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Contents

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The Listening Special Interest Group (Listening SIG) provides a forum for focused listening research and discussion in specific regard to teaching and learning. The group offers both teachers and researchers a place to connect, collaborate and share practice and research regarding how teachers teach listening and assess their learners, how learners improve their listening and use it to improve their knowledge, and finally how theoretical aspects connect to classroom practice. The Listening SIG aims to be a driving force for both current and future research in the field of how listening can be taught, learned, and tested in an increasingly global context.

Editorial

When we decided to set up *The Listening Post*, we wanted something that was focused on teaching and learning. This journal also aims to be comprehensible for teachers and learners. Whether you have an advanced degree, work at a school or university, or in the research field, finding accessible materials of journal standard that can be quick and comprehensible enough to apply to the classroom can be difficult at times. Of course, there are ample journals that focus on research and researchers, but we want to focus on the teachers' perspective of using these approaches practically. Starting from scratch, we have the freedom to make what we want to see.

This issue includes a selection of core submissions. **Gretchen Clark** provides us with a case study of introducing extensive listening into her classroom, which also details learner reactions to extensive listening. **Michael McGuire** and **Jenifer Larson-Hall** provide us with research on learners listening to reduced forms in connected speech, a perennial difficulty for teachers and learners. **Matthew Wiegand** provides a *Live Listening: Teaching Report* on using active listening exercises created by learners, and **Gemma Archer** provides a review of John Field's (2019) *Rethinking the Second Language Listening Test.*

We would like to thank all our writers for sharing their work with those of us who are intrigued by the listening process. Also, we would like to thank the reviewers for this issue. Your time is important in creating our publication and we appreciate it.

We hope that you find reading the articles as rewarding as we have found it to be when preparing them for this issue.

If you have ideas for an article, please feel free to contact us at listening@jalt.org.

Marc Jones

The Listening Post Editor
Listening SIG Publications Chair

Where to begin and where to go next?
Including extensive listening within your curriculum

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Abstract

This paper describes an extensive listening (EL) program instituted during the time of COVID-19 at a small private women's university in central Japan. The paper first outlines the structure of the program and then reports on the results of two questionnaires that were administered midway through the project and at its conclusion. The questionnaire gathered data about how the students (*N*=23) responded to the scaffolding provided by the teacher, how it contributed to their learning and their opinion about the program in general. The paper concludes with author reflections on the program and suggests ways to improve it. Educators interested in using EL as part of their language course may find the ideas expressed in this paper a starting point for their own forays into bringing EL into the classroom.

本論文は、COVID-19 の期間中に、日本の中部にある小さな私立女子大学で実施されたエクステンシブ・リスニング（EL）プログラムについて記述したものである。本論文では、まず、プログラムの構造を概説し、次に、プロジェクトの途中と終了時に実施した 2 つのアンケートの結果について報告する。アンケートでは、教師が提供する足場固めに学生がどう反応したか、それが学習にどう貢献したか、プログラム全般についての意見などのデータを収集した。本論文では、最後に著者がこのプログラムについて考察し、改善のための方法を提案している。EL を語学コースの一部として使用することに興味を持つ教育関係者は、この論文で述べられたアイデアを、教室に EL を導入するための出発点として見つけることができるだろう。

Keywords: extensive listening, digital journals, COVID-19, pedagogy

Extensive listening (EL) can follow the well-established practices of extensive reading (ER) by having learners regularly choose audio resources that appeal to them and are at a level at or slightly above their ability (Waring, 2008). EL contributes to language learning at the macro level by helping develop listening fluency (Ivone & Renandya, 2019) but also at the micro level by aiding individual word recognition (Chang, 2018). Also, repeated listening in one content area can help learners become familiar with context-specific vocabulary (Ivone & Renandya, 2019). Importantly, enthusiasm for learning in general can be bolstered if an EL program makes use of digital resources on the internet or

music and movies, rather than textbook audio samples (Lai, 2020; Honarzad & Ressaei, 2019; Vo, 2013). Furthermore, the benefits of EL extend into other skills, such as reading, if a student uses various support such as transcripts or subtitles as they listen (Ivone & Renandya, 2019). Finally, there are other effects of EL on learning in general. Aside from language learning benefits, EL can also contribute to world knowledge (Chang, 2018). It also promotes learning independence and confidence because it usually occurs outside of class and is engineered by the learner themselves (Ivone & Renandya, 2019; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016).

Given these findings, EL could be an exciting addition to any EFL curriculum if care is taken with how it's implemented. Some issues educators might consider are as follows. First, listening is an invisible process (Lee & Cha, 2020) that an individual must moderate for the most part on their own without outside support from a teacher. However, through guidance from the teacher, students can be taught how to select appropriate resources that help them progress in their listening journey. The key idea here is that they must be taught how to do this as it may not come naturally. Second, unlike ER, there is no standardized leveling system for resources that make it easy for learners to pick and choose. The internet provides a vast selection of resources for all levels of learner. While some websites such as *News in Levels* (https://www.newsinlevels.com) or *ELLLO* (https://www.elllo.org) level the resources to make it easier for one to choose an appropriate track, for the most part, the onus is on the individual learner to choose and evaluate a given resource for its suitability.

In this paper, I will describe an online EL program introduced during the time of COVID-19 which ran for 21 weeks during the 2021 academic year. During the course, students listened to online resources and documented their experience using a digital Listening Journal (LJ) which I, as their classroom teacher, monitored. First, the features of the program are described. Then the results of the Google Forms survey administered are reported on. In these surveys, students were asked to comment on the usefulness of teacher scaffolding and contributions to learning. At the end of the paper, I reflect on the outcomes of the program and make suggestions for future iterations. The specific questions addressed in this paper are:

RQ1: How did the learners use the LJ over the course of the academic year?
RQ2: Did the students think the scaffolding I provided was useful?
RQ3: Did the LJ contribute to the students' listening ability? If so, in what ways?
RQ4: How did the students respond to the EL program?
RQ5: What changes would I make in the future?

The Listening Journal Project

Teaching Context

The LJ project was conducted with a second year listening course in the department of English Language and Literature at a private women's university in central Japan. The course was organized by semester with one student repeating only the spring semester and another student repeating only the autumn semester. The total number of students enrolled in the course was 23 for both semesters. The students' general English proficiency level ranged from A1-B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): Learning, teaching, assessment with the bulk of students around A2. Twenty-two students spoke Japanese as their first language while two spoke Chinese. The project lasted from April to December during the 2021 academic year. During that time, we were still dealing with the effects of COVID-19, so classes were conducted either in person or online depending on the university's decisions regarding safe course methods. In total, we spent 13 of 30 class periods in the classroom and the remaining classes were held asynchronously on the school learning management system (LMS), *Manaba*. The entire LJ project was carried out online regardless of the method of course delivery.

Procedure

Listening level pre-test and post-test

In order to understand the ability of each student, I used Oxford's online Listening Level Test (https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/english-level-test/listening) to measure the students' listening skill level at the beginning (pre-test) and end (post-test) of the project. The 24-item test is comprised of six short listening passages, each followed by four multiple choice comprehension questions. The students took the test in the classroom using their mobile phone and their own personal earphones during the first class period. I gave instructions in Japanese and then allowed the students to take the test at their own pace. At the conclusion of both tests, the website provided each student with a numerical score and CEFR level which the students reported to me on the LMS.

Materials

To help students document their listening journey, I asked them to complete a log using a Word template that was adapted from the EL journals used by Bibby (2020), Gonulal (2020), Schmidt (2016) and Chen (2016) (Appendix A). They submitted this weekly on the LMS. To give the students a starting point in their EL journey, I asked them to do at least one LJ assignment a week, either using a website I recommended or one of their choice (Appendix B). With each new website introduction, I made a screencast in English and uploaded the file to my YouTube account to help the students navigate the webpages and choose appropriate videos. After watching an online video or, alternatively, listening to an online audio track, the students completed a journal entry for each resource they chose. They kept track of which website they used, the title of the resource, and any level information. They also wrote a short summary about the content, noted any vocabulary they

learned, documented any listening problems they encountered and wrote a goal for the following week. In addition to the single journal entry, they were encouraged to do as many as they could to further practice listening in the way that is stipulated by EL practitioners.

Assessment

To obtain 40% of their grade, the students had to complete one journal a week. The remaining 60% was comprised of a participation score, listening exercises from the textbook, *Communication Spotlight, High Beginner* (Graham-Marr, 2009) and other speaking and listening activities.

Teacher feedback

For the duration of the project, at minimum, I acknowledged the number of journal entries each week on the LMS to show that I was checking their progress. Later, I began offering advice for how to tackle the learning problems they documented. Table 1 outlines the type of feedback I gave each week. By the end of the project, I noticed some students seemed to be navigating the task well, so I made a flowchart graphic outlining the advice I give for them to use when listening and ceased to give individual feedback (See Appendix C).

Table 1

Teacher feedback

Semester	Week	Teacher Feedback
Spring Semester (April- July)	Week 1-4	Further instruction about how to use the journal if it seemed a student misunderstood; Light comments about the chosen video to create a friendly student-teacher relationship.
	Week 5-11	Based on the problems reported in the log, specific advice was given. Number of completed journals was noted.
	Week 12	Number of completed journal entries was noted.
Fall Semester (September-December)	Week 13-17	Based on the problems reported in the log, specific advice was given. Number of completed journals was noted.
	Week 18	Students recommended resources in the LMS message board
	Week 19-21	Number of completed journal entries was noted. Students independently used the 'Problem-Solution' document (Appendix C) to understand listening weaknesses and make informed choices about which videos to use in the future.

Data collection instruments

Journals and LMS data

To understand the learners' experiences doing EL (RQ1), the journals were examined and analyzed. I tabulated the websites used, and the types of problem experienced. Crosschecking their goals with my advice allowed me to see if the students were choosing suitable resources and using the websites in a purposeful manner. I wrote about the experiences of three prolific students in Clark (2022). In addition to this close examination of the journals, I was able to document each student's submission frequency and amount with the timestamp data on the LMS. For this paper, I will report the class results to give the reader an idea of how an EL program is experienced by an entire group of students.

Both the Spring and the Fall questionnaire asked the students to rate the usefulness of scaffolding and the task's contribution to learning. However, the Fall questionnaire also asked if more support was needed. This difference was important as the program was designed to help the learners practice autonomy and eventually choose videos by themselves. Again, as there is no standardization for the vast number of resources available online as with ER readers, it is imperative that learners can choose and evaluate resources on their own for EL to be an effective tool to use for learning.

