

TEACHING LISTENERS, NOT ACCENT LABELS: INFORMATION-CENTRED LISTENING WITH MULTIPLE ENGLISH VOICES

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ABSTRACT

Listening lessons can introduce a wider range of English voices without changing the activity that follows: learners identify an accent, answer isolated questions, and proceed to the next recording. A more consequential use of voice diversity asks learners to obtain information from identifiable people, inspect a misunderstanding, and use the corrected interpretation to complete a task. This article specifies that form of listening instruction through a complete community-exhibition unit for adult and tertiary EFL learners working at approximately B1–B2 level. Three contributors participate twice each: a hall coordinator, a collection volunteer, and an access volunteer. Across three fifty-minute lessons, learners combine six messages to determine opening arrangements, exhibit placement, visitors' choices, and an exact closing sequence. The article draws on Global Englishes, talker adaptation, perceptual effort, bottom-up listening, and communicative teaching. It provides the six complete speaker scripts, a hall diagram, a timed lesson plan, individual listening questions, a fourteen-item answer key, and a transparent scoring guide. The distinction between perceived ease and demonstrated understanding is maintained throughout, as is the distinction between a correct group briefing and independent comprehension of unheard speech. The messages are authored teaching texts; they have not been recorded or tested with learners. Its practical contribution is a fully specified procedure in which the speech of each contributor determines what the listener must know and do.

KEYWORDS: English as a foreign language; listening comprehension; Global Englishes; intelligibility; speaker familiarity; communicative instruction

1. INTRODUCTION: WHAT LEARNERS DO WITH DIFFERENT VOICES

A recording can broaden the range of voices represented in a course without necessarily providing a meaningfully different experience of listening. A learner may hear an unfamiliar English speaker, answer several worksheet questions, receive a score, and then move directly to the next recording. Sometimes the lesson goes further by asking where the speaker comes from or how strongly accented the speech sounds. Neither activity, by itself, establishes which ideas the learner actually recovered, why a particular sentence was misunderstood, or whether the information could be used accurately in a subsequent decision. The central instructional question is therefore not simply how many accents appear in a course. It is whether learners are enabled to understand people whose speech patterns they have not previously learned to anticipate.

The representational problem is genuine and pedagogically consequential. Kopperoinen [1], examining two Finnish upper-secondary English textbook series, documented unequal representation of native- and non-native-speaker accents. The study describes a particular set of books and cannot be generalized to every contemporary textbook. It nevertheless illustrates how curricular selection can narrow learners' experience of English. Rose and Galloway [2] argue that teaching choices should be considered against the multilingual, international uses of the language instead of treating a single idealized speaker category as the universal model.

Simply increasing the number of recordings is not an adequate pedagogical response. A new speaker could be heard for only thirty seconds, classified by country, and never encountered again. The learner may gain a label but no reason to listen to that individual closely. A different lesson can make the same person responsible for an important instruction, return to that person with another message, and require the class to use the information alongside contributions from others. In such a lesson, people are not audio specimens. They are participants whose words affect

the outcome.

The term *voice-diverse listening* refers here to purposeful engagement with different individual speakers while recognizing that pronunciation, rhythm, pace, pausing, lexical choice, and discourse organization vary within as well as between social groups. This terminology does not deny that accent can be investigated systematically. Rather, it prevents a broad category from substituting for an account of what was heard in a particular utterance. Someone who misunderstood a deadline needs help distinguishing the relevant numbers or temporal relation; assigning the speaker a national label does not recover the deadline.

The teaching unit developed below is situated in a fictional community exhibition so that listening decisions can be tied to explicit and checkable information. A new volunteer needs an accurate opening-day briefing. The listener must combine a coordinator's schedule, a collection volunteer's instructions, and an access volunteer's explanation of how visitors can use recorded and written stories. Each contribution changes an acceptable plan. The three contributors return with further instructions, permitting practice with continuing voices without making repeated playback of an identical message the only learning activity. The unit is designed for three lessons of approximately fifty minutes each. Its task facts are explicit, its worksheets are provided, and its answer guide specifies what comprehension would look like.

The lessons are intended for adult or tertiary EFL learners working approximately within the B1–B2 range. That description is a curriculum target rather than a result of proficiency testing. A teacher would need to check the vocabulary, response options, recording quality, and access arrangements for the actual class. The unit contains no acoustic sample and makes no claim that the speech of one contributor represents all speakers with a similar linguistic history. Its subject is attentive listening to people, not classification of accents.

2. EVIDENCE FOR INSTRUCTIONAL CHOICES

2.1. RECOGNITION OF A MESSAGE AND PERCEIVED EASE ARE NOT THE SAME JUDGMENT

Derwing and Munro [3] distinguish intelligibility, comprehensibility, and accentedness. In broad terms, intelligibility concerns how much speech listeners actually understand; comprehensibility concerns how easy or difficult speech seems to understand; and accentedness concerns perceived pronunciation difference from an expected norm. These constructs are measured differently across studies and should not be reduced to one indication of good or bad English. A listener may correctly understand a demanding message and still report considerable effort. Another listener may find a voice familiar but misunderstand a crucial restriction.

Verbeke and Simon [4] investigated these distinctions with thirty-three Dutch-speaking EFL learners. Participants rated speech from eight English speakers and transcribed forty sentences from those same speakers. Reported transcription accuracy for most speakers was high, ranging from 79% to 95%. The study thus supplies a concrete reason to record perceived ease separately from actual word recognition. A sentence transcription, however, is not the same activity as retaining several instructions and making a workable plan from them. A teaching task should examine the information the learner retained, including such relations as *before*, *after*, *only*, and *optional*.

This emphasis accords with Levis [5], who places intelligibility and oral communication at the center of pronunciation teaching. A listener's reason to examine vowel quality, prominence, connected speech, or word boundaries is that the detail matters to understanding. The classroom need not prescribe the elimination of accent as the condition for communication. The teacher can identify a specific mishearing and choose a form of assistance suited to that mishearing.

The same distinction matters in testing. Harding [6] considers whether a shared first language can influence performance on accented listening assessment, and Ockey and French [7] examine listening-test consequences when several accents replace one. Their work discourages the assumption that an unfamiliar voice is an automatically fairer or more demanding test item. Prior exposure, task requirements, message content, and the voice itself can all matter. Developmental exercises can employ unfamiliar speech with support; a consequential listening test requires separate justification and preparation.

