

23 strategies to scaffold ESL students' listening and viewing

The ability to listen effectively is dependent on a complex interplay between the listener, content and features of the text, and the context in which the text is being listened to. While listening comprehension requires a range of abilities on the part of the listener, it is also dependent on the spoken features of the text (eg pace, clarity and volume), the linguistic features of the text (eg technicality, abstraction and density of information), and non-spoken aspects of the text (eg visuals). Some of these can be controlled by the teacher if the teacher is the speaker. However, even when the teacher is not the speaker, such as when students are watching a video, listening to a visiting speaker or a lengthy assembly presentation, there are still ways that teachers can support ESL students to be more effective listeners. We list below 23 strategies that you can use for scaffolding your ESL students' listening and viewing. These strategies do not need to be invoked all at once.

Pre-listening/viewing

1. Prepare any visuals and other supports.
2. Build field knowledge needed for the listening task, activating prior knowledge.
3. Establish a context for the text students are to listen to or speak and revise understandings about the structure and the patterns of the text.
4. Explicitly teach the oral discourses that are valued in schooling and the community (eg how to ask questions of a guest speaker).
5. Co-construct with students note-taking frameworks.
6. Inform invited speaker about the students (eg background knowledge, language levels and age).
7. Ensure students are clear about what they are listening for and how they are going to go about it.
8. Use the co-constructed note-taking frameworks.

During listening/viewing

9. Provide handouts with written and/or visual supports (eg print-outs of PowerPoint slides).
10. Use objects, demonstrations and other visual supports.
11. Provide relevant and everyday examples and analogies.
12. Stress and/or enumerate significant points.
13. Pause and repeat key phrases, rephrase key information, summarise key points.
14. Ask questions to gauge understanding: 'So can you explain what I have just said?'.
15. Record speaker's presentation so that students can listen to it again and/or view it again.
16. If showing a video, stop and pause at key points.
17. Model note-taking on the board during a video.

Post-listening/viewing

18. Use various multimodal resources at various points in the presentation.
19. Set up and facilitate group discussions.
20. Set up activities where students need to use in new ways the information gained.
21. Replay parts of the presentation with specific focus questions.
22. Use the notes taken during listening to co-construct frameworks for organising the information presented.
23. Model and co-construct the shift from notes to prose.