When administering the questionnaires, I obtained informed consent to use the collected data for research purposes and program development. The students understood their participation would not affect their course grade. Both questionnaires collected data about student perception of skill improvement, and the usefulness of the various types of teacher feedback through a mixture of 4-point Likert scale items and open-ended items (RQ2 and RQ3). A four-point Likert scale was used because it limits false responses and forces students to share their opinion rather than settle on a middle neutral response (Edwards & Smith, 2014). For the open-ended questions, the participants responded in the language of their choice: English or Japanese. Any discrepancy in respondent numbers is due to students being absent the day the data was collected or in the case of the Spring questionnaire, a student taking the questionnaire twice. These details are important to understand when reading the data reported in this article. The responses were translated by the author into English and then confirmed by a L1 Japanese speaker for report in this paper. Twenty-four responses were collected at the end of the spring semester in July and twenty were collected at the end of the project in December.

Results and Discussion

Student listening habits

The submission data on the LMS and the textual content of the journals provided a wealth of information about the participants' listening habits. First, to see if the students were attempting to create a regular listening habit by listening more than once a week, I measured the frequency of submission by counting the rate of submission per week. These results are compiled in Table 2.

During the spring semester, 14 (60.86%) students submitted more than the minimum one entry. The number of students who submitted more than one entry decreased to 12 (52.17%) in the fall. The most prolific student submitted an average of 6.83 entries a week and maintained this consistency in the fall. Overall, the rate of submission of the entire class waned slightly in the fall semester.

Table 2

Number of entries submitted per week (% of students)

Semester	**Spring Semester (Weeks 1-12)**				**Fall Semester (Weeks 13-21)**			
Week	< or = 1x/ week*	Up to 2x/ week	Up to 3x/ week	> 3x/ week	< or = 1x/ week**	Up to 2x/ week	Up to 3x/ week	> 3x/ week
Submissions	9	8	2	4	11	7	4	1
Percentage	(39.13%)	(34.78%)	(8.69%)	(17.39%)	(47.83%)	(30.43%)	(17.39%)	(4.35%)

Note: * (less than or equal to 12 entries)

** (less than or equal to 9 entries)

Next, frequency counts for the number of entries using each website were calculated. Table 3 shows that *News in Levels* proved to be the most popular website (36.2% of all entries) with *TEDed* the second most popular (10.14% of all entries) and *English Central* the third most popular (8.87% of all entries). In general, most learners seemed to prefer the websites that offer short listening tracks and were leveled in some way, such as *News in Levels*, *Breaking News English*, or *ELLLO* (highlighted in Table 3).

Table 3.

Website popularity

Week introduced	**Resource name**	**Number of entries**
1	News in Levels	315 (36.29%)
2	English Central	77 (8.87%)
3	TEDed	88 (10.14%)
4	ELLLO	52
5	Breaking News English	66
6	Learn English with TV Series YouTube channel	6
7	The Fable Cottage	25
8	Listen a Minute	57

9	Voice of America	9
10	BBC Learning English	23
11	Talk English	26
12	Storyline Online	17
13	British Council Learn English Podcasts	12
14	Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab	40
15	BBC Learning English Drama	4
16	BBC Radio 6-minute English	3
17	BBC Radio The English We Speak	2
	Other	46
	Total	868

As for the rationale for choosing the other websites, I can only surmise their reasons for doing so as the students did not expressly explain why on the questionnaires. *Listen a Minute* was quite popular, perhaps because the tracks were short and easy to complete quickly. *The Fable Cottage* was popular perhaps because the stories are familiar and accompanied by animated videos that might help with comprehension. Most websites that offered little to no language support such as *Learning English with TV Series* or *Voice of America* were not popular at all, apart from *TEDed*. *TEDed* remained a popular resource throughout the project, however the reason for this did not appear in the data I collected for this project. Overall, there was a strong preference for the websites that were introduced at the beginning of the project.

Student opinion about teacher scaffolding

Section 2 of the questionnaires asked students to evaluate the helpfulness of the various scaffolds I provided. Table 4 shows the mean scores for the seven questionnaire items for both data collection periods. Students rated the teacher scaffolding on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *Not helpful at all / 4 = Very helpful*). Both in the spring and in the fall, results suggest all seven of the supports offered were helpful, with the most useful practice being *Gretchen made YouTube videos to help students understand how to use the websites* for both groups of students (Spring: 3.63; Fall: 3.55). In general, the average score for each item decreased in the fall. This result might indicate that some students may have developed a sense of autonomy over the course of the year and the scaffolds were no longer necessary.

Table 4

Mean scores for helpfulness of teacher support

	July 2021 (*N*=24)	**Dec 2021 (*N*=20)**
1) Gretchen introduced a variety of websites.	3.58	3.15
2) Gretchen made YouTube videos to help students understand how to use the websites.	3.63	3.55
3) Gretchen made a model journal for students to use to understand how to do the journal.	3.54	3.50
4) Gretchen made comments about the content.	3.38	3.20
5) Gretchen told me how many journals I completed.	3.54	3.33
6) Gretchen gave me advice for how to improve.	3.63	3.20
7) Gretchen reminded me to do the journal on Manaba.	3.33	3.25
8) Gretchen provided a Problem-Solution document.		3.20

Note: (1 = *Not helpful at all / 4 = Very helpful*).

However, in the short answer section of the questionnaire, when asked which practice was most helpful and why, some students expanded on their responses, and I was able to understand more about how the students interacted with the support I gave them. On the spring questionnaire, ten students found my advice to be the most useful. Some students appreciated the personalized advice and recommendations for websites and levels to choose. One student commented, "The advice on how to improve was the most useful. Because I didn't know what I should do next to improve, so it was very helpful to have someone point it out to me." Another said, "The feedback from the teacher on the previous assignments helped me to learn better, because I could see where I needed to improve." Four students appreciated the screencasts. One said, "even if it was a website that was new to me, I could use it smoothly [because of the screencasts]".

In the fall, ten students found the website recommendations to be the most useful rather than the screencasts. One student said, "I found it helpful that you recommended a variety of websites. This is because we aren't using just one but many, and I can find a video that is a good speed for me". Another student also appreciated the website recommendations because she was not familiar with them. Along the same lines, two more students mentioned the task for week 18 in which I had the students recommend websites to each other on the LMS discussion forum. One said, "I felt I learned more and had fun [when we exchanged website ideas]".

Contributions to listening skill

According to the numerical scores submitted on the LMS, over the course of the project, 10 students improved their score on the Oxford Listening Level Test in December. The CEFR rankings are compiled in Table 5, however these reflect a band of scores. Thus, the 10 students who reported an increase may have improved their score only slightly but within the same CEFR band. Here, it is important to acknowledge that any change in listening level may or may not be related to the LJ project. However, from my perspective as a teacher it is possible that the LJ project did affect the students' listening habits positively in some way as without it, most of the students had no opportunity to practice listening outside of the tasks I set for this course. Informal conversations with students over the course of the project corroborated this finding.

Table 5

Results of the Oxford Listening Level Test

CEFR level	**April (*N*=22)**	**December (*N*=21)**
A1	4 (18.18%)	2 (9.52%)
A2	14 (63.64%)	13 (61.9%)
B1	2 (9.09%)	5 (23.81%)
B2	2 (9.09%)	1 (4.76%)

Note: (1 = *Disagree strongly / 4 =Agree strongly*)

Section 3 of the questionnaire asked the students directly how the LJ helped them improve their listening skill (or other language ability). Participants chose from four Likert items (1 = *Disagree strongly / 4 =Agree strongly*) to rate their improvement for 7 items: general listening skill, learn information about the world, new vocabulary, TOEIC improvement, ability to understand accents, ability to understand classmates' and teachers' spoken English. Mean scores are reported in Table 6. Both in the spring and in the fall, *learn new information about the world* was the most reported item with a mean score of 3.33 in the spring and 3.45 respectively. In the short answer section, one learner made a point of saying, "Through the listening journal, I was able to learn a lot about events and happenings in the world". This finding was also noted by Chang (2018).

Table 6

Mean scores for perceived areas of improvement due to journal completion

	Spring Semester (*N*=24)	**Fall Semester (*N*=20)**
1) In general, I think the listening journal helped my listening skill improve.	3.16	2.90

2) I learned new information about the world by doing the journal.	3.33	3.45
3) I learned new vocabulary.	3.29	3.20
4) I think my TOEIC score improved by doing the journal.	2.58	2.35
5) I became able to understand various English accents.	3.08	2.90
6) I became able to understand my classmates' spoken English better.	2.83	2.70
7) I became able to understand my teachers' spoken English better.	3.08	2.80

Note: (1 = *Strongly Disagree / 4 = Strongly Agree*).

In addition to the skills noted in the questionnaire, the students could use the short answer section to expand on other skills they felt they had improved by doing the journal. In the spring, four students (16.6%) reported that the journals helped them improve summary writing skills. Two students (8.3%) reported they became able to watch a video without stopping. Another two students (8.3%) wrote the journal helped introduce them to topics they were not exposed to in daily life. Other skills that were mentioned are as follows: the journal helped create a daily listening habit, it helped with grammar, increased confidence and students were better able to find videos that were interesting to them.

In the fall, the students mentioned other ways EL impacted their learning. Summary writing was again the top response (3 learners; 15%) along with speaking practice (3 learners; 15%). Still other students responded that listening extensively helped them with other language skills such as reading and writing in general and also improved their exposure to specialized vocabulary. One learner thought she could understand American and British speakers more easily. Two surmised that they were beginning to understand aural exchanges more quickly. Two reported that doing the LJ helped them expand their knowledge as was also found by Chang (2018).

Student reflections on the project

On the questionnaire, the students had the opportunity to report if they enjoyed the project and offer feedback. In the spring, 22 of 24 students reported they enjoyed doing the journal but when asked in the fall, only 13 of the 20 students who took the survey responded favorably. In the spring, seven students (29.17%) wrote they gained new knowledge, five students (20.83%) wrote they enjoyed trying the different websites, and three students (12.5%) wrote they felt successful and gained confidence. Other reasons included learning vocabulary, enjoying the quizzes featured on some of the websites, and enjoyed interacting with me. In the fall, notable responses included: four students (20%) mentioned enjoying the websites, while others mentioned they felt had improved (2 students; 10%), found the content interesting (2 students; 10%), and enjoyed gaining new knowledge (2 students; 10%). The students who did not enjoy the journal for the most part did not explain why but

those that did said that the assignment was uninteresting or “it was a pain”. In the fall, three students (15%) said “I am busy with other classes and assignments”.

Reflections and considerations for future EL projects

At the conclusion of the project, I reflected on its efficacy and how I might improve it in the future. There are four features I wish to address: student motivation to listen frequently and extensively, the method of introduction of websites, teacher workload, and the limitations of making the journal digital.

First, I found most of the students did the minimum number of entries to obtain credit and did not seem to be invested in the activity no matter how much I talked about its contributions to their learning. On the questionnaire, the students mentioned that it was difficult for them to find time to listen as they had other assignments in my class and other classes to complete. Therefore, it is important to think about how to increase buy-in and encourage students to listen more for it to be worthwhile for them. Two students mentioned the peer recommendation task as a source of motivation for their learning on the questionnaire, however aside from that activity I did not emphasize student-student interaction at all. Perhaps shifting the feedback from teacher-student focused to a peer activity might boost enthusiasm for EL.