2.2. SPEAKER RECURRENCE HAS VALUE, BUT TRANSFER CANNOT BE ASSUMED

Several findings from speech-perception research support the careful organization of multiple voices rather than undifferentiated exposure. Baese-Berk et al. [8] demonstrated accent-independent adaptation after exposure to several non-native English speakers under laboratory conditions involving first-language English listeners. That result does

not establish the educational effect of the same exposure arrangement for EFL students who are simultaneously developing vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and inferencing skills.

The limits of this assumption appear more clearly in the study by Bieber and Gordon-Salant [9]. In research with younger and older adults listening to non-native-accented English, increasing the number of talkers did not improve the rate or amount of adaptation. It strengthened generalization to a new speaker with a familiar accent but not to a speaker with an unfamiliar accent. These results make the number of recorded accents a poor stand-alone indicator of instructional quality. Improvement with a continuing contributor does not demonstrate that a learner can understand any speaker assigned the same broad accent label.

A change in speaker identity can itself require additional attention, adaptation, and processing effort. Luthra [10] discusses how talker variability may interrupt auditory attention or call for adjustments to individual speech patterns. Using pupillometry, McLaughlin et al. [11] found additional cognitive demands around speaker changes, including some switches across accents. Such studies investigate perception; they do not prescribe exactly how often a classroom should change recordings. A practical implication is to avoid combining a new voice, difficult terminology, an unfamiliar topic, an unstable audio signal, and a complex written answer in the same moment. Continuing speakers provide one way to reduce unnecessary demands while preserving variety across the course.

For these reasons, the exhibition unit uses three individual contributors, each heard twice in a role that carries new and consequential information. The first message establishes a role; the second adds information the first did not contain. Learners are expected to listen for the new content, not to assume that a previously heard voice has become uniformly easy. Other units should introduce additional people and less scripted speech. The six messages here are a starting set for instruction, not evidence of generalization.

2.3. COMPREHENSION IMPROVES THROUGH PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES, NOT ANSWER CHECKING ALONE

Vandergrift and Goh [12] emphasize the importance of planning, monitoring, and evaluating understanding as part of second-language listening development. Graham [13] discusses how strategy research can be translated into classroom practices. Such instruction becomes useful when a learner has a definite question to investigate. Replaying a recording to decide whether a case must be collected *before ten* differs from repeated listening without a purpose. A teacher should first establish the meaning at issue, then decide whether replay, a short transcript, an explanation, or a comparison of phrases is helpful.

The speech signal itself also deserves explicit instructional attention when a misunderstanding can be traced to word recognition, segmentation, or connected speech. Siegel and Siegel [14] report favorable evidence from bottom-up listening activities in Japanese university education. Their finding supports explicit work on word recognition and connected-speech processing alongside broader strategies; it does not mean that every learner needs the same phonetic exercise. Kissling [15], investigating pronunciation instruction with 116 novice learners of Spanish, likewise provides evidence that selected pronunciation-related practice can influence listening-oriented abilities. The language, population, and intervention differ from the English exhibition unit, so its implications are restricted to the potential usefulness of focused perceptual instruction.

An exclusive focus on short troublesome segments would also be inadequate because successful listening depends on maintaining and integrating meaning across longer stretches of discourse. Chang and Millett [16] found benefits from sustained extensive listening arrangements. Listening for stories, interest, and the development of continuous understanding should remain part of the course even when a brief classroom passage receives detailed analysis. For that reason the present unit ends by inviting learners to attend to the subject of an exhibition story without completing another pronunciation worksheet.

Communicative tasks provide a further source of guidance because they connect listening to a consequential purpose rather than to answer checking alone. Qiu and Xu [17] followed sixty university EFL learners in China during a semester-long comparison of task-supported listening and post-task self-reflection. Task-supported instruction was beneficial for listening development; adding self-reflection did not yield the anticipated further proficiency advantage. The finding is particularly relevant to a lesson design that might otherwise demand a reflection entry after every recording. In the exhibition unit, learners inspect a particular interpretation only when it matters to a decision. A corrected deadline, a more accurate distinction between originals and copies, or a clear answer to a visitor's question is more informative than an unconnected declaration that a speaker was interesting or difficult.

2.4. CAREFUL LISTENING ALSO REQUIRES CAREFUL SOCIAL JUDGMENT

Social attitudes form part of the classroom encounter, but they cannot be inferred simply from the presence of a preferred accent or from one report of listening difficulty. Sung [18] describes mixed responses among Hong Kong university students exposed to different English accents: learners recognized advantages yet also expressed concerns about learning priorities and practical difficulty. An examination requirement or future workplace can make one variety especially salient. Teachers should discuss these reasons instead of interpreting every preference as hostility toward other speakers.

Unexamined judgments can nevertheless influence who is treated as credible, competent, or worthy of accommodation. Lippi-Green [19] documents relationships between accent and discrimination, while Flores and Rosa [20] examine racialized judgments about which language forms are considered appropriate in education. The practical distinction is between a defensible claim about one listening event—for example, that the word *copies* was mistaken for *cases*—and a sweeping judgment about a language group. Subtirelu and Lindemann [21] further argue for preparing first-language speakers to communicate across linguistic differences, emphasizing that accommodation is not the sole responsibility of those with less institutional authority.

Galloway and Rose [22] studied 108 listening journals containing 1,092 reflections. Although the journals supported awareness of Global Englishes, the authors also identified stereotyping and a tendency to evaluate varieties instead of examining how communication succeeded. Their later classroom account by Galloway and Rose [23] and Sifakis's [24] account of ELF awareness both give reasons to attend to local histories, social expectations, and speaker roles. More recent reviews by Rose et al. [25] point to limitations in longitudinal and directly observed learning evidence in this area. A task that demands accurate use of a contributor's information can address listening performance without treating respectful wording as proof of language development.

These educational decisions are also shaped by teachers' working conditions, available materials, curriculum requirements, and institutional expectations. Galloway and Numajiri [26] examine how teachers encounter opportunities and constraints while introducing Global Englishes content. The exhibition unit accordingly uses ordinary playback, short texts, and one compact answer guide rather than requiring expensive software or a total change to the course. Its materials assign meaningful expertise to contributors without asking any of them to act as a representative of an entire national variety.

