

# Practical Activities for Balanced Listening Instruction

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# Listening is Important

- 50% of L2 time is listening time (Nunan).
- Listening is a good way to learn language.
- Lack of listening proficiency causes anxiety.

# Listening is Challenging



✓ Speech is fast, variable, and out of the listener's control.

✓ Listeners actively create meaning from the sounds they hear.

# Listening is Challenging

What are learners doing while they listen?

## Bottom-Up Processes

- Build from small to large:
  - ✧ Phonemes
  - ✧ Syllables
  - ✧ Words
  - ✧ Phrases
  - ✧ Discourse
- Automatic for native speakers but high cognitive load for L2.

## Top-Down Processes

- Build frameworks for comprehension using:
  - ✧ World knowledge
  - ✧ Logic
  - ✧ Context
  - ✧ Co-text
- Have two different possible purposes:
  - ✧ Compensate
  - ✧ Enrich

# Listening is Challenging

## **Product Approach (Listening to Learn)**

- ✓ Listening activities always involve assessing learners' comprehension.
- ✓ Understanding the message is the goal of the listening activity.
- ✓ Teachers give pre-listening information and post-listening hints to help students succeed.

## **Process Approach (Learning to Listen)**

- ✓ Students are taught explicitly about listening processes and strategies (Vandergrift).
- ✓ Students listen and re-listen, form and test hypotheses, discuss interpretations.
- ✓ Noticing language features is the goal of the listening activity (Richards).
- ✓ Teachers use misunderstandings as a window on student listening abilities (Field).

# Listening is Challenging

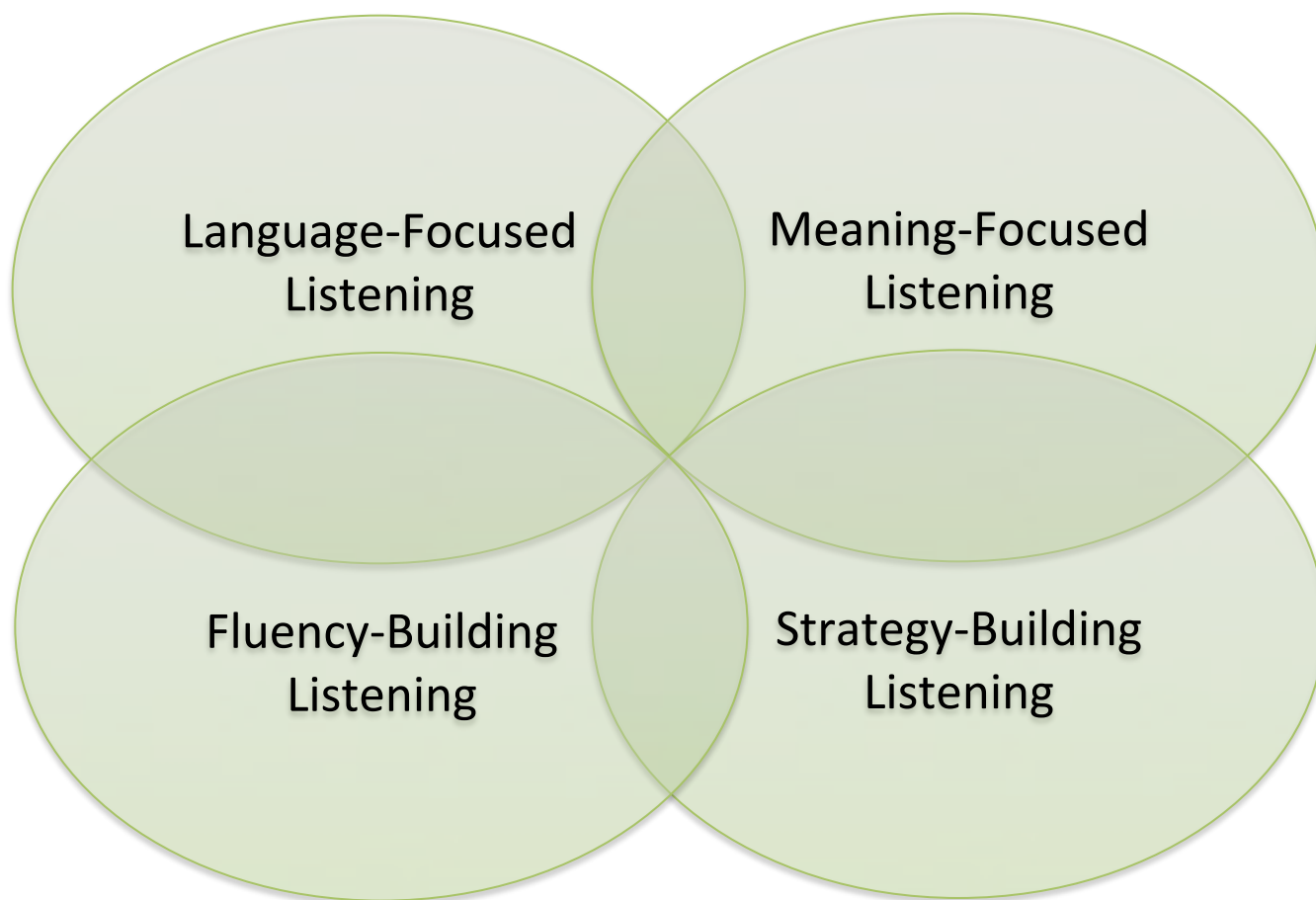
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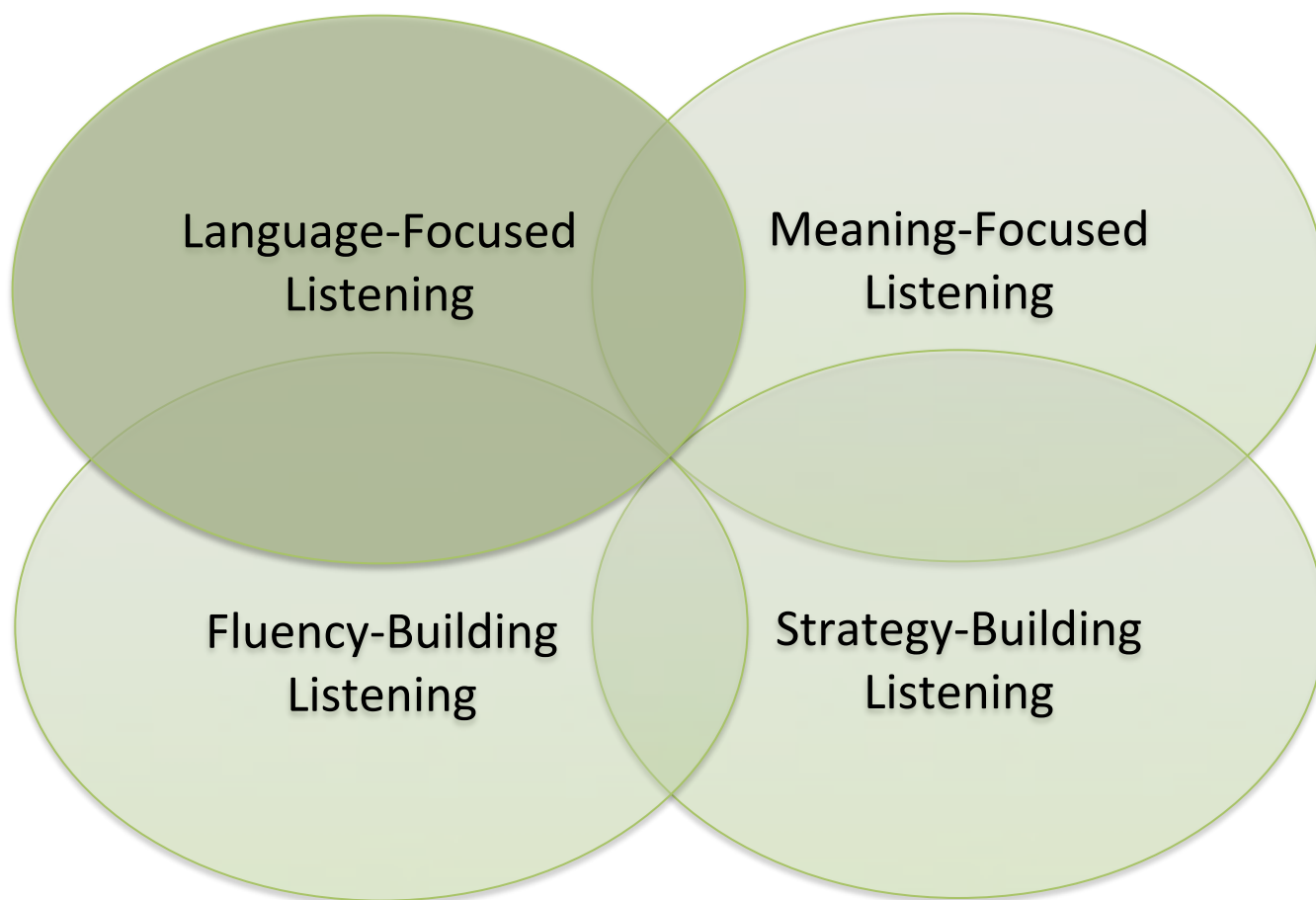
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# Balanced Listening Instruction