Also, for this project, I think introducing a website a week and offering a screencast to help them navigate the site was a measured way to introduce the sites and helpful because it did not overwhelm the students. However, as can be seen by their preferences in Table 3, most settled on the first three I introduced and did not seem interested in trying new ones. For future iterations of this project, I think the resource introductions could be presented in a more purposeful way by organizing them by listening goal. Having students identify a listening goal and then pointing them to predetermined sets of leveled listening websites designed to support learners in their goals might produce more engagement overall. For example, those who would like to listen to news, could use leveled sites such as *News in Levels* and *Breaking News English* before trying a website like *Voice Of America* which does not have any language support. Those who would like to listen and improve their comprehension of spoken conversational English could begin with *Randall’s Cyber Listening Lab* and *ELLLO* before moving on to *Learn English with TV Series*. This type of organization of the program might provide more scaffolding from the beginning and give students a sense that they are working towards their predetermined goal.

Furthermore, to encourage the students to listen regularly, I felt it was necessary to provide feedback each week. Checking and responding individually to each student was difficult to execute every week because I had other work responsibilities to attend to. A solution for this might be to incorporate a peer element to the project so that the onus to provide feedback does not always fall on the teacher. My recommendation is to begin with the teacher feedback at the beginning of the project,

phase it out as the students get used to choosing resources successfully and then let the students report on their progress with peers and ask for and offer advice together toward the end of the project.

Finally, I'd like to address the decision to make the project entirely digital. There were many positive aspects. First, because the resources are digital, it makes sense for the students to also complete a journal digitally. COVID-19 course method restrictions also necessitated that a lot of submissions be moved onto the LMS so that classes could progress regardless of whether the actual course meeting was in person or asynchronous. Also, having the journals posted to the LMS also made it easy to see each student's submission frequency and to upload feedback, but because my feedback was for an entire week's worth of entries and not attached specifically to each one or a specific feature of any one entry, I felt there was a disconnect and perhaps some confusion on the part of the student. A paper journal would allow me to comment on specific entries and may have proven to be more useful to the student when choosing future resources. Yet, paper notebook-style journals also have their weaknesses (e.g., if needed in the classroom, there is a possibility they might be forgotten at home) so the pros and cons of both modes of journaling should be considered when planning an EL program.

Final Thoughts

Unlike ER, EL is a relatively new method for practicing listening and one that needs to be experimented with in order to devise a system of best practices. EL relies heavily on the student's ability to choose suitable resources independently as there is no standardization for leveling online resources. This paper is one example of a project that proved to be successful in some ways and for some students but there are plenty of improvements that can be made to make it more useful for learners. I hope that teachers who are interested in introducing EL in their classes improve on the practices outlined in this paper to help their students develop an enjoyable listening practice.

About the author

Gretchen Clark is an assistant professor of English in the Department of Business Administration at Ritsumeikan University. In addition to listening pedagogy, her research interests include the role of teacher feedback in language learning, interactional competence, self-access learning, and accessibility in ELT.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Model journal

Video title	
Coronavirus in Royal Family	
Video source / level	
News in Levels, level 1	
Video summary (1-3 sentences)	
This video is about Prince Charles and his family. The prince had coronavirus and was in quarantine in Scotland. His mother, the queen, stays at Windsor Castle to stay healthy.	
Did you learn any new vocabulary?	
eldest: 一番上　　quarantine: 検疫 illness: 病気	
Why did you choose this video?	
I'm interested in news about the British royal family but also I'm worried about Coronavirus so I watch news about it every day.	
Did you have trouble understanding the video? Why? Write the number(s). 1) I had no problems understanding the video. 2) I didn't know a lot of the vocabulary. 3) I couldn't understand speaker's accent. 4) I could understand the words but not the full meaning of the content. 5) The speed was too fast. 6) I was not familiar with the topic at all. 7) Other (Please explain).	4, 5
What is your goal for next week?	
I want to listen to at least one video every day. Also, I think I'll try an elllo.org video next week.	

Appendix B. List of websites recommended to students by week

Week	Resource	Format	Level	Features
1	News in Levels https://www.newsinlevels.com	Audio	Level 1-3	Transcript, Difficult vocabulary defined in English
2	English Central https://www.englishcentral.com/browse/videos	Video	Beginner A1 (level 1 & 2), intermediate A2/B1 (level 3 & 4), advanced B2-C2 (levels 5-7)	Personalized dictation exercises and vocabulary study, ability to pause after each line; speaking practice activities, speed controls, rewind/ fast forward
3	TEDed https://ed.ted.com	Video	Advanced	English CC, other language subtitles, speed controls, rewind/FF
4	English Listening Lesson Library Online (elllo) https://www.elllo.org	Audio/Video	6 levels: low beginner (CEFR A1), mid-beginner (A1), high beginner (A2), low-intermediate (B1), mid-intermediate (B2), high-intermediate (C1), advanced (C2)	Transcript, grammar explanation, keywords with English definition and pronunciation, comprehension quiz; English CC, speed controls
5	Breaking News English https://breakingnewsenglish.com	Audio	6 levels, 1-6	6 speeds; online activities (e.g. dictation)
6	Learn English with TV Series YouTube channel https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKgpamMlm872zkGDcBJHYDg	Video	Advanced	Free PDF lesson with a transcript, vocabulary definitions, grammar explanation, cultural notes
7	The Fable Cottage https://www.thefablecottage.com	Audio/ Video	Advanced	English subtitles, speed controls
8	Listen a minute https://listenaminute.com/index.html	Audio	Easy	Transcript, Games: Dictation, word jumbles etc.

9	Voice of America https://learningenglish.voanews.com	Audio/ Video	Advanced	None
10	BBC English https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/	Video	4 levels: Low-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate, advanced	Transcript, listening comprehension questions, vocabulary and grammar lessons
11	Talk English https://www.talkenglish.com	Audio	3 levels: Basic, intermediate, advanced	Transcript, listening comprehension quiz
12	Storyline Online https://storylineonline.net	Video	Advanced	English subtitles, Japanese subtitles, speed controls
13	British Council Learn English Podcasts https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/general-english/audio-series/podcasts	Audio	Advanced	Transcript, Listening comprehension exercises
14	Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab (www.esl-lab.com)	Audio	Easy, intermediate, difficult	Transcript, Listening comprehension questions
15	BBC Learning English Drama https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02pc9s1	Audio	Advanced	Speed controls
16	BBC Radio 6-minute English https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02pc9tn	Audio	Advanced	Speed controls
17	BBC Radio The English We Speak https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/features/the-english-we-speak_2022	Audio	Advanced	Transcript
18	Student recommendations			
19-21	None			

Appendix C. Problem-Solution Document

<table>
<tr><td>Number</td><td>Problem</td><td colspan="3">Gretchen's advice for next time</td></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td>I had no problems understanding the video.</td><td colspan="3">Choose a more difficult video.</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>I didn't know a lot of the vocabulary.</td><td rowspan="5">Turn on the closed captions/ English subtitles and...

1) Read and listen at the same time

2) Listen without subtitles.</td><td>Take a memo about new vocabulary, use a dictionary to look them up, and try to find another video about the same topic.</td><td rowspan="6">If you answered many options 2~6, choose an easier (lower level) video next time.</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>I couldn't understand speaker's accent.</td><td>Listen to another video by a speaker with the same type of accent (Possibly the speaker is the same nationality but not necessarily...)</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>I could understand the words but not the full meaning of the content.</td><td>Take a memo about difficult phrases and look them up in a dictionary. Try to find similar example phrases.</td></tr>
<tr><td>5</td><td>The speed was too fast.</td><td>Use the settings to slow down the tempo or use an app such as https://audiotrimmer.com/audio-speed-changer/ .</td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td>I was not familiar with the topic at all.</td><td>Take a memo about content keywords/ phrases, look them up using a dictionary and try to find another video on the same topic to listen to next time.</td></tr>
</table>

Appendix D. Spring Questionnaire (English version)

Digital copy of informed consent form.
Do you agree to participate in this study? Yes, I agree. / No, I don't agree.

Section 1: Basic questions
1) What class are you in?
First year class / Second year class
2) How many listening journals did you complete in the spring?
12 or less / 13-20 / 21-30 / More than 31

Section 2: For each of the following kinds of support from Gretchen, please rate how helpful they were to you.
[Likert: Not helpful at all - Not very helpful - Helpful - Very helpful]
1) Gretchen introduced a variety of websites.
2) Gretchen made YouTube videos to help students understand how to use the websites.
3) Gretchen made a model journal for students to use to understand how to do the journal.
4) Gretchen made comments about the content.
5) Gretchen told me how many journals I completed.
6) Gretchen gave me advice for how to improve.
7) Gretchen reminded me to do the journal on Manaba.
8) Short answer: Which of the previous supports were the most helpful in helping you to complete the assignments?
9) Short answer: Which were the least helpful?
10) Short answer: Do you have any other ideas for how to continue listening regularly to English on your own?

Section 3: Did the journal help you improve your listening skills?
[Likert: Disagree strongly (1)- Disagree (2) – Agree (3) - Agree strongly (4)]
1) In general, I think the listening journal helped my listening skill improve.
2) I learned new information about the world by doing the journal.
3) I learned new vocabulary.
4) I think my TOEIC score improved by doing the journal.
5) I became able to understand various English accents.
6) I became able to understand my classmates' spoken English better.
7) I became able to understand my teachers' spoken English better.
8) Short answer: What other skills did you improve because of the journal?

Section 4: Final thoughts/ Short answer

1) Did you enjoy doing the journal this term? Yes or no?

2) If you answered "yes", why? Explain.

3) If you answered "no", why not? Explain.

4) Are you planning on continuing to use the resources Gretchen recommended to practice listening to English this summer vacation? Why or why not? Explain.

Appendix E. Fall Questionnaire (English version)

Do you agree to participate in this study? Yes, I agree. / No, I don't agree.

Section 1: Basic questions

1) What class are you in?

First year class / Second year class

2) How many listening journals did you complete in the spring?

9 or less / 10-20 / 21-30 / More than 31

Section 2: For each of the following kinds of support from Gretchen, please rate how helpful they were to you. [Likert: Not helpful at all (1) - Not very helpful (2) – Helpful (3) - Very helpful (4)]

1) Gretchen introduced a variety of websites.

2) Gretchen made YouTube videos to help students understand how to use the websites.

3) Gretchen made a model journal for students to use to understand how to do the journal.

4) Gretchen made comments about the content.

5) Gretchen told me how many journals I completed.

6) Gretchen gave me advice for how to improve.

