Misunderstood

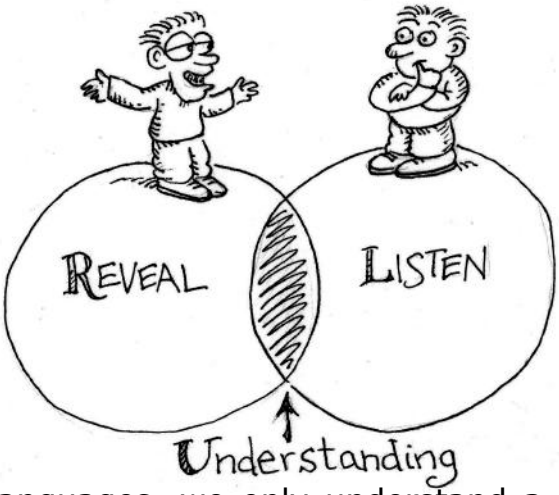
EAE Learning objectives for this lesson

Learn techniques to improve your listening skills. Test your comprehension. Learn some useful expressions.



« *I am so clever that sometimes I don't understand a single word of what I am saying* ».

Oscar Wilde



« *Please don't let me be misunderstood* ».

Nina Simone

Even in our own languages, we only understand a part of what is said. What we understand depends on our perspective, on our background, on what else is on our mind. Often with background noise, or background thoughts, there is interference. It therefore goes without saying that in a foreign language oral comprehension can be quite challenging. In today's lesson we will try to give you some good advice to help you to understand better.

Activity One – Let's play 'Chinese whispers'. Your teacher will start by saying something and you will pass the information on, from one person to another, by whispering. Let's see what comes out at the other end…

Activity Two – ask and answer the following questions to your partner.



1. Do you feel confident about understanding in English?
2. Do you sometimes have difficulty understanding what is being said, in English?
3. In what kind of situations, or places, do you find it difficult to understand?
4. What techniques do you use to try to understand better?
5. Do you ever get lost in a conversation?
6. Do you ask people to repeat when you don't understand?
7. Do you sometimes just pretend to understand?
8. What expressions do you usually use to ask people to repeat or rephrase?
9. Have you ever had a big misunderstanding in English?
10. Have you ever noticed that someone had got the wrong end of the stick in a meeting? (to get the wrong end of the stick = to misunderstand).

Activity Three – Listen to the song and fill the gaps.

"Don't let me be Misunderstood" - Nina Simone or – The Animals

Baby do you ……. me now
If sometimes you see that I'm mad
……. know that no one alive can always be an angel?
When everything goes wrong you see some bad

But oh, I'm just a soul …….
intentions are good
Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood

Ya know sometimes baby I'm so …….
With a ……. that's hard to hide
Then sometimes again it ……. that all I have is worry
And then you're ……. to see my other side

But I'm just a soul ……. intentions are good
Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood

If I seem …….
I want you to know

I never meant to ……. it out on you
Life has it's problems
And I get more than my …….
But that's me one ……. I never mean to do

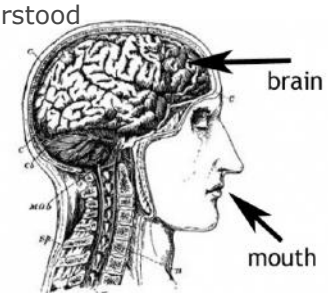
Cause I love you
Oh baby
I'm just human
Don't you know I have ……. like anyone?

Sometimes I find myself alone regretting
Some little ……. thing
Some simple thing that I've done

I'm just a soul ……. intentions are good
Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood
Don't let me be misunderstood

I try so hard
So don't let me be misunderstood

Activity Four – Let's **read the text*** together.



Auditory

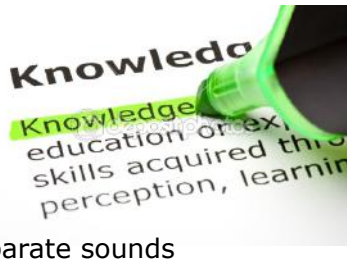
Listening is more than hearing. To understand we need to listen for key information and process that information in the right context.

Communication Awareness

Spoken words, the organization of the words, their intonation, loudness, and stress patterns, gestures, facial expression, proximity, and posture all contribute to meaning. Context factors need to be taken into consideration in interpreting what people mean to communicate, and it is easy to misinterpret another's communication, and it often requires effort!

People seem to accept this in their own language and forget this when trying to understand a foreign language, which is why we often hear them complain *'je n'ai rien compris!'*. It seems that the French education system has somehow made you expect to understand everything and so you have a sense of failure and frustration when you don't. You need to accept that you will only understand partially, and that you must use the context to piece the puzzle together!

(***Adapted from an article by Mark Ylvisaker)**



Hearing and Auditory Processing

Auditory processing of language includes the ability to integrate the separate sounds of a word into the perception of a meaningful word and of sequences of meaningful words. This means that if you are only used to reading English and not listening to it or speaking it then you will find it hard at first to understand when listening to people speak. You can easily practice and improve your listening skills, but it takes time and needs to be done regularly over a period of time.

Word Knowledge

Knowing the meaning of a word is more than knowing what that word refers to. Rather it is possession of a large set of meaning associations that comprise the word's full meaning. Understanding spoken language requires an adequate vocabulary. Word meanings may be concrete or abstract. This is why **you have to see a word in many different contexts**, not just learn a translation of what it means, in order to really understand it. So reading articles, books, magazines in English, or practicing your English in different situations, will help you to build up a better knowledge of the vocabulary and therefore understand better.