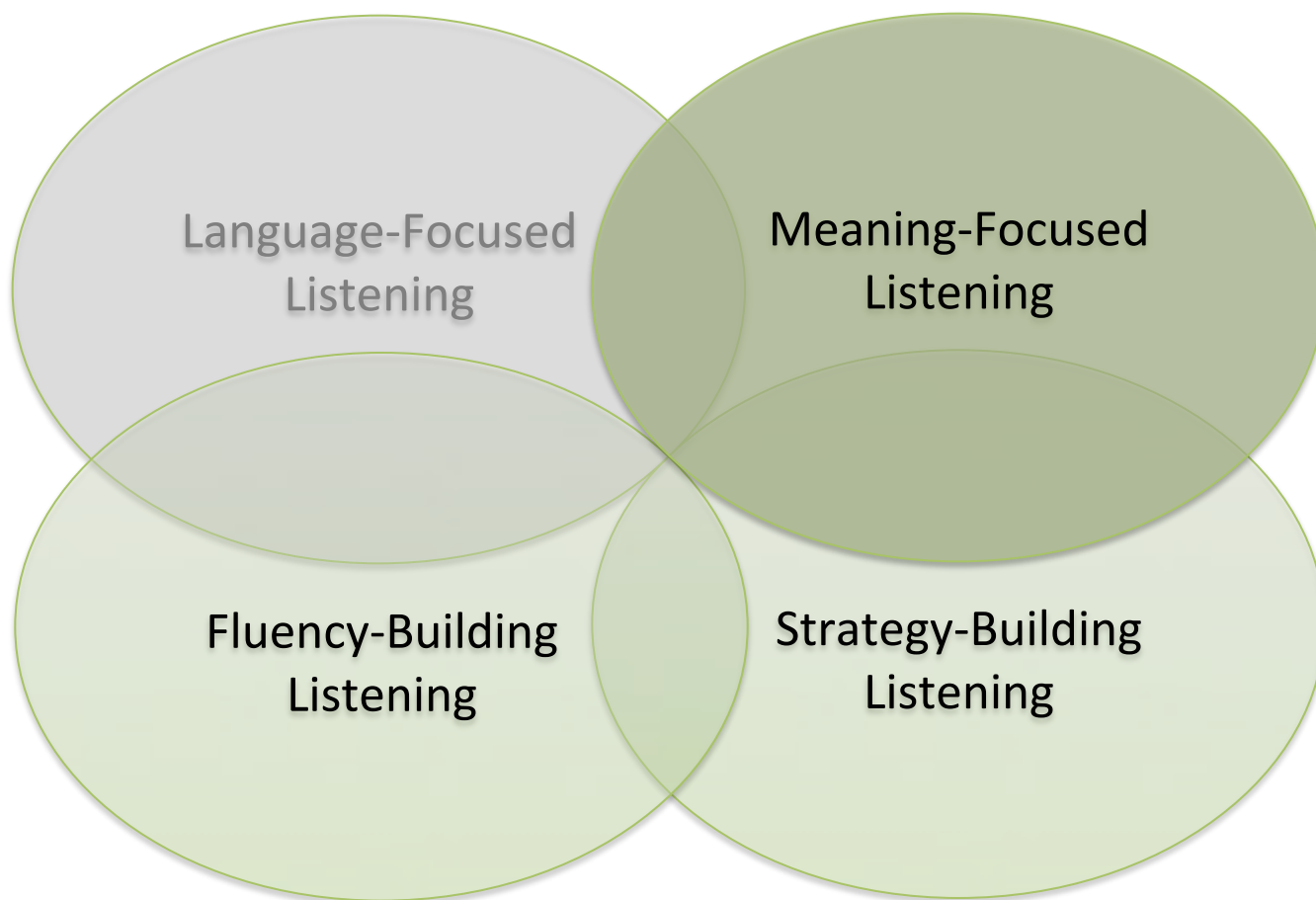


# Balanced Listening Instruction

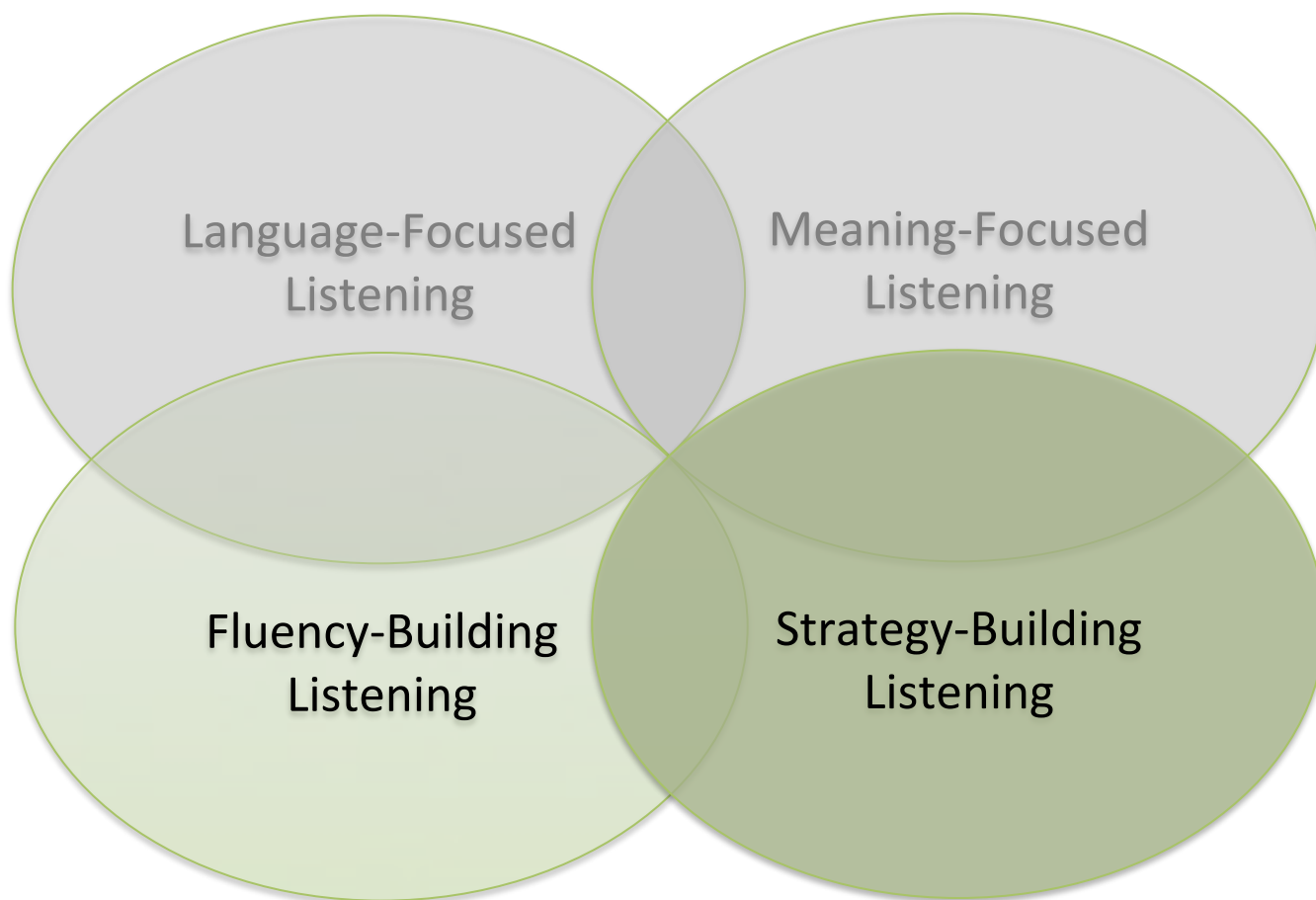




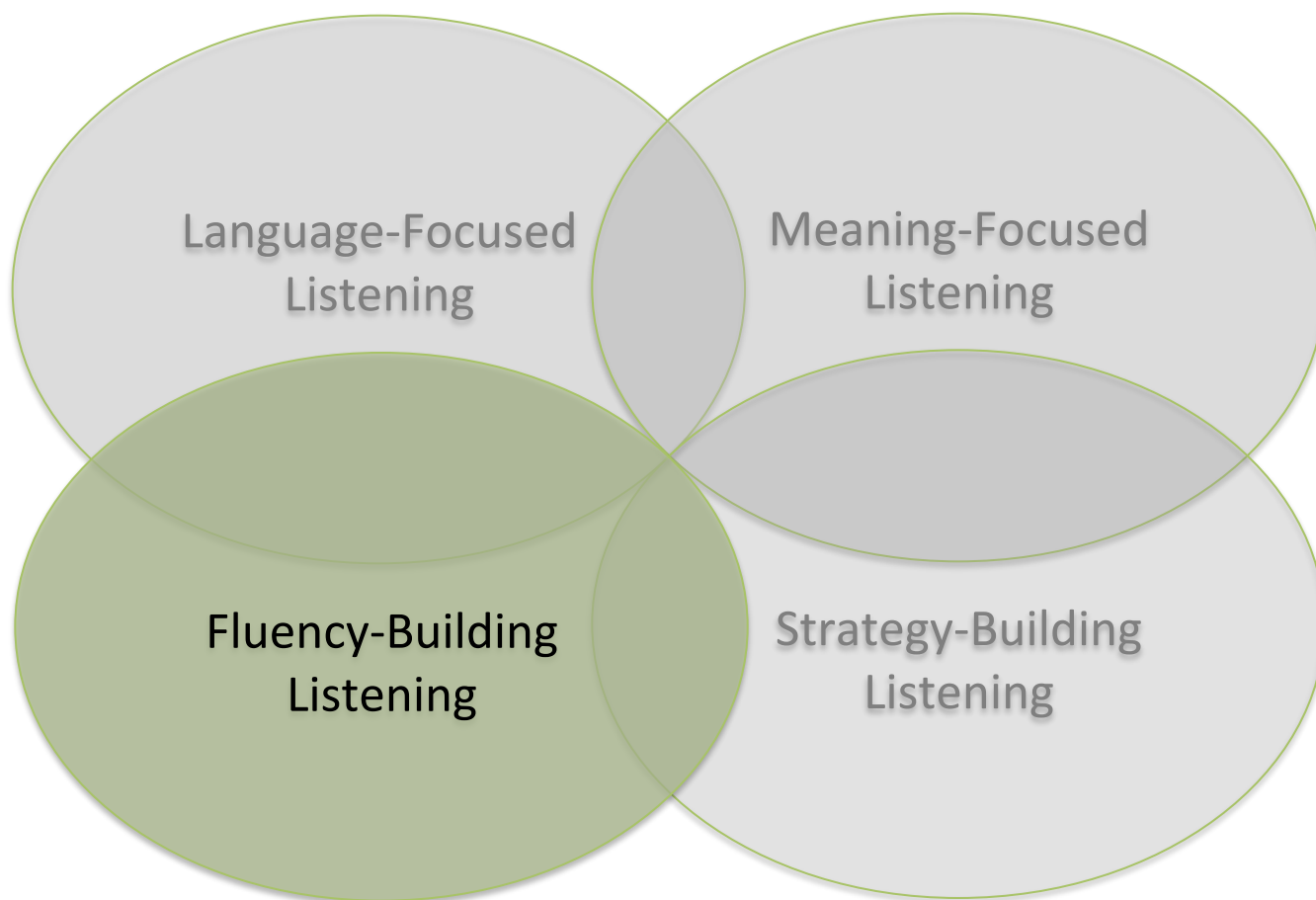
# Balanced Listening Instruction



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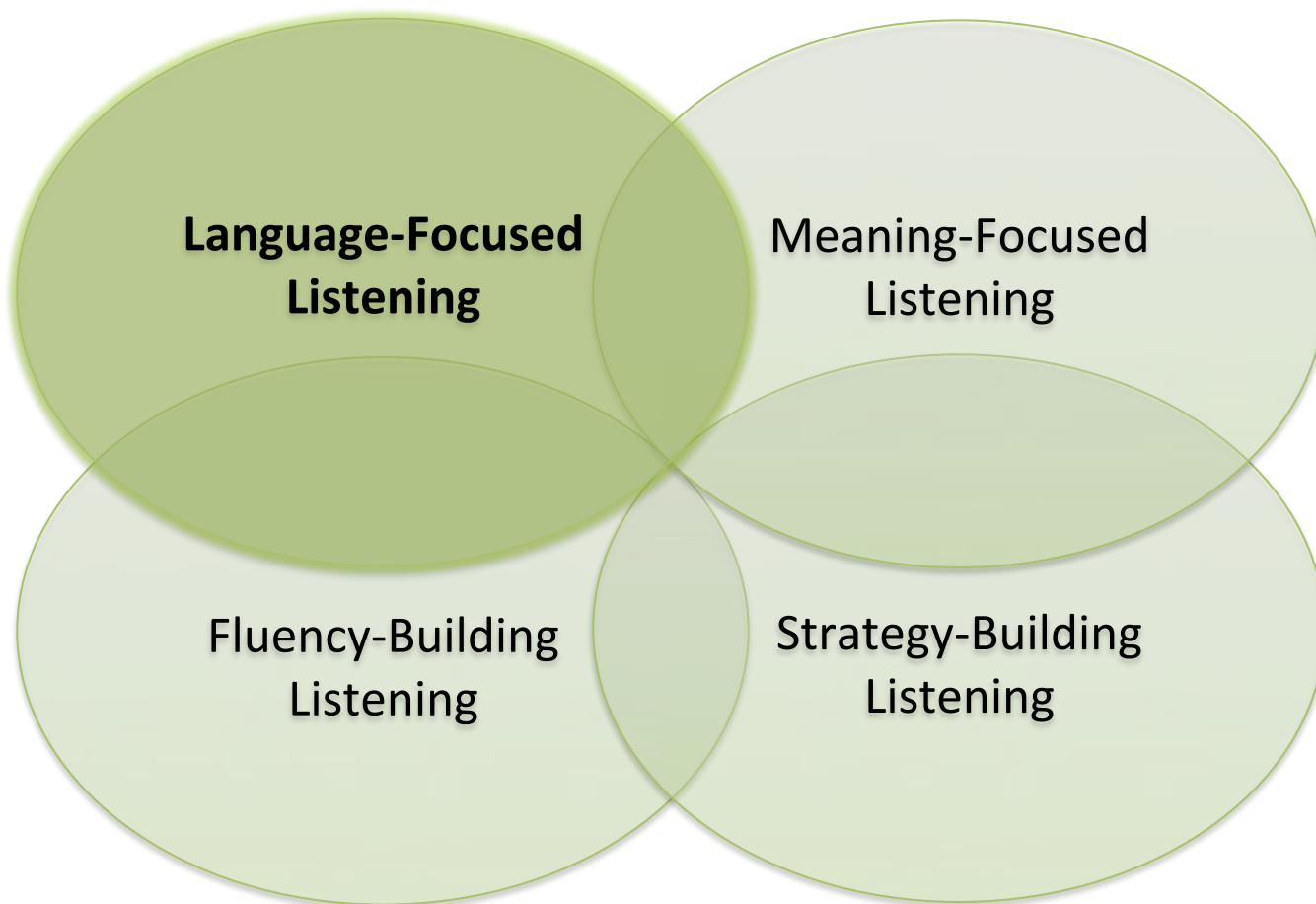


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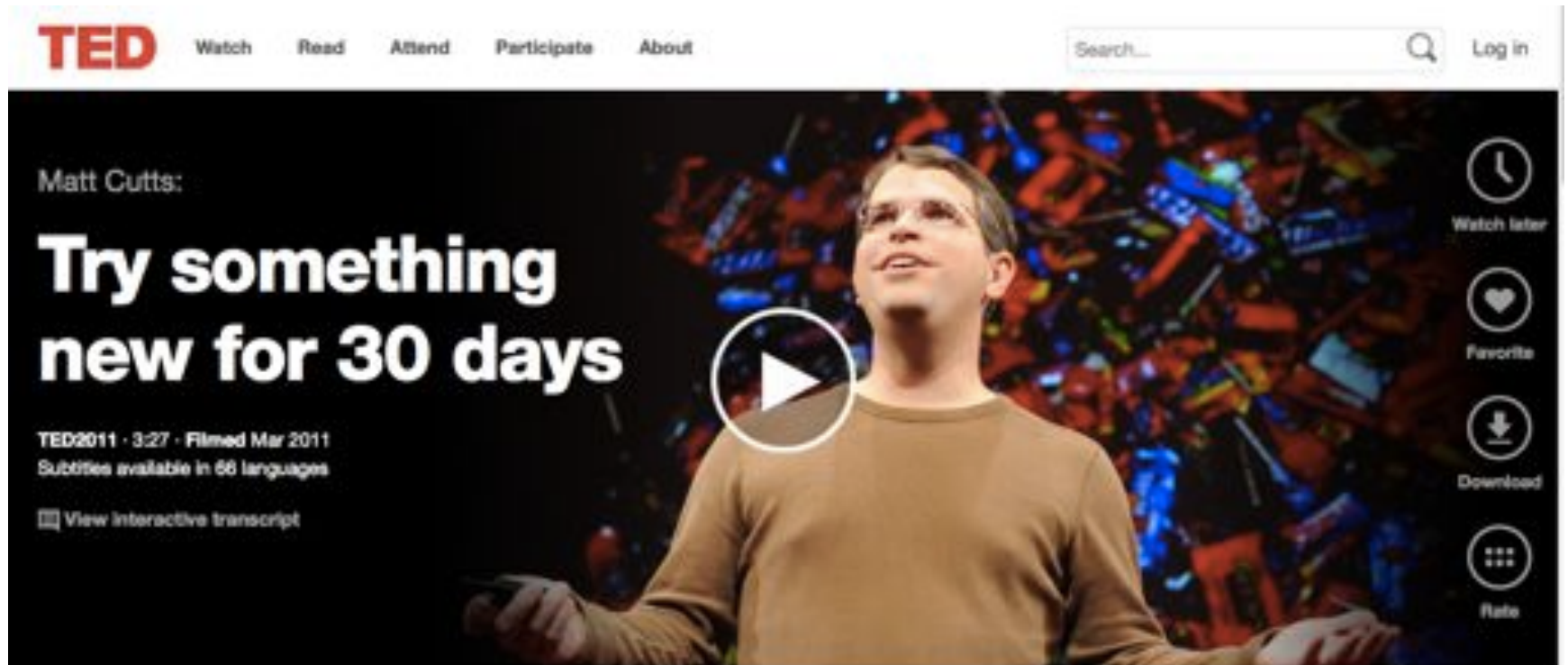


**Listening Purpose=**  
**Communication**  
**Goal**

# Balanced Listening Instruction



# Example Listening Text



[http://www.ted.com/talks/matt\\_cutts\\_try\\_something\\_new\\_for\\_30\\_days](http://www.ted.com/talks/matt_cutts_try_something_new_for_30_days)

# Language-Focused Listening

Language =

“For the next 30 days”

✧ Phoneme/syllable level

/fə ðə nekst θædi dez/

✧ Word/chunk level

f'th'next + thirtydays

✧ Syntax level

(preposition + noun phrase)

✧ Intonation group level



# Language-Focused Listening

- ✓ Dictation
- ✓ Repetition
- ✓ Anticipation
- ✓ Language Spotting
- ✓ Transcript correction
- ✓ Tiny questions



# Language-Focused Listening

## ✓ Dictation

✓ Repetition

✓ Anticipation

✓ Language Spotting

✓ Transcript correction

✓ Tiny questions

## Dictation Activities

Spelling and punctuation don't matter.

Dictate words/phrases/sentences at normal speed – adjust level by adjusting complexity and length.