7) Gretchen reminded me to do the journal on Manaba.

8) Gretchen provided a 'Problem Solution' document to help me solve issues on my own.

9) Short answer: Which of the previous supports were the most helpful in helping you to complete the assignments?

10) Short answer: Which were the least helpful?

11) Did you feel you needed MORE support from Gretchen during the fall term? Yes / No

12) Short answer: Please explain your answer to the previous question.

Section 3: Did the journal help you improve your listening skills? [Likert: Disagree strongly (1)- Disagree (2) – Agree (3) - Agree strongly (4)]

1) In general, I think the listening journal helped my listening skill improve.

2) I learned new information about the world by doing the journal.

3) I learned new vocabulary.

4) I think my TOEIC score improved by doing the journal.

5) I became able to understand various English accents.

6) I became able to understand my classmates' spoken English better.

7) I became able to understand my teachers' spoken English better.

8) Short answer: What other skills did you improve because of the journal?

Section 4: Final thoughts/ Short answer

1) Did you enjoy doing the journal this term? Yes/ No

2) Please explain your answer to the previous question.

3) Are you planning on continuing to use the resources Gretchen recommended to practice listening to English in the future? Yes/ No

4) Please explain your answer to the previous question.

A frequency-based approach to improving learner listening perception of reduced forms in connected speech

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Abstract

For English language learners, accurately decoding reduced forms while listening to fluent connected speech presents a significant barrier to understanding native-speaker speech. Eighty-eight high-frequency reduced multi-word sequences (MWSs), chosen objectively utilizing a corpus-based approach, were used to test the efficacy of teaching reduced forms. Experimental participants (n=35) studied digital flashcards that contained audio files of the reduced MWSs and also watched videos for 15 minutes while focusing on particular MWSs. Control participants (n=36) studied digital flashcards with collocations and phrasal verbs. Both groups participated in the same speaking/listening activities during class. Listening perception for the reduced MWSs was measured with a challenging dictation test at the beginning and end of a 15-week semester. Both groups improved in their overall ability to transcribe the rapid native-speaker conversation but showed differences in decoding the reduced MWSs: there was a 15% improvement for the control group but a 33% improvement for the experimental group.

英語学習者にとって、流暢な連続発話 を聞きながら短縮形 を正確に解読することは、ネイティブスピーカーの発話を理解する上で大きな障壁となる。そこで、コーパスに基づくアプローチにより客観的に選択された高頻度で現れる短縮形の単語列（ Multi-word sequences; MWSs）を用いて、短縮形を指導すること の有効性を検証した。実験参加者（n=35）は、短縮形の MWS の音声ファイルを含むフラッシュカードを学習し、また、特定の MWS に焦点を当てながら 15 分間ビデオを視聴した。対照群（n=36）は、連語と句動詞を含むフラッシュカードを学習した。授業では、両グループとも同一のスピーキング/リスニング活動に参加した。15 週間の学期の始めと終わりに、難易度の高いディクテーションテストを行い、短縮形の MWS に対するリスニングの知覚度 を測定した。両グループとも、ネイティブスピーカーの会話を書き取る能力は全体的に向上したが、短縮形の MWS の解読には差が見られた。対照群では 15%向上したのに対して、実験群では 33%向上した。

Keywords: listening perception, multi-word sequences, reduced forms, connected speech

Even with years of classroom experience, many English language learners struggle when listening to native speakers. The pronunciation of fluent informal English speech is often drastically different from the clear textbook language that students hear in the classroom. Classes specifically aimed at improving listening skills may neglect sources of authentic pronunciation, instead giving priority to canned dialogues and listening comprehension strategies. One specific problem for non-native listeners is that of phonological changes in rapid speech. Any attention paid to these changes in spoken English traditionally takes the form of pronunciation practice in speaking classes rather than as a critical listening skill. However, listening perception skills are crucial for real-world communication. This study looks at the challenge of accurate perception of connected speech and investigates an experimental method for improving listening perception skills which uses corpus-based frequency to objectively select and teach high-frequency spoken multi-word sequences (MWSs) that feature phonological reduction.

Listening perception and low-level errors

Cognitive models of listening describe listening ability in terms of "bottom-up" and "top-down" processing skills. Bottom-up perception skills involve decoding and building up from the smallest units such as phonemes, syllables, and words (Field, 2008). Top-down comprehension skills use background knowledge and context to unravel and understand the meaning of the message (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). While these two processes work together in tandem, top-down comprehension skills or 'strategies' seem to receive priority in textbooks as students are taught to make contextual guesses when their listening perception is inadequate. This has resulted in unbalanced listening instruction. Wilson (2003) asserts that "although top-down processing is used by all listeners, it is not the ideal, and we should keep in mind that the learners' ultimate aim is to rely less on contextual guesswork, and more on hearing what was actually said" (p. 336). In this study, we examine the use of a listening task at the bottom-up level that may help learners more accurately decode fluent spoken English.

Low-level errors in listening perception can cause breakdowns of comprehension and can distort listener expectations of the incoming message. Field (2019) comments that "many incorrect answers to comprehension questions originated, not in failures of general understanding, but in failures of recognition at word or clause level" (p. 290). These failures of recognition take the form of two primary low-level errors in listening perception: (1) phoneme discrimination and (2) lexical segmentation (Field, 2003). Phoneme discrimination errors occur when a listener mistakes one phoneme for another or struggles to accurately perceive a particular phoneme that results in a mistake in word recognition, such as hearing *won't* instead of *want*. Errors in lexical segmentation take place when a listener has trouble identifying word boundaries which leads to misinterpretation, such as hearing a *sister* instead of *assistant* in a string of speech. Field (2003) maintains that the most prevalent challenge in listening perception is the lexical segmentation of reduced forms in connected speech. Thus, this study addresses the challenge of correctly segmenting the most common reduced

trigrams found in connected English speech.

Reduced forms in connected speech

Reduced forms are phonological simplifications that occur in spoken language. These alterations occur in connected speech (i.e., continuous speech with phonological coherence) due to gestural overlap and reduced gestural magnitude in articulation (Browman & Goldstein, 1992). Such phonological reductions include vowel weakening, assimilation, elision, resyllabification, and cliticization. Reduced forms are notably problematic for language learners because they involve a "massive loss of phonetic detail" (Brown, 1990, p. 59). Reduction affects unstressed syntactic function words (articles, prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, and other particles) much more than lexical content words, and often involves dropping consonants and vowels as well as full vowels being reduced to more central vowels such as /ə, ɪ, ʊ/ (Cruttenden & Gimson, 2014). These reductions are often noted in humorous spellings of sequences in English like *j'eat* for 'did you eat' or *whaddya* for 'what do you'. Even more confounding for L2 learners is the fact that many common English function words have homophonous reductions: for example, *a*, *are*, and *of* all reduce to the schwa sound /ə/ in connected speech (Field, 2003).

Several studies have shown that L2 listeners struggle to accurately perceive reduced forms. An early study by Henrichsen (1984) tested L2 listeners' accuracy on a dictation task of sentences with and without reduced forms and found the participants scored significantly lower when reduced forms were present. Ito (2001) conducted a similar dictation study but compared L2 listeners' perception of lexical reductions (contractions such as *won't* and *don't*) with phonological reductions (such as *take them* reducing to *take'em*) and found participants scored significantly lower when transcribing phonological reductions. Wong et al. (2017) determined that learners' reduced form perception ability can predict their overall listening comprehension of connected speech. Wong et al. (2021) categorized errors in L2 listener dictations of connected speech and found that close to 75% of them were near misses in perception (as opposed to the remaining 25% which were wild guesses). The present study aims to examine the question of whether direct teaching of reduced forms can help listeners to improve their perception of connected speech.

Teaching reduced forms

Very few reliable studies exist which have examined whether attention to reduced forms in the classroom can improve student listening ability. Brown and Hilferty (1986) had an experimental group (n=16) receive 10-minute lessons on reduced forms daily for four weeks with seven review dictations spread throughout, while a control group (n=16) practiced minimal pairs for the same amount of time. A "reduced forms dictation" (unfortunately, the study offers no details of the dictation) was given as a pre-test and post-test, the results of which found the experimental group scoring significantly higher than the control group with an estimated gain score effect size of Cohen's $d > 1.0$, a large difference. Matsuzawa (2006) taught a single group of 20 Japanese

businesspeople reduced forms in seven 30-minute lessons over the course of a month. The lessons involved brief explanations of a set of reduced forms and listening dictation practice targeting those reductions, and each lesson was reviewed at the beginning of the following week's lesson. A listening dictation of 30 short sentences (each containing one reduced form from the lessons) was used for the pre-test and post-test. Participants were required to transcribe all words in each sentence but were given a blank space for each word in the sentence. The learners gained 3.7 points between the pre-test (mean score of 14.95) and post-test (mean score of 18.65), which was a 24.75% gain.

From the few available studies, we have hints that teaching reduced forms in the classroom is worthwhile, but an important question remains: How should target reductions be selected and categorized? There is no consensus or even much method to the way that the existing studies have approached this question. Brown and Hilferty (1986) categorized reduced forms by communicative (greetings, farewells, questions) or grammatical (modals + TO, modals + HAVE) function. Matsuzawa (2006) selected reduced forms as examples of specific reduction categories such as flapping, linking, contraction, glottalized /t/, assimilation, deletion, and others, but there were no specific criteria for why certain reductions were included and others excluded. In this study, we use the guiding principle of frequency to choose which reductions to teach to students.

The length of target items should also be considered, as reduced forms occur both within words and at word boundaries. For example, /t/ can assimilate as a glottal stop within words like *certain* and *important*, or at the boundary between words in bigrams like *don't get* and *that was*. Reduced forms may lose salience at such a granular level and trying to teach them all would likely overwhelm learners. Brown and Hilferty (1986) included everything from single words to 4-grams. Matsuzawa (2006) included single words, bigrams, and trigrams, although Matsuzawa categorized them by phonological change (some within single words, some between bigrams).

Since the more frequently a word is used, the more likely it is to be reduced (Bybee, 2002b), our study focused on the most frequent words in English: syntactic function words. Almost all of the function words which appear in Cruttenden and Gimson's (2014) list of weak forms appear in the top hundred most frequent words in the British National Corpus (BNC) (BNC Consortium, 2007). It is not, however, feasible to present syntactic function words individually; they are found most often in groups of two or more words. The most frequent bigrams and trigrams found in any corpus of general English (spoken or written) are almost all bundles of function words. For fluent speakers, common multi-word sequences (MWSs) are stored in the lexicon and recalled as single units (Wray, 2002). They are automatized through repetition (Bybee, 2002a), which helps to reduce the cognitive processing load required for rapid fluent speech (Wood, 2010), and phonologically reduce as a result. Many of the highest frequency MWSs (such as *a lot of*, *I think that*, or *you have to*) are believed to be stored in the lexicon as is, along with their phonological reductions (Bybee, 2002b), in spite of being incomplete ideas.