3. THE COMMUNITY-EXHIBITION BRIEFING

3.1. AN INFORMATION TASK WITH THREE CONTINUING CONTRIBUTORS

The fictional community exhibition includes photographs, letters, recorded personal accounts, a children's workshop, and a reception area, thereby providing several distinct information sources that must be coordinated through listening. The learners' assignment is to brief a volunteer who has not heard the event organizers' messages. The briefing must answer four practical questions: when staff and visitors may enter; what must be ready before opening; how people can reach the exhibition activities and recorded stories; and what must happen before the building is left ready for the evening. A correct response can take the form of a short talk, an annotated plan, or a sequence of actions. The goal is accuracy of meaning, not imitation of any contributor's pronunciation.

Three contributors provide six different messages, and each message supplies information that changes or completes the volunteer briefing. The *coordinator* controls access and visitor organization (C1 and C2); the *collection volunteer* explains object handling and end-of-day checks (V1 and V2); and the *access volunteer* explains how visitors can use the stories in audio or print (A1 and A2). Their second messages do not repeat the first scripts. Learners must return to a familiar individual to obtain instructions that were not previously available. The actual wording for all six messages is given in Appendix A. It is written as teaching material and is not a transcript of recorded participants.

Table 1 contains the information on which the briefing depends. The times and spaces are facts *within the authored exhibition task*, not observations about an existing site. The teacher can adapt the fictional setting, but changing a deadline or location in a recording also requires changing the answer guide. Recording speech in a contributor's natural style is permitted, provided that the consequential task facts remain accurate.

The distinctions are deliberately consequential so that comprehension can be evaluated through the accuracy of a practical decision rather than through accent identification. Confusing 09:00 and 11:00 would give the new volunteer the wrong public-opening time. Overlooking the word *before* could delay collection of the protective cases. Failing to distinguish original letters from display copies would direct sensitive objects toward the sunny window. Treating

the two demonstration times as continuous staff assistance would misinform visitors. Moving display tables before protecting original letters would reverse an explicit safety sequence. By contrast, no instruction requires a learner to assign the speakers a nationality.

TABLE 1. CONTRIBUTOR MESSAGES AND THE CONDITIONS AN ACCEPTABLE VOLUNTEER BRIEFING MUST PRESERVE.

Message	Contributor's responsibility	Required information
C1	Hall coordinator: access and circulation	Volunteers may enter at 09:00; visitors enter at 11:00; the entrance and central corridor remain unobstructed; end-of-day packing must be complete by 16:30.
V1	Collection volunteer: objects and layout	Protective cases must be collected before 10:00; handwritten original letters stay out of direct sunlight; copies may be displayed beside the sunny window; a separate table remains available for the children's workshop.
A1	Access volunteer: story materials and assistance	Headphones and written story versions are in the side room; staff demonstrations of the audio equipment take place at 11:30 and 14:00; recorded and written stories are distinct access choices.
C2	Hall coordinator: visiting group	Coats belong in the entrance alcove rather than the corridor; taking part in the children's workshop or listening to a story is voluntary.
A2	Access volunteer: visitor choice	Written stories may be chosen by any visitor, without giving a reason; volunteers offer an alternative when headphones are unsuitable or unwanted.
V2	Collection volunteer: safe closing	Put handwritten original letters into their cases before shifting display tables; check the photographs at 16:15; complete final packing by 16:30.

3.2. A SCHEMATIC HALL AND APPROPRIATELY LIMITED VISUAL SUPPORT

Figure 1 deliberately presents only the physical information learners are permitted to see before listening, thereby preserving the informational role of the spoken messages. The diagram identifies the entrance, a central corridor, a side room, a sunny window, and an entrance alcove. It does not reveal the case deadline, location of exhibits, story-access choices, or order of closing actions. Those details must come from the messages. The workshop region is not fixed on the plan; learners decide where to reserve an appropriate table outside the corridor.

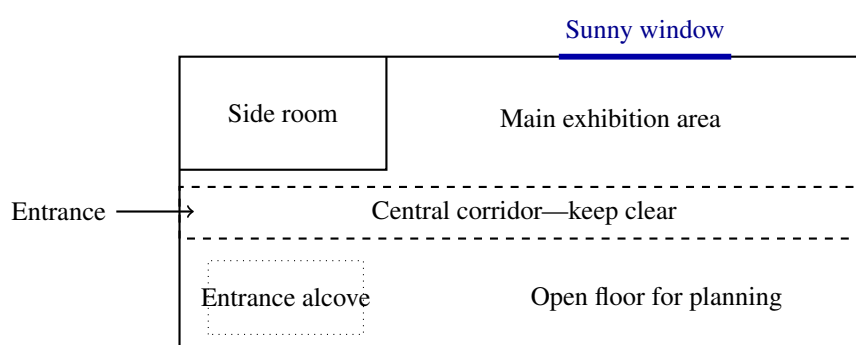


FIGURE 1. ROOM RELATIONSHIPS FOR THE LISTENING TASK. POSITIONS AND SIZES ARE NOT MEASURED, AND THE DRAWING CANNOT ESTABLISH BUILDING ACCESSIBILITY OR SAFETY COMPLIANCE.

The lesson uses two versions of each learner's plan: an initial interpretation recorded before discussion and a completed briefing produced after the relevant evidence has been checked. This separation prevents later group agreement from hiding an earlier misunderstanding. It also lets the teacher distinguish the ability to work collaboratively with written support from the ability to recognize and understand an unheard spoken message independently.

3.3. RECORDING THE SCRIPTS WITHOUT MANUFACTURING ACCENT DIFFERENCES

A local implementation requires three willing contributors to record C1/C2, V1/V2, and A1/A2, respectively, with each contributor retaining an ordinary speaking style rather than performing a stereotyped variety. Each person should use an ordinary speaking style. Contributors may adjust phrasing that feels unnatural, but the teacher must compare the resulting recording against Table 1 and the answer guide. A changed place, time, negation, or distinction between originals and copies is a content change, not a harmless pronunciation variation. Recordings should be checked for understandable volume, clipping, misleading edits, and unwanted background interference before classroom use.