### Purposes:

- Preview key words.
- Practice understanding difficult sounds.
- Review vocabulary list.
- Focus on students' problem areas.

# Examples for Dictation

1. He really loved biking to work.

Distinguish /r/ and /l/ sounds

2. He wrote a pretty bad book.

Distinguish /p/ and /b/ sounds

3. Crazy challenges help him remember exactly.

Important phrases from talk.  
Consonant blends. Reduction.

4. Morgan Spurlock isn't a philosopher.

Let Ss try to write down an unknown name. Then give background knowledge for TED talk.

# Language-Focused Listening

- ✓ Dictation
- ✓ **Repetition**
- ✓ Anticipation
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## Repetition Activities

Have students shadow the speaker.

Necessary to understand a sentence in order to repeat it.

Adjust level by adjusting the length and complexity of phrases to be repeated.

Where repetition breaks down. note areas for improvement in listening (and speaking).

# Examples for Repetition

## Repeat Phrases

1. subtract a habit
2. remember exactly
3. crazy challenges



Challenging sounds to discriminate

## Repeat sentence

Focus on rhythm and intonation

4. Now is my book the next great American novel?
5. No. I wrote it in a month. It's awful!

# Language-Focused Listening

- ✓ Dictation
- ✓ Repetition
- ✓ **Anticipation**
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## Anticipation Activities

Stop mid-sentence and have students guess what word or sound they will hear next.

Depending on where you stop, focus on sounds, word endings, grammar, etc...

Students can answer individually (in writing) or in groups.

### Examples:

1. Try it for the next 30...
2. Subtract a habit fr...
3. Think about something you've...

# Language-Focused Listening

- ✓ Dictation
- ✓ Repetition
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- ✓ **Language Spotting**
- ✓ Transcript correction
- ✓ Tiny questions

## Language Spotting Activities

Have students listen selectively for certain aspects of language. This could be sounds, words, intonation, grammar...

### Examples:

- “Raise your hand every time you hear the word THIRTY.”

# Language spotting: the word 30

A few years ago, I felt like I was stuck in a rut, so I decided to follow in the footsteps of the great American philosopher, Morgan Spurlock, and try something new for 30 days. The idea is actually pretty simple. Think about something you've always wanted to add to your life and try it for the next 30 days. It turns out, 30 days is just about the right amount of time to add a new habit or subtract a habit -- like watching the news -- from your life.

# Language-Focused Listening

- ✓ Dictation
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- ✓ Tiny questions

## Language Spotting Activities

Have students listen selectively for certain aspects of language. This could be sounds, words, intonation, grammar...

### Examples:

- “Raise your hand every time you hear the word THIRTY.”
- “Write down every word you hear that begins with /f/.”



# Language spotting: the sound /f/

Few

Felt

Follow

Footsteps

Philosopher

For

For

From

Total number of  
/f/ sounds = 10

Note:

“philosopher”  
has /f/  
“of” does not  
have /f/

# Language-Focused Listening

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- ✓ Tiny questions

## Language Spotting Activities

Have students listen selectively for certain aspects of language. This could be sounds, words, intonation, grammar...

Examples:

- “Raise your hand every time you hear the word THIRTY.”
- “Write down every word you hear that begins with /f/.”
- “Write down the past tense verbs that you hear.”

# Language spotting: past tense verbs

Learned

Noticed

Was

Started

Was

Grew

Was

Went

Did

Ended up

Was

Would never have been

Was doing

Started

# Language-Focused Listening

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- ✓ Tiny questions

## Language Spotting Activities

Have students listen selectively for certain aspects of language. This could be sounds, words, intonation, grammar...

Examples:

- “Raise your hand every time you hear the word THIRTY.”
- “Write down every word you hear that begins with /f/.”
- “Write down the past tense verbs that you hear.”
- “On your transcript, circle the ideas that Matt Cutts wants to emphasize.”

# Language spotting: emphasis

There's a few things I learned while doing these 30-day challenges. The first was, instead of the months **flying** by, forgotten, the time was **much more memorable**. This was part of a challenge I did to take a picture every day for a month. And I remember **exactly** where I was and what I was doing that day. I also noticed that as I started to do more and harder 30-day challenges, my self-confidence grew. I went from desk-dwelling computer nerd to the kind of guy who **bikes** to work -- for **fun**. Even last year, I ended up hiking up Mt. Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa. I would **never** have been that adventurous before I started my 30-day challenges.

# Language-Focused Listening

- ✓ Dictation
- ✓ Repetition
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- ✓ **Transcript correction**
- ✓ Tiny questions

## Transcript Correction Activities

Students fill in the blanks on a transcript – choose a specific language focus when creating blanks.

Students find and correct errors inserted by the teacher. Errors can involve any of the language levels discussed previously.

# Transcript activity examples

## Transcript Completion

There 's a few thing s I learn ed while do ing these 30-day challenge s. The first was     , instead of the month s flying by, forgot ten, the time      was much more memorable.

Note language focus here:

## Transcript Correction

I also discovered that if you really want something enough, you can do anything for 30 days. Have you ever wanted to write a book? Every November, tens of thousands of people try writing their own 5,000-word novel from scratch in 30 days. It turns out, all you are to do is write 1,667 words a day for a month. So I did. By the way, the secret is to go to sleep until you write your words for the month. You might be sleep-deprived, but you'll finish your novel.

# Language-Focused Listening

- ✓ Dictation
- ✓ Repetition
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- ✓ Transcript correction
- ✓ **Tiny questions**

## Tiny Question Activities

Very brief listening text

Students must infer the answer from grammar or word choices.

Tiny questions are challenging to create or find, but very useful.

For example:

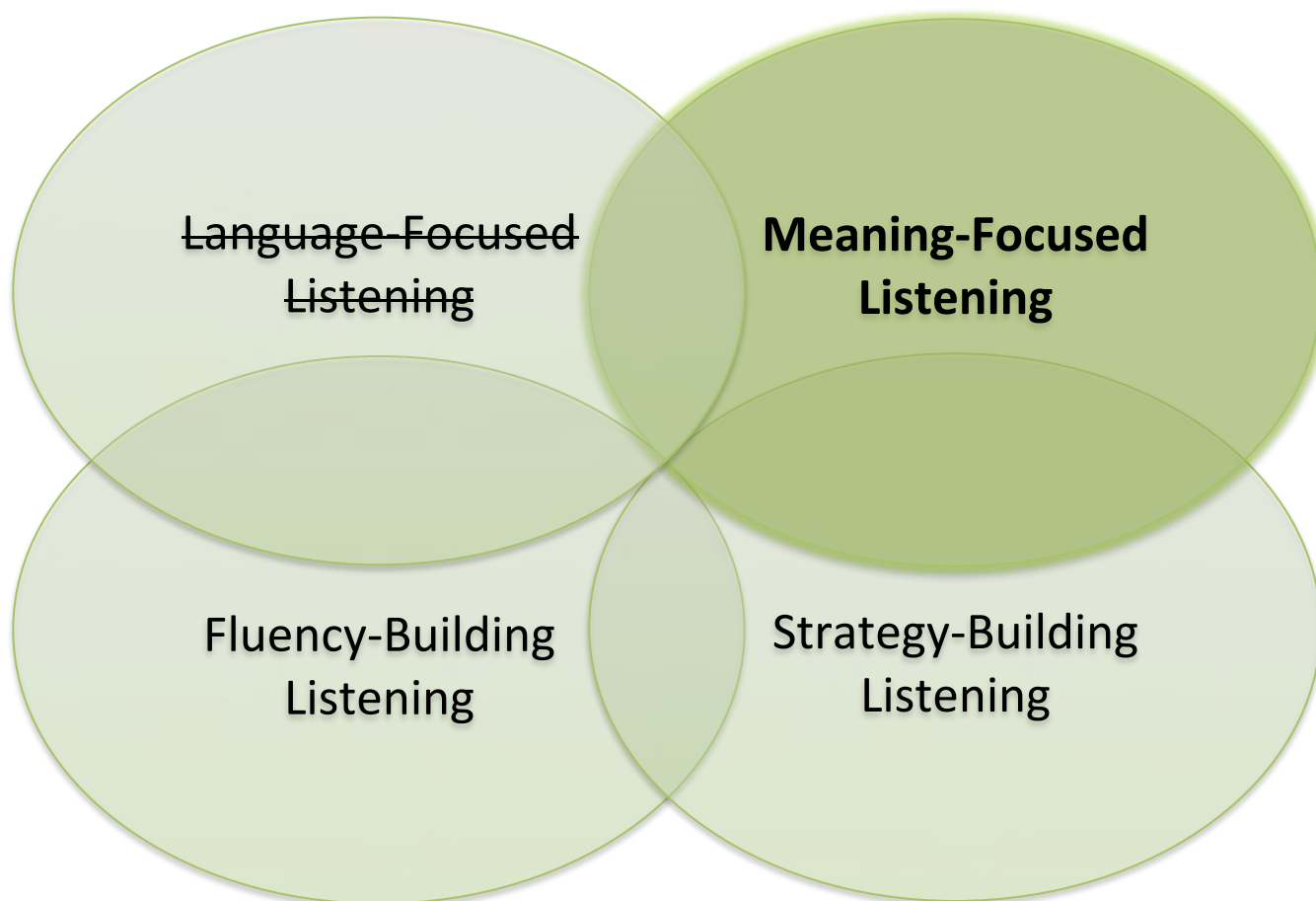
*Students hear: "A few years ago, I felt like I was stuck in a rut."*

*Tiny question 1: "Stuck in a ...? What does this mean?"*

*Tiny question 2: "Was he definitely stuck in a rut?"*



# Balanced Listening Instruction



# Meaning-Focused Listening

Meaning =

- ✧ Main idea(s)
- ✧ Supporting points
- ✧ Details, figures, and evidence
- ✧ Inferences
- ✧ Listener reactions

Students can...

- ✓ Reconstruct Content
- ✓ Manipulate Content
- ✓ Respond to Content

# Meaning-Focused Listening

## Activities for content reconstruction

Students take  
scaffolded notes

Scaffolding for note-taking =

- A chart or graphic organizer.
- A discussion of the text's sections.
- A known purpose for the notes.

Students can...

- ✓ **Reconstruct Content**
- ✓ Manipulate Content
- ✓ Respond to Content

# Scaffolded note-taking examples:

## Graphic organizer

Matt Cutts

Try Something New for 30 Days

30 Day Challenge	Result
Take daily pictures	
Bike to work	
Write a novel	
Eat no sugar	
Stop watching news	

## Text sections

	Matt <u>Cutts</u> Try Something New for 30 Days
○	What did he do?
○	Results
○	Advice

# Meaning-Focused Listening

## Activities for content reconstruction

Students take  
notes in order to:

Create/correct/complete a summary.

Paraphrase in an oral presentation.

Follow the instructions they hear.

Create comprehension questions.

Answer comprehension questions.

Students can...

✓ **Reconstruct Content**

✓ Manipulate Content

✓ Respond to Content

# Meaning-Focused Listening

## Activities for content manipulation

Students listen  
in order to:

Put pieces in order.

Match theme titles to parts.

Tell it back in reverse order.

Finish or change the story.

Compare content in a jigsaw activity.

Students can...

- ✓ Reconstruct Content
- ✓ **Manipulate Content**
- ✓ Respond to Content

# Examples for manipulating content

## Sequencing:

Write numbers to put these challenges in order as you hear them:

- [ ] Eat no sugar
- [ ] Take daily pictures
- [ ] Write a novel
- [ ] Stop watching the news
- [ ] Bike to work

## Finding themes:

*“Raise your hand when Matt Cutts switches from describing to giving advice.”*

## Jigsaw activity:



# Meaning-Focused Listening

## Activities for responding to content

Students listen  
in order to:

Share initial reactions.

Compare to personal experience.

Evaluate, discuss or debate the speaker's opinion.

Answer questions left open by speaker.

Play the role of the speaker.

Create related interview questions.

Students can...