Thus, the first author of this paper (McGuire, 2022) developed a corpus frequency based "reduced MWS" list in order to address the selection and categorization of reduced forms for instruction. This is a list of the highest frequency 3- and 4-grams in spoken English, compiled from the spoken section of the Open American National Corpus (Ide & Macleod, 2001). Rather than categorizing reduced forms by phonological change or communicative function, this list organizes them into the most frequent contexts in which students will encounter them. The list is divided into ten categories of ten MWSs based on shared keywords or keyword combinations (*of*/*of the*, *I don't*, *you know*, *I think*, *that*, *and*, *have*, *was*, *do you*, and *to*) ordered by frequency. There is a total of 88 reduced MWSs because twelve of the MWSs repeat in more than one group. It is designed to be used over ten weeks by teaching one category per week, focusing on the reduced forms that occur within the MWSs.

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of teaching reduced forms using a corpus-based approach in the form of high frequency reduced MWSs. Because there has been no reliable report of whether spending time in a language classroom teaching reduced MWSs can result in improved listening perception, this study is necessarily exploratory and preliminary. However, we began with the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. Do students who learn and practice high frequency reduced MWSs improve in their listening perception of informal connected speech?
2. Do such students improve their ability to decode the actual MWSs?

Methods

Participants

The participants for the study were 71 Japanese students majoring in English at two universities. The students were all enrolled in speaking classes which were chosen for this study and taught by the authors of this paper. The proficiency levels of the students ranged from intermediate to upper intermediate, equivalent to a CEFR level of between B1 and C1. The treatment took place over ten weeks during a 15-week university semester and was repeated over three separate semesters to increase the sample size. The number of students who completed all the requirements for the study, and thus could be included in the experimental group, was n=35. Students from two additional classes from the second author's university were included as control group students, n=36. These were students in a speaking class which focused on learning collocations and phrasal verbs. These students took the same tests as the experimental group at the beginning and end of the semester but did not focus on reduced forms.

Procedures

This study utilized the previously mentioned reduced MWS list for the target language items (see

McGuire, 2022 for the full list with frequencies). The weekly treatment procedure is outlined in Figure 1. Each week of the ten-week treatment, students in the experimental group were introduced to one category of the reduced MWS list. This included a short video (two to five minutes) explaining the phonological reductions that occur in each category. Many of the videos compared the waveforms of standard non-reduced forms of the MWSs to their reduced forms, making the phonological changes visible. Each video ended with a reading of the ten reduced MWSs for the week, after which they were practiced in the classroom. These reduced MWS lessons lasted around ten minutes. For the remainder of the class time each week, students participated in speaking activities such as story-retell tasks and group discussions as part of the usual class curriculum. Reduced MWSs were not targeted during these activities. For homework, the students in the experimental group were assigned 20 digital audio flashcards (two for each MWS) using the open-source Anki software to practice at least three times before the following class. The participants were required to submit their study logs from Anki each week to ensure that they completed the flashcard practice. Each card featured audio of the reduced MWS on one side and the standard written form on the other side which was used for listening practice (see Figure 2). Reversed cards were also included in the deck so that students could practice saying the reduced form before comparing their speech to the audio on the back of the card. Students were also encouraged to practice shadowing the reduced form with the audio.

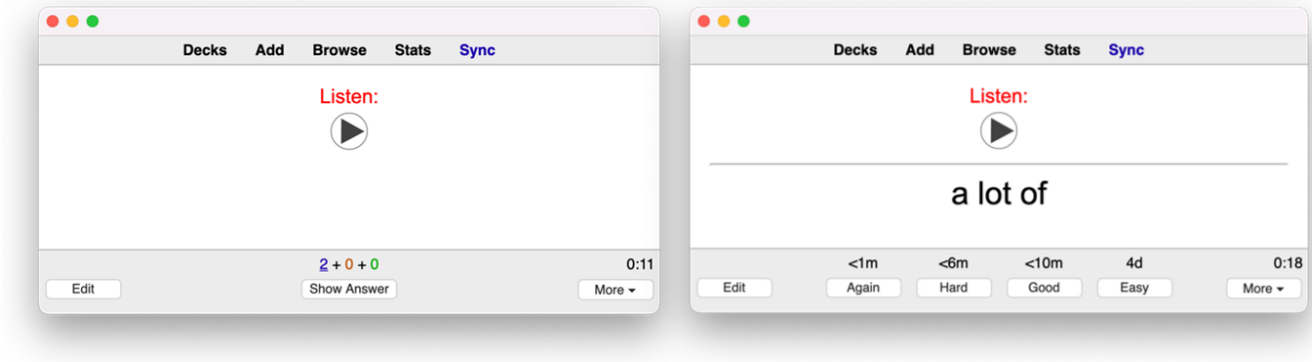
Figure 1: Weekly treatment procedure

	Experimental Group	**Control Group**

In-class	• Reduced MWS lesson
	  ○ Introduction video
	  ○ Pronunciation practice
	• Speaking tasks
	  ○ Story-retell
	  ○ Group discussions
		• Speaking tasks
		  ○ Story-retell
		  ○ Group discussions

Homework	• Digital flashcards (3 times)
	  ○ Reduced MWSs
	• Listening journal (15+ minutes)
		• Digital flashcards (3 times)
		  ○ Collocations and phrasal verbs

Figure 2: The front side (left) and back side (right) of one Anki card for listening practice



In addition to the Anki flashcards, students in the experimental group completed a weekly listening assignment. Students were required to watch at least 15 minutes of conversations on YouTube each week and attempt to count the number of times that they heard one of the MWSs (or another reduced form containing the reduced MWS keyword) in their listening materials. While this count was not measured for accuracy, it was included in order to help focus the students' attention on the sounds of connected speech. After completing their listening practice, students wrote a listening journal in which they were asked to comment on their listening practice and how the weekly reduced MWSs were used in the conversation. The students in the control group also participated in in-class story-retelling tasks and group discussions. They also used Anki every week but used it to study audio flashcards of collocations and phrasal verbs. They did not receive any instruction on reduced forms. All students in both groups who finished and passed the course were included in the study.

Pre-test and post-test

Before and after the treatment period, participants completed a dictation test using a conversation recorded by the authors of this paper (both native speakers of American English) at a rapid speed (speech rate of 3.77, calculated as the number of syllables divided by duration), which included many of the target reduced MWSs. The same test was used for both the pre-test and the post-test. It was thought that a dictation test provided the most direct and valid method of measuring perception of the MWSs. As the test was one which we created ourselves, the creation process involved asking two native speakers to listen to the recording and complete the dictation as well. Neither of these native speakers had any trouble with the task. The dictation was done on a prepared worksheet with spaces for each line of the dialogue. The length of the entire dictation was 209 words, and it was split into 28 segments based on turns in the conversation. Thirty-two content words were pre-written on the worksheet to help students not get lost in the dictation. Students needed to transcribe the remaining 177 words, 81 of which were contained in 27 reduced MWSs from the list. All of the words for transcription appear in the NGSL (88.5% from NGSL level 1) with the exception of the words "oh", "hey", and "homework", which the participants were likely familiar with. The reduced MWSs included ranged in frequency from as high as 1854 occurrences per million tokens to as low as 74 with an average of 342. Students completed the task by writing their answers on the worksheet

while listening to the recording played on the room's audio system. There were 5 seconds appended to the end of each segment to give listeners time to write. For the task, the entire sequence of audio was played all the way through once, then repeated once more. A reliability analysis was carried out on each of the 28 separately graded segments of the dictation, and Cronbach's alpha (α) showed that the dictation reached acceptable reliability (Robertson & Evans, 2020), α=0.92 for the pre-test and α=0.94 for the post-test. Here are the first few segments from the conversation, and below them, what students saw on their sheet (targeted reduced MWSs are highlighted in grey):

A: Hey Karen, do you have time to go to a movie tonight?
B: Oh, hey Alan. I don't know, I have a lot of homework.
B: I just got started and I have to keep on working tonight.
A: Oh yeah? What do you need to do?
B: I have to come up with a couple of ideas for my history project.

A: _____ Karen, _____?
B: _____ Alan, _____,
_____.
B: _____.
A: _____?
B: _____ history project.

Results

This study aimed to determine if students who studied reduced MWSs would make improvements in their perception of those reduced MWSs as well as their overall listening perception. After students submitted their written dictations, the authors of this paper typed them into a Google form. Minor spelling mistakes were corrected when the intended word was obvious (such as *reserch* instead of *research*, or *yeh* instead of *yeah*). Total errors (number of errors out of 177 words) and MWS errors (number of errors out of the 81 words in the MWSs) were measured using custom Python scripts. For the total errors, a script based on the open-source JiWER package was used to calculate word-level minimum-edit distance (Levenshtein distance) between the participants' dictations and the original script. This was used in order to accurately account for word insertions, substitutions, and deletions (for more information, please see Morris et al., 2004). Another Python script was created to measure only the MWS errors. Because MWS sequentiality is crucial, this was strictly checked. If all three words of the trigram were accurately transcribed, all three were counted correct. If the first two or last two words were accurately transcribed in sequence, but the remaining word was not, then two of the three words were counted correct. However, if the first and last word of a trigram (or larger) were accurately transcribed, but the middle word was incorrect, sequentiality was broken, so only one out of the three words was counted correct. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for all measures.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for pre-test, post-test, and gain score

	Pre-test		Post-test		Gain Score	
	Total errors (out of 177)	Reduced MWS errors (out of 81)	Total errors (out of 177)	Reduced MWS errors (out of 81)	Total errors (out of 177)	Reduced MWS errors (out of 81)
Control (*n*=36)	77.81 (16.9)	29.97 (8.59)	69.11 (20.02)	25.44 (7.85)	-8.69 (12.06)	-4.53 (5.78)
Experiment (*n*=35)	72.11 (30.69)	28.17 (14.28)	58.17 (30.89)	18.86 (11.95)	-13.94 (13.49)	-9.31 (8.5)

The total errors measure shows the average number of errors out of the total possible 177 words. The experimental group (72.11) started slightly stronger than the control group (77.81) in the pre-test (a smaller number equals less errors), although the experimental group had a much higher standard deviation (30.69), meaning more variation in scores. Both groups made improvements from the pre-test to the post-test with the control group dropping an average of 8.69 errors to 69.11 (an 11.17% improvement) and the experimental group dropping 13.94 errors to 58.17 (a 19.33% improvement). Figure 3 shows the parallel coordinate plots for total errors, visually representing improvement (declining scores) or worsening (rising scores) from pre-test to post-test (each line represents an individual participant, and the thick black line represents the mean). Figure 4 shows the distribution of gain scores for each group.