Contributor selection should not be based on a quota of country labels or on the assumption that one individual can represent a national or linguistic group. Across a course, teachers can seek participants with varied speech experience and communicative roles, record what each person has permitted to be shared, and ask learners about relevant prior familiarity. Within this small unit, substantive responsibilities are distributed evenly: the coordinator controls access, the collection volunteer controls object care, and the access volunteer controls visitor information. None is introduced as the spokesperson for a linguistic population. The contributor-check procedure in Appendix C covers consent, file handling, biography preferences, and transcript checking.

4. THREE FIFTY-MINUTE LISTENING LESSONS

Table 2 presents an executable teaching schedule in which individual listening, selective support, group integration, and final checking remain visibly distinct stages. The allocations total fifty minutes in each lesson. They are intended lesson times, not observed teaching durations. Teachers may increase time for hearing or access needs while preserving individual responses before group correction.

TABLE 2. LESSON SEQUENCE, INCLUDING INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES AND SELECTIVE LISTENING SUPPORT.

Lesson	Time allocation	Action and record
1	5 min	Introduce the exhibition purpose and the unfilled hall plan; clarify essential object vocabulary without supplying answers.
	15 min	Play C1 twice, with an individual interpretation between hearings; record staff access, public opening, passage clearance, and final deadline.
	15 min	Play V1; learners establish object-handling and table conditions, then add their first layout and preparation order.
	10 min	Compare one or two disputed passages, using targeted replay and a short transcript when useful; return to the complete messages.
	5 min	Individually name one deadline, one display restriction, and the speaker who supplied each.
2	5 min	Retrieve the plan and identify what is still unknown about visitor participation.
	15 min	Play A1; learners prepare an individual response to a visitor seeking recorded or written stories.
	10 min	Play C2; learners add coat storage and the optional nature of activities.
	15 min	Check disputed interpretations against selected passages; examine any time or choice that changed the visitor response.
	5 min	Record one evidence-specific correction or a remaining unresolved question.
3	5 min	Recap the four briefing topics and reserve space for the final instructions.
	10 min	Play A2 and V2; learners add visitor choice and closing duties without seeing the transcripts first.
	15 min	Small groups create an annotated hall plan and a brief spoken account for the new volunteer.
	15 min	Groups present and answer content questions; note replay or transcript assistance that was used.
	5 min	Each learner answers a separate question from each contributor and identifies one item still uncertain.

4.1. LESSON ONE: RECONSTRUCT ACCESS, PREPARATION, AND OBJECT CARE

The opening instruction is intentionally direct and establishes the communicative purpose before the first recording: *You are advising a volunteer who will work at tomorrow's exhibition. Listen for details that change what the volunteer must do; do not guess a speaker's origin.* Learners receive the schematic hall but no written event timetable. Following the first hearing of C1, each writes a brief account of who may enter and what must be kept clear. Following the second hearing, each marks 09:00, 11:00, and 16:30 and explains the difference between these times. Pair comparison comes only after the individual note has been retained.

V1 then provides the object-protection and table-allocation rules that must be integrated with the coordinator's earlier constraints. Learners arrange three actions in a defensible preparation order: collect cases before ten; position originals away from direct sunlight while allowing copies beside the window; and reserve one table for the children's workshop. They should explain the difference between *original handwritten letters* and *copies of letters*, because confusing these objects produces different physical placements. The teacher asks groups to sketch a possible arrangement on the hall plan without blocking the corridor. There is more than one acceptable placement. The evidence for correctness is the set of constraints, not the resemblance of a diagram to the teacher's drawing.

The instructor then investigates one actual point of uncertainty that has emerged in the class rather than selecting a predetermined pronunciation feature. If notes conflict about the word *before*, learners replay only the relevant sentence and check what event the restriction applies to. If the disagreement concerns originals versus copies, the two clauses are read together rather than taught as unrelated vocabulary items. If a learner did not know the word *case*, the teacher can show a covered display or protective container before returning to the full message. The teacher does not infer that any difficulty was caused by an accent without examining the recorded passage and the learner's interpretation.

At the end of the lesson, learners identify the earliest deadline, explain the light-related restriction, and identify the contributor who supplied each piece of information. These individual responses make it possible to notice when a group plan is correct but a member cannot yet explain a key instruction. The responses are classroom work, not findings from a conducted intervention.

4.2. LESSON TWO: ANSWER VISITORS WITHOUT ADDING FALSE REQUIREMENTS

A1 provides the information required for a visitor who asks, *Where can I hear the stories, and when can someone show me the equipment?*, creating a task in which location and time must be kept distinct. The response must distinguish location from assistance: headphones and printed story versions are available in the side room, while demonstrations occur at 11:30 and 14:00. A note saying merely that staff are available in the afternoon is incomplete and may be misleading. Learners individually construct a two-sentence visitor answer before hearing classmates' versions.

C2 introduces another message from the coordinator and adds constraints on visitor movement and voluntary participation. A visiting group should leave coats in the entrance alcove rather than in the central corridor. Its members may choose a children's activity, a story, or neither. A correct briefing must not turn invitations into obligations. In a pair check, learners underline wording in their own visitor response that conveys permission or choice. They then explain whether any of their language incorrectly implies *everyone must participate* or *everyone must use the audio equipment*.

A short listening investigation can use A1's two demonstration times to examine precisely what information was missed and what form of support resolves the problem. The teacher asks each learner to note the two times separately, then replays the relevant passage. If a written transcript is used, learners identify exactly what it confirmed and whether their first version was accurate. The aim is not to reward a ritual statement that reflection helped. It is to establish whether the learner can now give the visitor correct information and identify the evidence behind it.

The closing note has three explicit elements: the first interpretation, the phrase or relationship checked, and the decision now taken. An academically and socially defensible response would be, *I first thought help was available continuously; the speaker named two demonstration times; I will now give the visitor those times.* This sentence is an example of the desired explanation, not a quotation from a participant. An unresolved item may be recorded instead of being covered by a claim of improvement.

4.3. LESSON THREE: INTEGRATE CHOICES AND PROTECT THE CLOSING SEQUENCE

A2 returns with a point that may be overlooked by listeners who are concentrating primarily on efficient visitor organization: anyone can choose a written story, and no explanation of that choice is required. The class adds this condition to its visitor instructions. The lesson does not treat the fictional exhibition as a full account of disability

access; a real venue would need to meet its applicable legal and practical requirements independently of this diagram.