✓ Reconstruct Content

✓ Manipulate Content

✓ **Respond to Content**

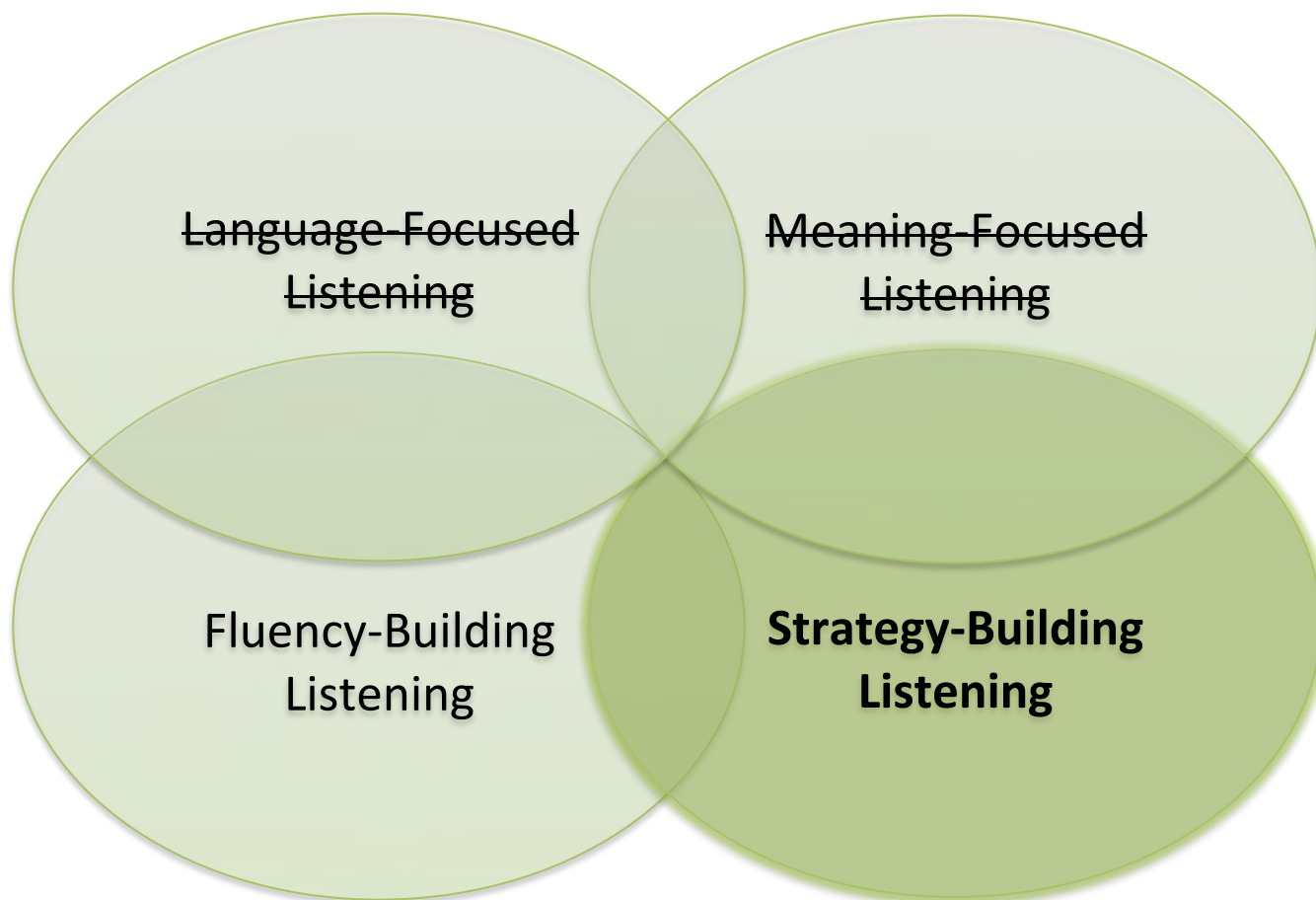


# Response question examples:

Groups discuss after listening:

1. Does Matt Cutts think it's a good idea to try new things? How do you know? Can you think of specific words or phrases that showed his opinion?
2. Was Matt Cutts' argument convincing for you? Why or why not?
3. Will you try a 30-day challenge? What will it be?

# Balanced Listening Instruction



# Strategy-Building Listening

Strategies are..

- ✧ Techniques effective listeners use in challenging situations.
- ✧ Often categorized as cognitive, metacognitive, or socio-affective.
- ✧ Variable from student to student and from activity to activity.

Strategy activities include...

- ✓ Prediction/Planning
- ✓ Monitoring
- ✓ Problem-solving
- ✓ Collaboration

(See Vanderbilt & Goh, 2012)

# Strategy-Building Listening

## Suggested activities:

Show title or first few sentences, then...

- Ss predict content.
- Ss predict structure.
- Ss predict words they will hear.
- Groups discuss and plan HOW they will listen.

## Strategies:

✓ **Prediction/Planning**

✓ Monitoring

✓ Problem-solving

✓ Collaboration

# Strategy-Building Listening

## Suggested activities:

- Discuss importance of checking understanding.
- Students use hand signals while listening.
- Teacher pauses video for small groups to summarize, evaluate comprehension, ask each other questions, plan for next part.

## Strategies:

- ✓ Prediction/Planning
- ✓ **Monitoring**
- ✓ Problem-solving
- ✓ Collaboration

# Strategy-Building Listening

## Suggested activities:

Students list comprehension challenges and possible tools/solutions for each, eg:

- ✓ *Focus on key words*
- ✓ *Ignore unknown words*
- ✓ *Use context*
- ✓ *Make a guess + verify*
- ✓ *Take a deep breath, forget what you missed, and hear what's being said now*

Teacher pauses the video and “thinks aloud” about how to apply strategies.

Students complete reflective strategy journals after listening.

## Strategies:

- ✓ Prediction/Planning
- ✓ Monitoring
- ✓ **Problem-solving**
- ✓ Collaboration

# Strategy-Building Listening

## Suggested activities:

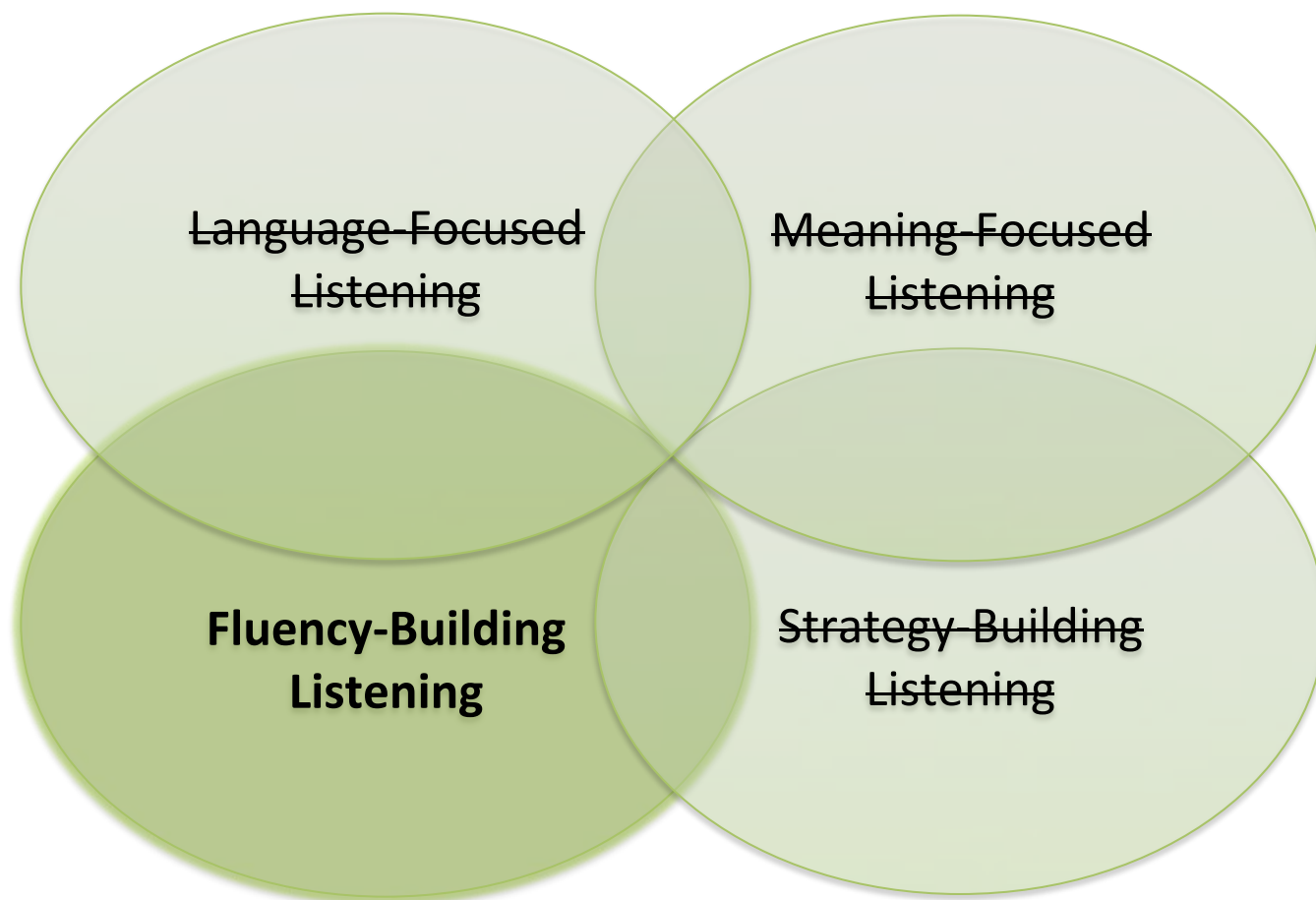
Vandergrift's process approach (2004) – in groups:

1. Planning/Predicting Stage
2. First Verification Stage
3. Second Verification Stage
4. Final Verification Stage
5. Reflection stage

## Strategies:

- ✓ Prediction/Planning
- ✓ Monitoring
- ✓ Problem-solving
- ✓ **Collaboration**

# Balanced Listening Instruction





# Fluency-Building Listening

Activities:

- ✓ Graded listening
- ✓ Repeated listening
- ✓ Supported listening
- ✓ Topic/genre flooding
- ✓ Independent listening

**Listening Fluency = The ability to hear & understand without significant effort.**

Fluency-Building Listening = learners complete an easy task, with a high level of performance, (Nation & Newton).