Figure 3: Parallel coordinate plots for total errors

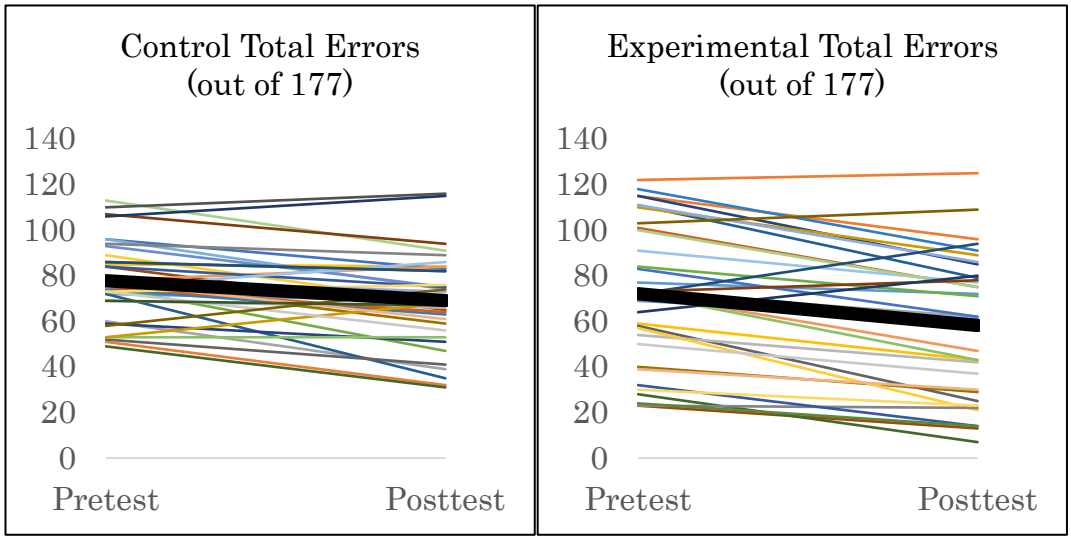


Figure 4: Boxplot with beeswarm for total errors gain score

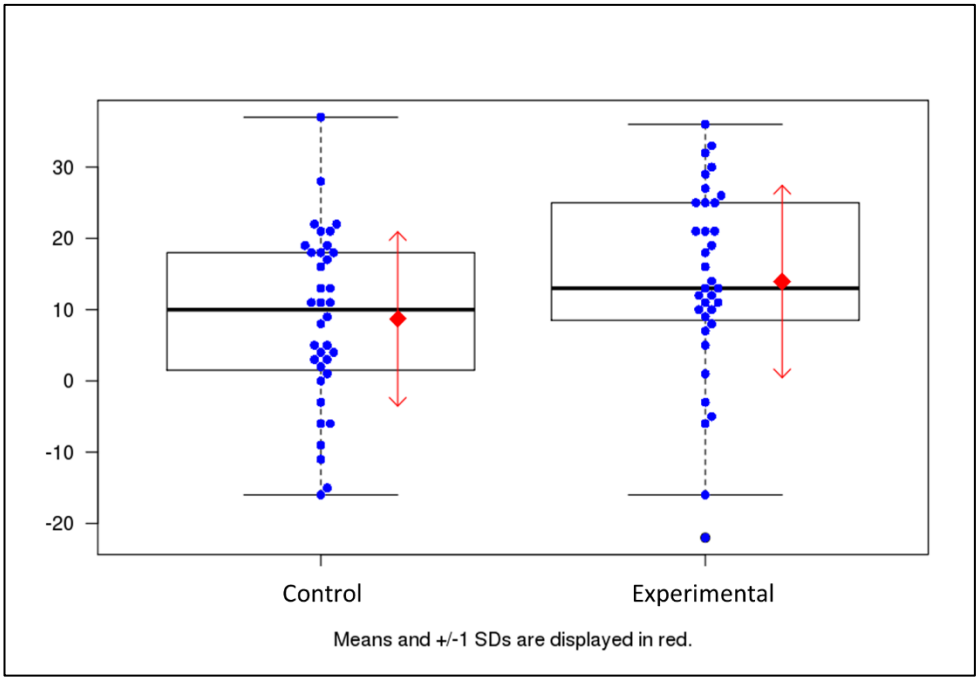


Table 2 shows the results of paired t-tests done to examine whether each group's progress was statistically significant. It shows that in both total errors and MWS errors, both groups improved statistically over time. The effect sizes for the experimental group (shown in the Cohen's d column) are larger than the control group's and can be categorized as large effects (about one standard deviation) for the experimental group, while for the control group the improvement in total errors is medium-large and the improvement in MWS errors specifically is smaller (a medium effect size).

Table 2

Inferential tests (pre-test vs post-test)

	Pre vs Post	*t*-value	df	*p*-value	95% *CI*	Cohen's *d*
Ctrl (*n*= 36)	Total errors	4.27	35	p = 0.00014	[4.56, 12.83]	0.71 [0.34, 1.07]
	MWS errors	4.63	35	p<.0001	[2.54, 6.51]	0.54 [0.29, 0.79]
Exp (*n*= 35)	Total errors	6.12	34	p<.0001	[9.31, 18.58]	1.03 [0.62, 1.44]
	MWS errors	6.48	34	p<.0001	[6.39, 12.23]	1.10 [0.67, 1.51]

As can be discerned from the descriptive statistics and the visuals in Figures 3 and 4, when we compare the experimental group to the control group, the differences were not strong or large enough to be statistically significant for the total errors category. In other words, during the course of the semester, both groups, who were taking classes with significant listening input and speaking practice,

were able to improve their overall ability to complete a challenging dictation test. Table 3 shows the results of an independent t-test between the two groups. For overall errors, the 95% confidence interval passes through zero, indicating a lack of statistical significance, and the effect size is small-to-medium; indeed, it is right at d=.40, which Hattie (2008) argues is the minimum that most educational treatments seem to achieve, so effect sizes larger than d=.40 are necessary to show that there is a real desired effect.

Table 3:
Inferential tests (control vs experimental)

	Pre vs Post	*t*-value	df	*p*-value	95% *CI*	Cohen's *d*
Ctrl vs Exp	Total errors	1.72	67.9	p = 0.0907	[-11.35, 0.85]	-0.41 [-0.88, 0.06]
	MWS errors	2.75	60.2	p = 0.0078	[-8.26, -1.31]	-0.66 [-1.13, -0.18]

The reduced MWS errors measure looks only at mistakes made within the 27 reduced MWSs (81 words total) in the listening dictation test. In this measure, both groups started off very close in the pre-test, and both groups made improvements on the post-test. The control group dropped 4.53 errors from 29.97 on the pre-test to 25.44 on the post-test, showing a 15.12% improvement. The experimental group dropped 9.31 errors from 28.17 on the pre-test to 18.86 on the post-test showing a 33.05% improvement (more than double that of the control group). Figure 4 shows the parallel coordinate plots for MWS errors, while Figure 5 shows the distribution of gain scores for each group.

Figure 5: Parallel coordinate plots for reduced MWS errors

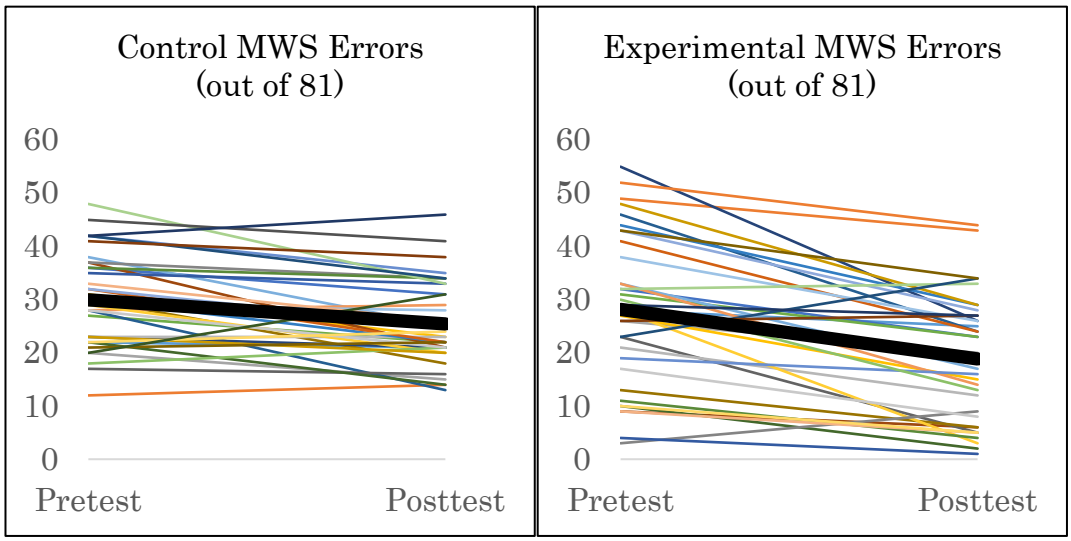
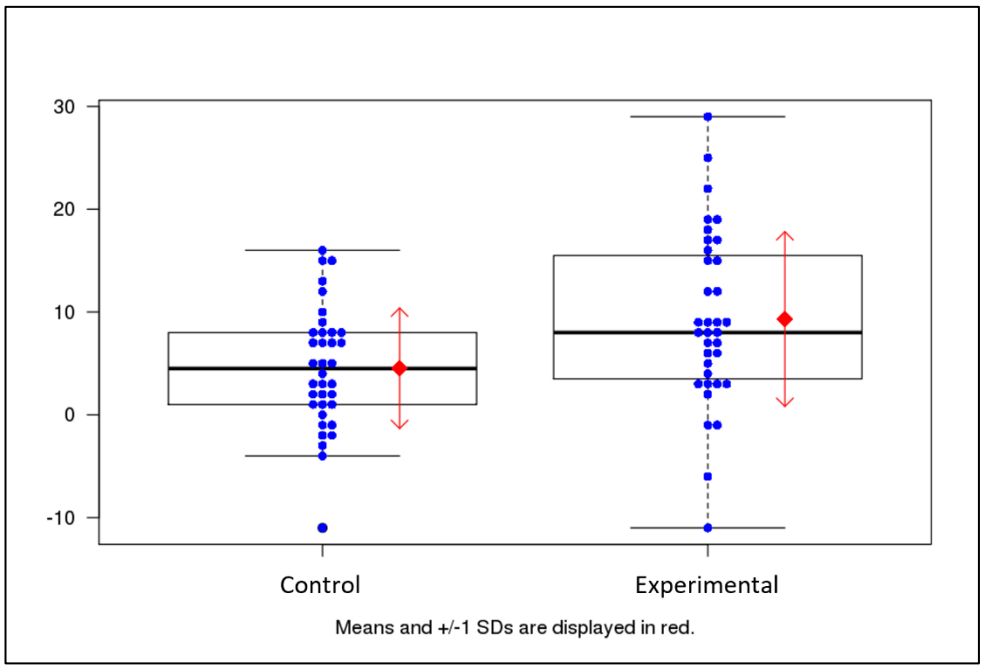


Figure 6: Boxplot with beeswarm for reduced MWS errors gain score



Here, the descriptive statistics in Table 1 and the visuals in Figures 4 and 5 show more of a difference between groups, although it is not striking. Table 3 shows that the 95% confidence interval for the comparison between groups does not pass through zero, but the difference between groups could also be as small as only a point and a half, and the effect size of d = 0.66 can be classified as medium.

