

TEACHER'S CORNER – MARCH 2015

LISTENING

This month, we ask you to “lend us your ears” as we explore listening activities. As many EFL teachers have experienced, textbooks frequently limit listening activities to asking students to listen to an audio text and then recall details or a main idea to demonstrate comprehension. However, such meaning-focused comprehension activities are just one way we can incorporate listening in the EFL classroom. We can create listening activities that are much more varied and dynamic by involving several skills and strategy-building approaches.

This month’s “Teacher’s Corner” activities are inspired by a framework for thinking about listening instruction presented in Beth Sheppard’s 2014 “Practical Activities for Balanced Listening Instruction” webinar, part of the *Shaping the Way We Teach English* webinar series. This framework suggests that balanced listening instruction includes four key components:

- **Language-focused listening:** includes a focus on topics such as individual sounds, syllables, stress, thought groups or “chunks,” intonation, and grammar (syntax)
- **Meaning-focused listening:** includes a focus on main and supporting ideas, evidence and examples, details, inferences, and listener reactions to a text
- **Fluency-building listening:** increases learners’ comfort-level with listening through approaches such as graded listening, repeated listening, and supported listening
- **Strategy-building listening:** helps learners become more strategic listeners in different situations by practicing approaches such as prediction, planning to listen, monitoring their listening skills, and problem solving

Let’s take a look at how to apply these approaches! This month’s activities combine the four-part framework’s components, and all use listening texts drawn from songs and audiobooks available on the [American English website](#). Be sure to explore American English audio resources to find those that are the best fit for your learners: the website offers listening texts for all ages (children to adult) and skill levels (beginner to advanced). On the American English [Resources for Teachers](#) page, select “Browse by Type of Content,” and then choose “Audio,” “Song,” or other relevant content types. Also, for more information and examples related to the listening framework above, be sure to review Beth Sheppard’s “Practical Activities for Balanced Listening Instruction” webinar.