“Learners receive a lot of comprehensible and enjoyable input” (Renandya & Farrell).

# Fluency-Building Listening

## Activities:

- ✓ **Graded listening**
- ✓ Repeated listening
- ✓ Supported listening
- ✓ Topic/genre flooding
- ✓ Independent listening

## Graded texts for fluency

Students listen to interesting texts without unknown vocabulary or grammar elements.

- Teacher tells stories.
- Students listen to other students.
- Use textbook audio, graded readers CDs, or online recordings for a lower level.

# Fluency-Building Listening

## Activities:

- ✓ Graded listening
- ✓ **Repeated listening**
- ✓ Supported listening
- ✓ Topic/genre flooding
- ✓ Independent listening

## Repeated listening for fluency

Of all the ways to make listening easier, repeating is the most effective (Chang & Read).

Many of the activities already described involve repetition.

One easy way to add a thread of fluency-building listening to instruction is to always play recordings one more time after other activities are finished, with instructions to just listen and enjoy.

# Fluency-Building Listening

## Activities:

- ✓ Graded listening
- ✓ Repeated listening
- ✓ **Supported listening**
- ✓ Topic/genre flooding
- ✓ Independent listening

## Supported listening for fluency

Students receive support for comprehension while they listen.

- Listen while reading a story.
- Listen while reading subtitles.
- Listen while following along with pictures, gestures, or video.

# Fluency-Building Listening

## Activities:

- ✓ Graded listening
- ✓ Repeated listening
- ✓ Supported listening
- ✓ **Topic/genre flooding**
- ✓ Independent listening

## Topic/genre flooding for fluency

If students are familiar with the content of what they hear, they are likely to recognize more of the vocabulary and be able to compensate for some missed information.

This can be accomplished via:

- Content themes sustained over several lessons.
- On-going audio/video series.
- Focusing on topics that are familiar to students.

# Fluency-Building Listening

## Activities:

- ✓ Graded listening
- ✓ Repeated listening
- ✓ Supported listening
- ✓ Topic/genre flooding
- ✓ **Independent listening**

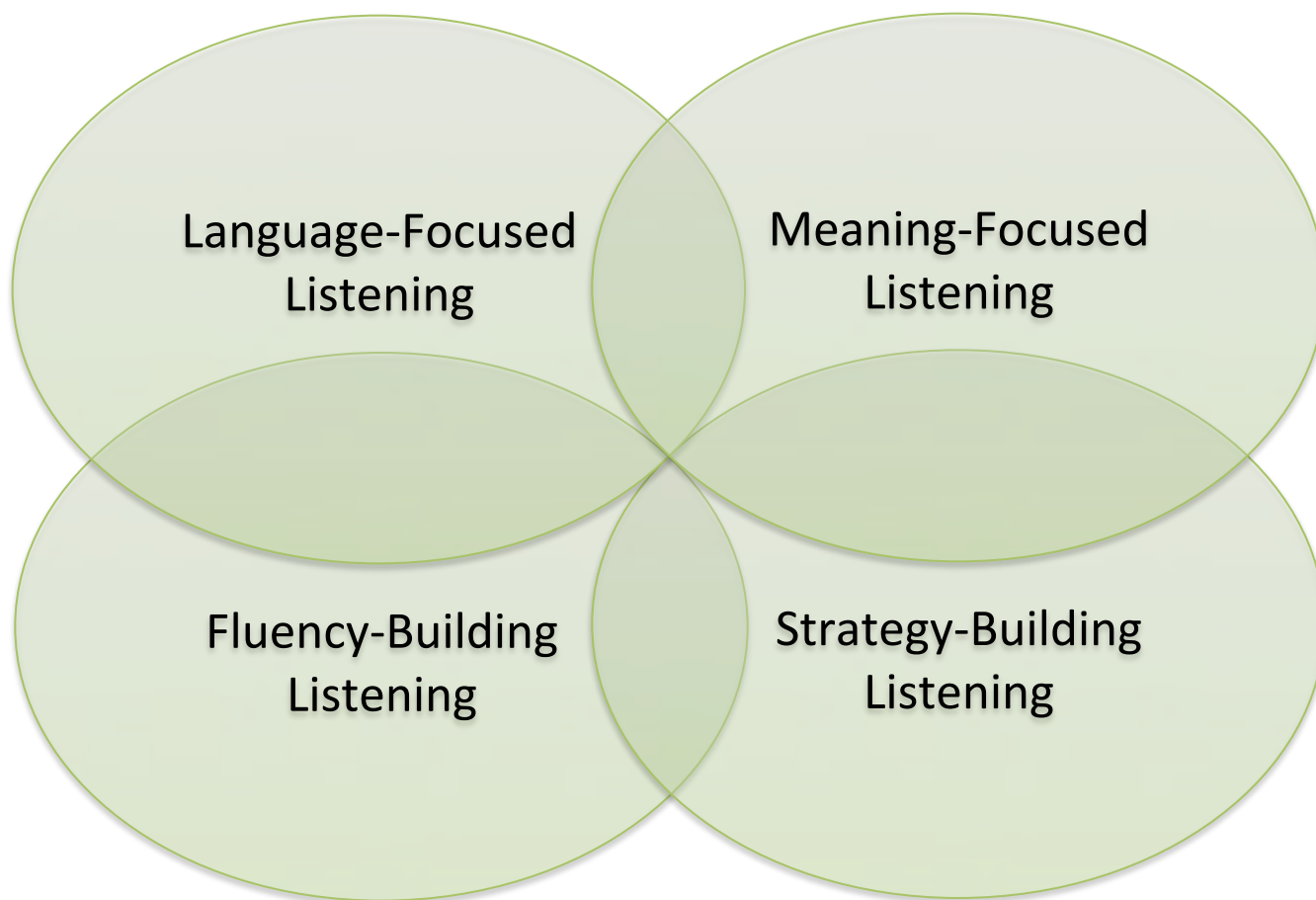
## Independent listening for fluency

Class time is limited, but students can hear a greater quantity of easy, interesting material if they listen independently.

Easy and/or motivating material is available online

- Podcasts
- VOA
- Songs and videos

# Balanced Listening Instruction



# Finding Time



A Venn diagram consisting of two overlapping circles. The larger circle on the left contains the text 'Good activities' and 'Student needs'. The smaller circle on the right contains the text 'Instructional Time'. The two circles overlap, with the intersection area shaded in a slightly darker green than the individual circles.

Good activities  
Student needs

Instructional  
Time



# Finding Time

Integrate (and emphasize!) listening instruction when teaching other skills

- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

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