V2 introduces the closing order and makes sequencing itself part of the listening target. Learners must first protect handwritten originals in their cases and only then move tables. Photographs are checked at 16:15; final packing is complete at 16:30. The difference between *check the photographs at 16:15* and *start packing at 16:15* is consequential. So is the relationship between packing original letters and moving furniture. The teacher should not correct these by displaying all answers before the first independent response has been recorded.

Groups now assemble the complete briefing by integrating information from all six messages rather than relying on one contributor at a time. Each team must explain staff access, public access, preparation, object placement, the story options, voluntary activities, coat storage, and the final order of closing. One member can point to the plan while another describes the timeline; there is no requirement for identical speaking time or memorized wording. After presenting, the group answers a visitor question and a closing-duty question. A learner who asks to replay a segment is allowed to do so in practice, and the support is recorded as part of the response history.

The teacher then gives a separate three-question exit check, with one question associated with each contributor, so that a successful group briefing does not conceal individual misunderstanding. This does not substitute for a test with unfamiliar recordings, but it helps prevent a polished group presentation from hiding an individual's misunderstanding. The final five minutes also accommodate a brief uninterrupted story excerpt for enjoyment when a suitable rights-cleared recording is available; listening for information need not always end in detailed error inspection.

5. UNDERSTANDING ERRORS WITHOUT ASSIGNING FAULT TO AN ACCENT

In a listening lesson, the immediate teaching problem is often narrower and more useful than the question *Was this speaker easy to understand?* The teacher needs to know what information the learner did not recover, what evidence would settle it, and which form of support is appropriate. Four recurring difficulties are especially relevant to the exhibition: a missed time, a reversed order, a contrast between two kinds of objects, and an optional activity described as compulsory. Each can be addressed through the actual language of a contributor rather than through a nationality-based explanation.

Table 3 connects a plausible incorrect reading to the pertinent scripted instruction. These are teacher-authored examples of possible misunderstandings. No classroom participant has produced these answers. The table intentionally avoids specifying phonetic causes before recordings exist. A missed instruction can arise from unfamiliar vocabulary, a boundary in continuous speech, misunderstanding of grammar, diverted attention, or interference in the audio. Several of these may be present simultaneously.

TABLE 3. CONTENT-SPECIFIC CHECKS AND FEEDBACK USING THE EXHIBITION MESSAGES.

Learner's possible interpretation	Information to examine	Teacher response
"Visitors may enter at nine."	C1 separates volunteer access at 09:00 from public opening at 11:00.	Replay both sentences, map each time to its actor, and ask the learner to explain the distinction.
"All the letters can go next to the window."	V1 contrasts originals that must avoid direct sunlight with copies that may be displayed there.	Present both clauses together; have the learner move two different object cards on the plan.
"Equipment help is available all afternoon."	A1 gives the specific times 11:30 and 14:00.	Confirm both clock times, then ask for a visitor-facing answer that does not promise continuous help.
"Everyone must join the workshop."	C2 presents participation in activities as optional.	Compare <i>may choose</i> with <i>must</i> ; ask the learner to express the same invitation without imposing participation.
"Move the tables and then pack the letters."	V2 requires originals to be placed in protective cases before tables are moved.	Arrange action cards, replay the ordering expression, and return to the complete closing instruction.
"The photograph check is the final deadline."	V2 states a 16:15 check and a 16:30 packing deadline.	Put both events on the timeline and ask which action happens at each time.

The teacher should begin by asking learners what they believed the speaker meant, because the interpretation itself determines which evidence should be revisited. Only then is it possible to identify the best segment to replay.

Displaying the correct transcript immediately may produce a corrected answer without identifying why the earlier interpretation differed. Conversely, asking for repeated unaided listening when the recording is distorted or the word is genuinely unknown can waste time and create avoidable frustration. A short definition, a transcript excerpt, or a clean recording may be more suitable, depending on the problem.

After investigating the segment, learners return to the whole message so that a corrected local detail is reintegrated into the contributor's complete instruction. This step matters: the object of instruction is a usable explanation, not the ability to imitate an isolated syllable. Learners might accurately identify the word *before* after a second hearing yet continue to place the photographs and packing deadline in the wrong relationship. The teacher therefore asks for a complete instruction that preserves both content and order.

The same evidential care is required when learners discuss the speakers themselves. A statement such as *I could not identify the two demonstration times* is open to investigation. A statement that all people from a presumed country are difficult to understand is not warranted by that one encounter. The teacher can acknowledge real listening effort while asking which words, relationships, or recording conditions created difficulty. This distinction is compatible with broader classroom conversations about standard-language expectations and the distribution of authority among speakers [19, 20].

6. ASSESSMENT: WHAT COUNTS AS A CORRECT BRIEFING?

6.1. FOURTEEN CHECKABLE MEANING UNITS

The learner's final account must preserve the important instructions even when those instructions are expressed in different words or reorganized for the volunteer briefing. Appendix C gives fourteen checkable meaning units, each connected to one of the six scripts. For teacher feedback, each unit receives 0, 1, or 2 points: **0** when absent or contradicted; **1** when part of the meaning is present but a condition, actor, or relation is unclear; and **2** when the essential information is accurate. The arithmetic total is at most 28 points. This total is a transparent way to report completeness of the authored exhibition task; it is not a standardized score or an empirically validated proficiency measure.

For example, if the prompt concerns the opening schedule, *the building opens at nine* earns no credit for distinguishing staff from visitors. *Volunteers can enter early and visitors come later* partly preserves the relation but omits the stipulated times. *Volunteers enter at 09:00, while the public may enter at 11:00* preserves both distinctions. The same principle applies to meaning units about object handling and visitor choice. A fluent or lengthy paragraph cannot compensate for a reversed order, and a hesitant but accurate list should not be penalized merely for lacking polished prose.

An individual briefing score and a group briefing score answer different questions and should therefore remain separate in both classroom interpretation and any later research use. The group account shows whether the team can produce a practical plan with discussion, replay, and other resources. The individual notes show which information each learner could recover independently at a particular point in the lesson. Reporting a group score as an individual's listening attainment would blur that distinction. Teachers can therefore keep the initial note, the supported group product, and the individual exit answers as separate records.

The fourteen-item guide is best used initially to inspect coverage, provide corrective feedback, and identify questions whose wording may be ambiguous or overly dependent on vocabulary. It should not be treated as a calibrated test. An item might be difficult because of unfamiliar vocabulary rather than voice variability, and some instructions contain more information than others. Before using any item for formal assessment, teachers should check the quality of the recorded message, whether the task asks an unambiguous question, and whether paraphrases are credited consistently. If two raters score learner answers, disagreements can be examined against the audio and answer guide rather than resolved by unexpressed expectations.

