire, while completing the exercise, but my teaching experience has shown that

students who cannot perform the listening task within three times of repeated listening may have a problem with the level of the material, and only become disinterested and discouraged with further attempts.

Despite this problem with implementation in actual classroom use, *Listening Tasks* is one of the few textbooks available in natural spoken American English for improving the listening skills of intermediate ESL/EFL students. For this reason, I feel that it is well worth the effort to use the many useful and realistic activities in this text to supplement and enrich one's listening course.

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The American Language Institute of the School of Continuing Education of New York University and Language Innovations, Incorporated (LINC) are pleased to announce the inauguration of the annual Fred W. Malkemes Prize. Fred, a member of the faculty of the American Language Institute of NYU for nearly twenty years and an active member of LINC, had many areas of interest. He devoted special attention to helping adults develop listening, speaking, and conversational skills; the application of the principles of Sector Analysis to classroom practice; exploring the special nature of teaching English in Puerto Rico and Kenya; developing materials for use in ESOL classrooms for beginning students; adult literacy; and computer-assisted language learning.

The prize of \$1,000 will be awarded for an article in English published in the two years preceding the submission deadline. While special consideration will be given to articles which explore topics that interested Fred, articles on any topic which make a contribution to our knowledge of teaching and classroom practice will be welcome.

Authors, editors, publishers, and readers are welcome to submit articles deemed worthy of special recognition. In a cover letter which includes the name(s) of the author(s) and the date and place of publication, please remark briefly which special feature of the article makes it outstanding and appropriate for the Malkemes Prize. No later than November 1, 1987, send the letter, together with six copies of the article to The Malkemes Prize, The American Language Institute, #1 Washington Square North, New York, NY 10003.