Discussion

The results of this study provide evidence that L2 learners can benefit from studying reduced forms in the classroom. Although the reduction in errors in the experimental group was only of medium effect size and the difference between experimental and control group was not strikingly different (d = 0.66), we suspect that our test may not have captured the full extent of how learners improved. Anecdotally, we saw many comments on the experimental group listening homework that participants felt their listening ability was improving quite a bit because of the reduced MWS focus. Future studies may be able to find ways to better measure how listening ability improves, or it may be the case that improvement comes more slowly than the time frame we tested within.

We acknowledge that there were many choices for our experiment that could have been changed, such as how to best study reduced MWSs or what type of test to administer to see whether students' listening perception improved. The Anki cards provided a way to listen to the reduced MWSs themselves while the video homework was a way to get students to pay attention to specific forms in context, but there may be more effective methods of directing students' attention to these important forms. As for measuring listening perception, our dictation test provided a way to quickly gather data from a large number of students but asking students to shadow a listening task and then examining where their accuracy broke down might be a more direct way of measuring listening perception and

provide information on what types of language provide difficulties for learners.
There are a number of limitations to our study. Probably the most important is that we did not keep track of how much time the experimental students spent studying the MWS list on Anki or doing the listening homework. Surely this time spent on task outside of the classroom had important effects on improvement, and the students in the study showed enough time spent using Anki and enough homework assignments submitted to pass the class, but no measure was made of the exact amount of time spent. A future study that monitored students more closely, either through more detailed self-reports or laboratory work where study could be observed, might find stronger effects for reduced MWS study. Another limitation was that the dictation test contained some fairly long segments which may have been too taxing for students' working memory and thus led to them being unable to accurately transcribe some reduced MWSs that they were able to decode. Another possible problem is that the dictation audio was played in a classroom over speakers. Audio levels were checked before the test began and students were asked to verify that they could hear the recording clearly, but it is possible that some errors could be due to the audio delivery. Some students may have been able to perform better on the test if they had had access to individual headsets for listening. Additionally, it is likely that the students became more familiar with the instructors' voices during the course of the study, which could have affected post-test performance. However, this would have affected the control group as well.

In sum, this study showed that explicitly training participants in recognizing reduced MWSs, combined with practical training in listening in context, resulted in modest increases in the ability to decode reduced MWSs in fluent speech. This study did not test whether increases in perception resulted in better comprehension, but we believe that perception is a precursor to comprehension so that increased comprehension should be a benefit of more accurate perception. This study is only a preliminary investigation into this area, and we encourage more researchers to explore different ways in which reduced form perception could be improved.

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Listening Live: Teaching Report

S.C.A.L.E.S : Self-Created Active Listening Exercises

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Rationale

The SCALES (Self-Created Active Listening Exercises) project grew out of two frustrations with my listening material provided in the textbooks I was using. The first was that the material only featured 'native' English speakers. The second was that the listening work was all passive. The SCALES project places the emphasis on the L2 speaker and requires them to engage in using several types of listening skills.

Native-speakerism is a problem because it devalues other pronunciations of English. In the classroom and in the world of business, when students begin to speak to each other, they will be hearing non-native pronunciations. Therefore, it is important to practice and validate the practice of hearing and comprehending non-native speakers.

Most material provided in standardized texts requires students to listen passively to recordings. In the real world, listening is often active. Listening often requires turn-taking and the negotiation of meaning which cannot occur in passive listening exercises. When students create and perform their own listening quizzes, it activates these skills.

Too often, exercises provided by textbooks are irrelevant or insensitive to classroom cultures and over-value the 'native' way of speaking. The goal of the SCALES activity is to have students actively involved in the production and performance of listening quizzes. This gives students a chance to experience language production as well as practice their listening skills. Furthermore, it gives students a chance to reinforce and practice the new grammar and vocabulary they have learned.

Teaching self-created active listening exercises

Teaching: active listening, passive listening, creativity, performance

Student level: all

Teacher experience: anyone capable of performing a short dialogue (8 -10 lines)

Task time: depends on class size

Prep list: whiteboard, pens and paper, worksheets

Pre-listening

Prepare worksheets that include a list of target grammar/vocabulary and a dialogue prompt. See the appendix for a sample worksheet.

Method

1. Divide students into pair or groups of 2 or 3. Hand out the worksheets. Ask students to complete a dialogue using the target language. Be sure to have the students write a final comprehension question (FCQ) which will be asked to the students at the end of the dialogue performances.
2. As students are writing, go around the room and check for errors of grammar in production. Help students with pronunciation. If students are feeling stuck, encourage them by helping them brainstorm ideas.
3. After students have finished their dialogues, have them rehearse the dialogues several times, playing both roles. As they are rehearsing, write the FCQs on the whiteboard. Ask the students to write the FCQs down on the back of their paper.
4. Students perform the scripts twice, playing both roles. If necessary, the scripts can be performed a third time. After they perform, the students ask the question that corresponds with their dialogue.
5. After all the groups have performed and asked the question, confirm the correct answers with the class and performers.

Variable listening

This material could be gamified or played for multiple rounds as a sort of quiz-challenge. The FCQs could be made increasingly difficult in order to enhance the challenge and encourage more careful listening. Bottom-up or top-down listening strategies could be discussed with students' pre-exercise and post-exercise.

Results

With my students, I tried this activity eight times over the span of 12 weeks. As students became more accustomed to the procedure, the set-up and execution went more swiftly. The first time, it took more than an hour, but in subsequent times, it took about 30 minutes. Students reported that the exercises helped them to understand their classmates' English but also that understanding their fellow students' pronunciation was the most difficult part of the activity. My students came from all around the globe. There was a variety of non-native English speakers from around Asia in the classroom and a variety of pronunciation styles. The Vietnamese, Japanese, Chinese, and Sri Lankan English L2 speakers in my class tended to pronounce English through the habits of their own phonological systems. The SCALES project is unique because it requires the two performers to listen for turn-taking and moves in the conversation to perform the dialogue correctly. At the same time, it requires the audience to listen actively to the dialogue in order to get a correct answer on the FCQs.

Students tended to write the scripts about things that interested them, like their dining habits, their employment, or their romantic lives. Engagement in learning is critical for success and having students develop their own material seemed to succeed in getting them engaged because they wrote what they knew and lived. Students cheered and laughed as they listened and performed the skits. Likewise, it seemed students tended to listen more actively to their friends in the class than to the material provided by the textbook.

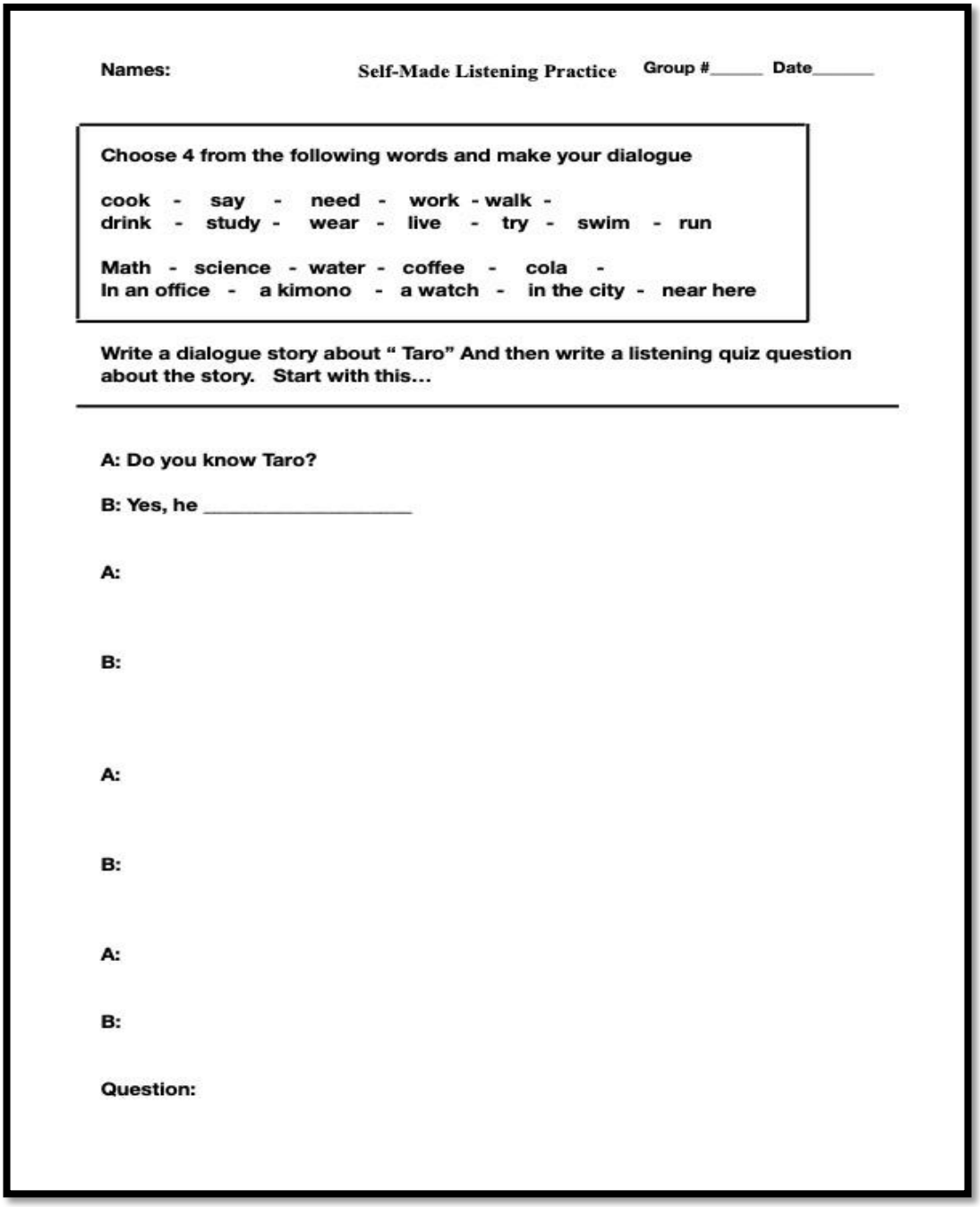
Limitations

It is not clear whether this activity would help students perform better on listening tests that are designed to test standardized listening proficiency such as the TOEIC exam. Different studies have shown that L2 learners use a variety of non-verbal skills and strategies when performing listening tasks. Students reported the most difficult thing about the exercise was non-native accents but further research is needed to clarify what is meant by that. Students also appeared to shift from top-down to bottom-up strategies but further analysis is needed.