6.2. PERCEIVED EFFORT AND THE CONDITIONS OF UNDERSTANDING

After completing an individual answer, learners may separately indicate whether understanding required little, moderate, or considerable effort, keeping perceived effort distinct from demonstrated comprehension. Such a rating can be discussed alongside accuracy, but it must never be substituted for it. The distinction matters particularly when a contribution contains a missed restriction: a learner can feel confident yet tell volunteers to move the tables before protecting the letters. Another learner may expend substantial effort and still give a completely accurate timetable.

The work of [3] and [4] supports keeping those observations separate.

Teachers should also record whether an answer preceded partner discussion, whether a passage was replayed, and whether a transcript, vocabulary explanation, or other support was consulted. A transcript-supported response may be excellent educational work, but it is not evidence of comprehension based only on unaided listening. Learners who require captions or written alternatives should receive them as access provisions; the teacher can describe the modality rather than withholding necessary access to create a misleading uniform test condition.

6.3. WHAT A CLAIM OF BROADER LEARNING WOULD REQUIRE

The exhibition scripts are practiced lesson content and therefore cannot, by themselves, demonstrate transfer to previously unheard speakers or messages. A learner who ultimately produces a correct briefing has shown an ability to complete this particular activity with the support recorded by the teacher. Independent listening progress would require previously unheard messages. Messages from the three continuing speakers could reveal learning about familiar individuals; messages from additional speakers would address a different question. Evidence of one does not establish the other, as the talker-variability findings of [9] make clear.

Any later empirical study would require actual recordings, piloted questions, learner recruitment and permissions, and a clearly specified comparison of instructional and assessment conditions. Different versions should be checked for vocabulary, syntax, duration, background knowledge, speaking rate, acoustic quality, and the number of relations listeners must retain. The comparison of classrooms should consider initial proficiency, teacher effects, differences between classes, prior familiarity with speakers, and missing observations. Scores would need to be presented with uncertainty rather than interpreted solely from the most favorable means. Nothing in the present six scripts supplies a sample size, a treatment effect, or an appropriate statistical model for such a study.

Equally important, a future investigation should not use favorable statements about accent diversity as a substitute for direct evidence of listening performance. A learner may become more cautious in describing a speaker while still misunderstanding the message. Conversely, a learner can accurately understand a difficult recording while expressing frustration. A defensible evaluation considers message accuracy, perceived effort, listening decisions, and social judgments separately. The present article supplies a practical teaching activity and a transparent answer guide, not a claim that changes in any of these have been measured.

7. CONDITIONS FOR RESPONSIBLE CLASSROOM USE

7.1. CONTRIBUTORS AND THEIR RECORDINGS

Before anyone supplies speech for classroom use, the teacher should obtain clear and specific permission for the intended recording, classroom playback, editing, storage, and any sharing beyond the class. A contributor may decline to have a name, accent background, or biography disclosed. The opportunity to hear and approve the final file is especially important when editing could alter a contributor's message. Approval for classroom teaching does not automatically authorize distribution on a public website or the research use of recordings.

An ordinary recording device and straightforward playback controls are sufficient for this short unit, provided that the resulting files are intelligible and technically consistent. The teacher should prevent clipping, check loudness, and remove avoidable interference without altering the message. Artificially exaggerating a speaker's accent or asking for an exaggerated national variety would compromise the educational premise. So would contrasting a distorted recording with a studio-quality one and attributing the difference in comprehension to a group identity. If a recording cannot be understood because of technical damage, the correct response is to repair or replace it rather than use it as a test of perseverance.

7.2. ACCESSIBILITY AND LEARNER AGENCY

A listening curriculum must not assume that all learners hear, process, or respond to spoken information in the same way. Transcripts, captions, replay, suitable amplification, and alternative response formats may be necessary. Teachers should distinguish access needs from instructional difficulty and document when written information was supplied. An accessible group task is not invalidated because its evidence differs from an unaided auditory test; those two activities simply support different conclusions.

No learner should be required to reveal a listening difficulty publicly or represent a linguistic group. Private first notes allow uncertainty to be recorded without embarrassment. A classroom can discuss how institutions value

different speakers without ranking classmates' pronunciation. Likewise, a learner's wish to practice a particular pronunciation for professional or examination purposes need not conflict with the broader ability to understand other English users. Receptive competence and an individual's preferred speaking style are different educational goals.

7.3. THE LIMITS OF SCRIPTED MESSAGES

Scripts make the six instructions sufficiently stable to support concrete questions and reproducible classroom preparation. They do not simulate simultaneous talk, interruptions, negotiation, or the unpredictable adjustments of spontaneous conversation. A continuing speaker may become familiar because the same voice appears twice, yet the lesson does not establish whether that familiarity improves understanding of a new topic or another person's speech. Subsequent teaching should include longer explanations, unprepared turns where appropriate, the opportunity to request clarification, and new speakers occupying substantive roles.

The fixed exhibition timetable also requires care in real settings. Figure 1 is only a teaching diagram. It contains neither usable dimensions nor an evaluation of fire routes, wheelchair access, hearing access, or safe object handling. Its fictional arrangements cannot replace professional safety and access decisions at an actual public event. What transfers from the lesson is the instructional demand to listen accurately to different people, not a certified exhibition plan.

8. CONCLUSION

A listening lesson changes fundamentally when a person is heard because that person has information the learner needs, rather than because the person has been selected to exemplify an accent category. The exhibition task makes this distinction observable. The coordinator establishes access and visitor instructions; the collection volunteer controls object care and closing; and the access volunteer makes recorded and written stories usable for visitors. Six contributions, three returning speakers, fixed task facts, and an answer guide make it possible to trace the connection between hearing a message and taking a correct action.

Focused listening support is appropriate when a particular word, contrast, time, or sequence is uncertain, but the support should remain subordinate to recovery of the complete message. It should be followed by renewed attention to the complete message. The teacher should not infer a speaker's deficiency from an initial misunderstanding, nor infer general listening competence from an accurate group plan. Published research provides reasons to distinguish effort from accuracy, to balance familiarity with additional voices, and to connect reflective work with communicative tasks. The scripts and teaching procedures below make those distinctions practicable. Whether learners carry them into new encounters is a question for observation with speech they have not practiced.