About the author

Matthew Wiegand has taught English at high schools, eikaiwa schools and colleges in Japan since 2015. He also teaches aikido to kids. In the USA he taught music, cooking and aikido at a private high school. His love of Japan began when he went to the Boston Children's Museum when he was five years old and felt comfortable in the tatami room exhibition.

Appendix 1. Worksheet example



Names: Self-Made Listening Practice Group #_____ Date_____

Choose 4 from the following words and make your dialogue

cook - say - need - work - walk -
drink - study - wear - live - try - swim - run

Math - science - water - coffee - cola -
In an office - a kimono - a watch - in the city - near here

Write a dialogue story about " Taro" And then write a listening quiz question about the story. Start with this…

A: Do you know Taro?

B: Yes, he _____

A:

B:

A:

B:

A:

B:

Question:

Book Review

Field, J. (2019). *Rethinking the Second Language Listening Test: From Theory to Practice*. Equinox Publishing, Ltd. (15/2/22)

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Creating an English language assessment that is reliable, valid, and adheres to the findings of second language acquisition (SLA) research can be a complicated business, and perhaps to some, an unenviable task. However, in *Rethinking the Second Language Listening Test: From Theory to Practice* (2019), John Field addresses this with regards to listening, compiling an extremely detailed guide, documenting, describing, and explaining seemingly every imaginable aspect a test writer or teacher may have to consider, alongside the theory and evidence behind its inclusion.

Field begins by stating the obvious: the process of assessing listening is not like assessing the other skills. For instance, in a reading exam, every word on the page can be recognizable if known by the candidate. But in listening, even if a word is familiar to the test taker and recognizable on the page, when spoken it can be misheard or even not heard at all. This example, where it is the *features* of spontaneous speech which can make English sound so very different to expectation, depicts one of several variables which make the process of listening a more complicated act, thus warranting test writers to take extra care.

The book is divided into two main stages: the first, covering Chapters 1-3, details the theoretical underpinnings behind the process of listening, considering how expert and non-expert (or learner) listeners differ from one another. The second section is more practical in nature. It addresses each stage of the test design process, highlighting potential problems and challenges and offering solutions and examples to help improve the assessment instrument and the experience for all involved.

Chapter 1 begins with a comparison of the main types of listening test: level-specific tests such as the Cambridge suite (i.e., KET, PET, FCE) where candidates take one exam per level, and proficiency exams, where all candidates take the same paper (i.e., IELTS). The process of listening as an expert listener is outlined and detailed descriptions of each stage are provided, highlighting problems that can interfere with the goal of ultimate comprehension.

In **Chapter 2**, Field compares the expert listener model to that of the L2 learner listener, noting where the latter can struggle to decode the sounds of speech they hear for a number of reasons

including lexical, grammatical, phonological and even cultural. A key concept was also introduced at this stage which was revisited time and again throughout the book: automaticity. Automaticity is when the brain automatically recognizes sounds, words, and their meaning from prior input. With this automatic recognition, listeners are freed up to focus their attention on content and inferring meaning. Automaticity is usually reached around the B1/B2 level on the Common European Framework (CEFR) - i.e., between the intermediate and upper intermediate levels. Below this, learners' brains are focused more on perceiving and processing the individual sounds that they hear and identifying their meaning from memory. This is a time-consuming process which can detract learners from grasping the overall meaning.

Chapter 3 argues that our current methods of describing listening capability (e.g., rated on a numerical scale, level by level, or using the CEFR) are insufficient and do not take important research findings into consideration. Descriptors for listening at each level of the CEFR are provided and then compared with the author's own more detailed descriptors which are informed by relevant research on automaticity and listeners' perceptual ability.

In **Chapter 4**, the author considers the text from which the recording will emanate, and potential pitfalls test writers need to be aware of during the script creation process. Covering vocabulary, grammar, text length, discourse type, and topic familiarity, Field identifies common problems and offers helpful practical solutions. In **Chapter 5**, the discussion moves on to producing the recording. Once again, the potential challenges exam writers face at this stage are identified and discussed at length, including selecting the right type of input (i.e., scripted, semi scripted, improvised, or authentic), speech rate of the speaker, visual input, and varieties of English.

Chapter 6 discusses the delivery of the listening test, focusing in particular on the format and means of assessment. Field urges us to consider the amount of wording we use given that we are testing listening, not reading, and suggests some alternative methods of posing questions to avoid a heavy reading load.

Chapter 7 is concerned with the task types used in listening assessments and Field provides detailed information on diverse formats (i.e., multiple choice, gap fill, matching). He also emphasizes the importance of using a variety of task types to ensure fairness.

Chapter 8 concentrates on the important matter of wording in listening exam questions. Specific parameters and examples can be found in this chapter which help readers to understand what an effective written item does and doesn't look like.

Chapter 9 focuses on two specific groups of learners, academic students, and young learners, going into detail about how listening assessments can be designed to suit these demographics, and outlining

the potential task types and processes a listening test could include. For EAP learners, Field reminds us how monologues (in this case lecture recordings) versus dialogues or group discussions should be presented. For young learners, he considers their still developing brains and suggests ways in which we can create an assessment which meets their needs and capabilities.

Chapter 10 addresses the combining of listening into the assessment of reading, writing, and speaking and the pros and cons of these combined formats. It is remarked that, aside from the academic environment where lecture listening and note taking are the norm, combined tests can 'blur the boundaries' between skills, making an accurate assessment of listening difficult.

The text concludes with a **Post-script** section containing two final chapters plus appendices. In **Chapter 11**, Field returns to the topic of information density, that is, the ratio of answers to distractors or unrelated detail, within a recording. He discusses the tricky balancing act required when increasing the complexity of a task, but not making the relevant script so long as to overload the listener. In **Chapter 12**, Field revisits the major themes of the text and reasserts his hopes that future listening assessments will consider the cognitive side of listening in their design, as well as how the skills and scenarios presented in the test replicate real world listening.

Recognition must be given to Field for producing such a comprehensive yet practical text on a fairly niche subject matter. Within educational institutions, training in exam writing is not the most common practice, often leaving teachers or department heads to emulate the same old tasks and styles from textbooks or large assessment bodies; Field's publication could certainly make up for that absence of initial instruction. One of its many attributes is that it will support both novice and experienced listening test writers as it could be read chronologically, after which readers will emerge with an in depth understanding of the processes and practices involved in listening and its assessment, or it could be dipped in and out of as questions form and need arises. Despite being a long-time listening exam writer, I found this text to be useful and enlightening and one which I will return to in future. Although relatively compact, it took me a long time to read as I frequently had to pause and reflect on past exams I had written, considering how I could have done things differently, or being thankful at having made the right choices. However, this text is not just useful for those involved in testing. Its thorough description of the process of listening and the detailed section on automaticity would be helpful and enlightening to all teachers, providing much insight into the creation of everyday classroom listening activities.

The only issue I had with this excellent publication was Chapter 5's discussion of accent. Though Field promotes a 'cautious' approach, his remarks on the 'cult of accent' are a little contentious. Field warns readers off including diverse varieties under the guise of fairness. With most exam candidates having progressed through a significant amount of English language education prior to sitting formal assessments, they will very likely have been exposed to and become familiar with the ubiquitous L1

prestige models of Standard British English and General American English which dominate the ELT industry. Straying from these and introducing new and unfamiliar accents for the first time in the exam hall, during what may be a high stakes test, would of course be unfair to candidates. While Field is not wrong in his call for caution in the test environment, research has proven the importance of familiarity to comprehension after all (Ballard & Winke, 2016; Smith & Bisazza, 1982), his continued reliance on prestige models, rather than pushing for change and greater exposure to diverse Englishes *prior* to testing is disappointing. But more than this, in a text in which he so frequently advocates for listening assessments which replicate real life and the scenarios our students will find themselves in post-exam, suggesting we simply carry on using prestige models still comes as a bit of a surprise. With L2 speakers far outnumbering L1 (Crystal, 2019), we know that for most of our students, it is the former rather than the latter that they will likely communicate with when out of the classroom, hence the need for exposure to its sounds.

About the author

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Submission Guidelines

Feature Articles

Submissions should be clearly-written, and fully-documented, research articles, in English or Japanese. Analysis and data can be quantitative, qualitative, or both. Manuscripts are reviewed and evaluated anonymously, based on reviewer expertise and interest. Papers are evaluated for degree of scholarly research, relevance, originality of conclusions, etc. Submissions should:

- be of relevance to language educators in Japan.
- be blinded (made anonymous for review purposes). See below for more information.
- be 5,000-8000 words for longer manuscripts (including references but excluding appendices)
- be 3,000-5,000 words for short manuscripts (including references but excluding appendices)
- have paragraphs separated by single carriage returns (may be indented), and subheadings (bold, bold-italic, or italic) used throughout for the convenience of readers - not numbered headings.
- have a supplementary file, including the article's title, the author's name, affiliation, contact details, and word count at the top of the first page, submitted along with the blinded paper which will NOT be made available to reviewers.
- have tables, figures, appendices, etc. included in the main file in the appropriate places, and also attached as supplementary files.
- have an English abstract of up to 150 words and translated into Japanese (authors are responsible for providing their own translation of abstracts), in the paper and entered into the Online Journal System. *Abstracts are used by reviewers to determine whether they wish to review the paper.
- be accompanied by a 100-word biographical background - NOT made available to reviewers.
- include the DOI for every reference that has a DOI. Preface the DOI with the appropriate HTML header (e.g., https://doi.org/).
- follow APA 7th Edition Guidelines. See below for more information.

We also accept *student papers*, *teaching reports* and *reviews*.
For more information contact listening@jalt.org or see https://jaltlistening.wordpress.com/

Call for The Listening Conference 2023

We are delighted to announce **The Listening Conference 2023 - Learning, Teaching, and Research.** This is our second event in affiliation with the JALT Tokyo Chapter and JALT Yokohama Chapter. This is a one-day event taking place on **Saturday 15th July 2023** at the **Tokyo International Exchange Center Plaza Heisei**.

We welcome abstracts for 20-minute presentations related to listening and teaching, assessment, and resources. Presentations will be followed by a 5-minute Q&A session. In addition to these areas of research, we would be keen for you to apply if your research in listening relates to another issue.

Please submit a 200-word abstract using the Google Form link below.
https://forms.gle/cfseSKrewjZ4A71u6

This call for abstracts will close on **31st March 2023**.
Submissions are limited to one presentation (as lead presenter) per person.