Study Materials and Ethical Considerations. This article presents literature-based analysis and author-written instructional materials. No new human participants were recruited and no participant data were collected for the present article; therefore, no new participant consent or institutional ethical approval was required.

Data Availability. No new empirical dataset was generated for this article. The complete instructional scripts, learner tasks, answer guide, and classroom procedures are reproduced within the manuscript and appendices.

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A. SIX SPEAKER SCRIPTS FOR THE EXHIBITION UNIT

The following messages are fictional teaching texts. Each pair is assigned to the same contributor so that learners hear a continuing individual with new information. The scripts define the task facts in Table 1. The suggested identifiers C1, V1, A1, C2, A2, and V2 are file labels, not speaker nationality or accent classifications. A contributor may make minor wording adjustments in ordinary speech; the recording must retain the listed restrictions, locations, responsibilities, and times. No acoustic performance is represented by the written page.

C1—HALL COORDINATOR: OPENING AND CIRCULATION (LESSON 1)

Hello, I’m coordinating the exhibition on opening day. Volunteers can come into the hall at nine o’clock to prepare everything, but visitors won’t be admitted until eleven. Please keep the main entrance and the

central corridor clear while tables and cases are being brought in. The corridor is the route through the hall and toward the side room, so don't leave boxes or furniture there, even for a short time. We also have a firm deadline at the end of the day: the team must finish packing by half past four in the afternoon. If you are helping a new volunteer, make sure the person knows which opening time belongs to the staff and which belongs to visitors, and remind them that the entrance and corridor cannot be used for storage.

Listening target: Distinguish volunteer access at 09:00 from public opening at 11:00; maintain unobstructed circulation; recognize 16:30 as the end-of-day packing deadline.

V1—COLLECTION VOLUNTEER: EXHIBITS AND PREPARATION (LESSON 1)

I'm looking after the photographs and letters. Before ten o'clock, someone needs to collect the protective cases so that they are here when we arrange the displays. There are two kinds of letter materials, and they must not be treated in the same way. The handwritten originals need to stay out of direct sunlight. We can put copies beside the sunny window, because those are the versions made for public display. Please don't put the originals there. We also need to keep one table available for the children's workshop. It shouldn't disappear under photographs or boxes simply because we have a lot to display. You can choose the exact position of the other tables, as long as the central corridor stays clear and the originals are protected.

Listening target: Retrieve the before-10:00 case requirement; distinguish handwritten originals from copies in relation to sunlight; reserve a workshop table.

A1—ACCESS VOLUNTEER: AUDIO AND WRITTEN STORIES (LESSON 2)

If a visitor asks about the recorded stories, please direct them to the side room. The headphones are kept there, and the written versions of the stories are there as well. People can read a story or listen to its recording. We have arranged two short demonstrations for anyone who wants to see how the listening equipment works. The first demonstration is at eleven thirty in the morning, and the second is at two in the afternoon. Those are demonstration times, not a promise that a member of staff will be beside the headphones throughout the day. When you explain the arrangements, mention both the room and the two times. Please don't describe the written stories as though they are hidden or available only when the audio has failed.

Listening target: Identify the side room and both access routes; differentiate 11:30 and 14:00 equipment demonstrations from continuous staff assistance.

C2—HALL COORDINATOR: A VISITING GROUP (LESSON 2)

We've been told that a group will visit shortly after the public opening. I want the first few minutes to feel welcoming rather than crowded. If members of the group arrive with coats, point them toward the coat alcove near the entrance; the coats must not be left in the central corridor. Once the group is inside, people are free to look at the exhibits in their own order. Some visitors may want to hear a recorded story, and some may join the children's workshop with a child. Those activities are invitations, not requirements for everybody. When you brief the volunteers, ask them to explain the choices clearly. They can help people find the side room or the workshop, but should not insist that every person takes part.

Listening target: Place coats in the entrance alcove and preserve the optional character of activities.

A2—ACCESS VOLUNTEER: THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE AN ACCESS ROUTE (LESSON 3)

I want to add one point about the stories, because it affects how we welcome visitors. The written versions are for anyone who wants them. A visitor does not have to say why they prefer reading, and a volunteer should not ask for a personal explanation. Some people may prefer headphones, some may prefer the printed story, and others may decide not to use either. Please present the audio and the written material as equally acceptable choices. If somebody does not want the headphones, show them where the written stories are kept in the side room. The purpose is to let people follow an account in a way that works for them, without making an individual defend a preference.

Listening target: Explain the availability of written stories to everyone, the absence of a justification requirement, and the voluntary nature of audio access.

V2—COLLECTION VOLUNTEER: CLOSING THE EXHIBITION (LESSON 3)

Before we start moving the display tables at the end of the exhibition, please put the original handwritten letters safely back into their protective cases. Moving the tables while those originals are still lying on them would put the collection at risk. The copies can be gathered separately. At four fifteen, we need to check the photographs against the list so that none has been missed. That check is not our final deadline: all the packing must be finished by half past four, as the coordinator explained earlier. Please keep the order clear when you speak to the next volunteer: protect the original letters, then move the tables; check the photographs at four fifteen; and finish packing at four thirty.

Listening target: Retain the before-moving-tables restriction, the photograph check at 16:15, and the separate packing deadline at 16:30.

B. LEARNER TASKS AND BRIEFING QUESTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS TO LEARNERS

You are preparing an opening-day briefing for a volunteer who has not heard the exhibition team. The diagram in Figure 1 shows the hall's main areas but does not tell you where to put the tables or when to carry out duties. After the first hearing of each message, record the speaker's main instruction in your own words. On the next hearing, check the facts that affect the plan. Keep your initial notes, even when you later change an answer. Use the questions below to identify the information you need. Do not guess the speaker's home country or grade the speaker's accent.

LESSON 1: C1 AND V1

1. Explain the different purposes of 09:00, 11:00, and 16:30 in C1. Which of these is the visitor-opening time?
2. Name the two hall spaces that must remain free of boxes and furniture. Why does the coordinator insist on that restriction?
3. Identify what must be collected before 10:00 and which contributor is responsible for explaining it.
4. Show on the plan one acceptable place for original handwritten letters and one acceptable place for copies. Explain the relevant difference between the two objects.
5. Reserve an appropriate place for the children's workshop table. Identify one placement that would conflict with a spoken instruction.
6. Write a short preparation sequence that includes the deadline, object protection, and the table reservation without treating any of them as optional.

LESSON 2: A1 AND C2

1. A visitor asks where the audio stories and their written versions can be found. Give an answer that identifies the correct room and both choices.
2. A visitor asks when someone will demonstrate the audio equipment. Give both exact times, avoiding any promise of continuous assistance.
3. A visiting group arrives with coats. Where should the group be directed, and which place should not be used for coat storage?
4. Would it be accurate to tell every member of the group that the workshop is compulsory? Explain the wording in C2 that settles your answer.
5. Compare your first answer with the passage you replayed or read. Identify which fact or relationship you confirmed and whether the answer changed.

LESSON 3: A2 AND V2

1. Explain who may choose a written story and whether the visitor must explain that choice to a volunteer.
2. Put these actions into an order that respects V2: move the display tables; protect the original handwritten letters; check the photographs; complete packing. Add the two specified clock times.
3. Produce a two- to three-minute spoken briefing or a comparably detailed annotated plan for the new volunteer. Cover arrival, preparation, exhibit care, visitor movement, stories, activities, and closing.
4. After group discussion, answer the following questions *individually*: (a) Which people enter at 09:00 and which at 11:00? (b) What is different about original letters and display copies? (c) May a visitor choose a written story without giving a reason?
5. Record which assistance you used: replay of a recording, a transcript, vocabulary explanation, or a peer question. Your answer remains useful when support was necessary; the record simply distinguishes different conditions of listening.

C. TEACHER ANSWER GUIDE AND RECORDING CHECKS

FOURTEEN-ITEM MEANING GUIDE

Table 4 presents the following fourteen items that define the contents of the exhibition briefing. Award 2 points if the essential information is intact, 1 if partly intact, and 0 if missing or contradicted. The examples in the third column are correct formulations, not language that learners must reproduce verbatim. The unit's classroom completeness score is the sum of the fourteen item scores, with a possible range of 0–28. It is not an established scale of listening proficiency.

TABLE 4. TASK ANSWER GUIDE: FOURTEEN INDEPENDENTLY CHECKABLE MEANING UNITS.

No.	Message	Essential meaning that merits full credit
1	C1	Volunteers are allowed in at 09:00 to prepare; 09:00 is not public opening.
2	C1	Visitors may enter at 11:00.
3	C1	The main entrance and central corridor must remain free of stored objects or furniture.
4	V1	Protective cases must be collected before 10:00.
5	V1	Original handwritten letters must be kept away from direct sunlight.
6	V1	Copies of letters may be placed by the sunny window; they are not subject to the same original-letter restriction.
7	V1	One table must remain available for the children's workshop.
8	A1	Equipment demonstrations occur at 11:30 and 14:00; both times are needed for full credit.
9	A1	The side room holds headphones and written versions of the recorded stories.
10	C2	Visiting-group coats belong in the entrance alcove rather than in the central corridor.
11	C2	Joining the workshop or listening to a recorded story is optional.
12	A2	Written stories are available to anyone; visitors need not explain why they choose them.
13	V2	Original handwritten letters must go into protective cases before display tables are moved.
14	V2 / C1	Photographs must be checked at 16:15, with all packing finished by 16:30.

For partially correct answers, record what remains unclear. In item 8, giving only one of the two times is partial. In item 14, recalling both times but reversing which action belongs to each is incorrect; naming just the final deadline is partial. In item 12, stating that written stories exist without explaining that everyone may choose them or that no reason is needed is partial. In item 5, placing the original letters beside the sunny window contradicts the instruction. A teacher may accept equivalent expressions such as *half past four* for 16:30 and *photographs counted against the list* for the 16:15 check.

BRIEFING ACCEPTANCE CHECK

An acceptable layout leaves the central corridor unobstructed, places original letters away from the sunny window, allows copies near that window if useful, and reserves a workshop table outside the circulation path. It makes the side

room identifiable for story materials and provides an appropriate coat-storage instruction. Exact table coordinates are deliberately not prescribed. A teacher should reject a visually attractive plan that violates a spoken restriction, while allowing different practical arrangements that preserve all of the information.

The final spoken briefing must also distinguish voluntary activities from required duties. Keeping children out of the workshop would be a separate design choice not instructed by the speakers; compelling every visitor to join would directly misrepresent C2. The use of written stories should be presented as a legitimate option for anyone, not as a service for a narrow category of visitors. These expectations can be checked without making claims about the learners' accent preferences.

CONTRIBUTOR CONSENT AND PRODUCTION PROCEDURE

1. Explain the fictional task and the intended classroom use before inviting a person to record. Ask separately about permission to retain, edit, share, or publish the file; do not treat permission for one use as permission for all uses.
2. Ask each contributor which name or role should be announced. Do not require a nationality, first language, or other biographical label. Do not request performance of a stereotyped accent.
3. Give the contributor both scripts in the assigned pair. Permit ordinary changes in pace and phrasing but identify in advance the times, places, restrictions, negations, and object distinctions that must remain constant.
4. Listen to each recording with its script in hand. Confirm 09:00, 10:00, 11:00, 11:30, 14:00, 16:15, and 16:30 where they occur; check *before*, *may*, *must*, and *not* in the relevant passages.
5. Confirm that audio is intelligible without distortion or persistent noise, that the volume is suitable, and that any transcript matches the actual recording. Obtain the contributor's approval of the version to be used.
6. Keep the recording securely under the agreed conditions. Remove it or limit use when permission expires or is withdrawn in accordance with the applicable arrangement. Do not upload classroom audio to public platforms without explicit authorization.
7. Before each lesson, check playback and accessibility needs. Make transcripts available to learners who require them while recording when an answer is based on listening alone or on additional written support.

TEACHER OBSERVATION RECORD

For each message, the instructor should record its identifier and duration, whether the first response was independent, the number and purpose of replays, the passage chosen for focused attention, any language explanation or transcript supplied, and the final decision learners made from the message. When an answer changes, note which task fact changed. When a group briefing is incomplete, record which contributor's information was omitted. These notes help a teacher improve instruction and should not be presented as research observations unless appropriate consent, ethical review, and study procedures have been established.