Social Knowledge and Pragmatics

Pragmatics refers to the rules governing the use of language in context Correct interpretation of what is said requires consideration of context information, knowledge of the speaker, understanding of events that preceded the interaction. Therefore your knowledge of the subject and context can help you to understand, sometimes better than a less knowledgeable native speaker. You have to trust yourself and trust your instinct. People often lose confidence completely when they fail to understand part of what is said in English. They then give up altogether. If you know the subject, and are confident about it in your own language, use this to help you interpret what is being said. Stay strong and focus!

Other Functions that Support Language Comprehension

Attention: Comprehending spoken language requires the ability to focus attention simultaneously on the speaker's words and nonverbal behavior, to maintain that focus over time, to focus simultaneously on ones own response, and to flexibly shift attentional focus as topics change.

Therefore if you get stuck, trying to obstinately translate a word into French, then you get lost! So you have to relax and focus in general on what is being said and how it is being said. If you don't understand something, forget it and move on.

Comprehension Monitoring and Strategic Behavior: Effective comprehension of spoken language requires routine monitoring of comprehension, detection of possible comprehension failures and a strategic ability to repair the breakdown.

You may have been taught to process a foreign language (and check comprehension) by translating every word of it into French. **In real life situations of spoken English, this method will not work.**

You need to rely on an appropriate solution for example by saying things like, "I'm not sure I understand what you mean; could you explain?

Change your expectations!

Never expect to understand everything. Don't say you understand nothing when you do understand something. Listening needs a great amount of practice and patience. Allow yourself the luxury of not becoming nervous when you do not understand, and you will be surprised by how quickly you **do** begin to understand.

Listening often is the most important way to improve your listening skills. Enjoy the listening possibilities offered by the Internet and remember **relax…**

Listen for Keywords: Use keywords (noun=principal words) or key phrases to help you understand the general ideas. Remember that understanding the main idea will help you to understand the detail as the person continues to speak. English speaking people use pitch, intonation and stress to draw attention to important ideas. So listen to the words, which **sound** more important.

Listen for Context: Focus on the words that you do understand, not the words you don't understand. You will work out what they mean from their context, or at least understand the general theme or direction of the information.

Expressions for when you don't understand.



- I'm sorry could I ask you to repeat that, I'm not sure if I understood.
- I didn't quite catch that please could you repeat the last part.
- I'm not sure if I understood everything. Could you repeat that please?
- Could you repeat that, sorry I didn't catch everything.
- Sorry, but could I ask you to explain that again, I'm not sure I understood properly.
- Would you mind repeating that, I didn't quite understood.
- I'm not sure if I am following you, could you just clarify that last point.
- I don't think I caught all that, could I ask you to repeat it.
- I might have misunderstood, am I right in thinking that….
- I'm not sure if I understood correctly, did you say that…

Ways to practice Listening:



- Listen to English speaking radio each time you are in the car. (You can use the Live Radio App on an 'I' phone for example). Listening to the radio is really one of the best ways to improve your level of comprehension. Do not expect to understand much of what you hear at first, and be patient. Remember that every sound you hear will gradually help you to improve your auditory processing in English, without you having to do anything, except tune in!

- Use the Yabla site in your spare time, a little every day.
- Watch films in VO (either with or without subtitles) on a regular basis.
- Watch some television in English every day (the news for example on the BBC or CNN).
- Take regular English lessons.
- Take your holidays in English speaking countries or try to make friends with English speaking people when on holiday.
- If you have an opportunity to participate in English speaking conferences or meetings at work, take it! Don't hesitate.

With your partner resume the main points you learned from the texts we just read together.



Activity Five – Watch the film clips and answer the comprehension questions. Use the advice from the text, relax and don't try to translate or understand everything. Listen for key information.

(1/2) Fawlty Towers - A Touch of Class (S01 E01)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lWJwgpOjpA&feature=related

Video 1 - first 8:15 minutes

1. What does he ask for on the phone?
2. What is there too much of on the tray?
3. Why did they hire Manuel?
4. What is Basil's wife asking him to do?
5. What was he trying to get done?
6. What didn't the couple get, that made them late?
7. What do they read about in the newspaper?
8. Why does he decide to change their advertising strategy?
9. Which magazine does he advertise in and how does he prove his strategy paid off?
10. What kind of room does the young man want?
11. What does he ask for?
12. What does Basil say to him before giving him the key?

Video 2
In video 2 there were several misunderstandings due to mispronunciation.
Cultural misunderstandings – The Italian Man who went to Malta
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_N1Cmt_QB0

Video 3
Robin Williams - The French
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tc78yPv_ztM&feature=related

1. What does he say about bombs?
2. Who does he give the cigarette to?
3. What does he say about Americans?
4. What will be special about Mini mouse?

Video 4 first 5 minutes
Ricky Gervais hosting the 2010 Golden Globes All of his good bits chained
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwH0HfbYHlM&playnext=1&list=PLCAFB5800F76D5B93&feature=results_main

1. What does he say about the people present?
2. What does he claim to have done to his face and body?
3. What does he say about actors?
4. Which scenes does he say were not in the script of 24?
5. Why does he say actors are known all over the world?
6. What will he do on his blog?

Activity Six – Role Plays

Invent and act out one with your partner a misunderstanding where you ask for clarification.

Activity Seven – Discussion

Discuss with your partner:

Do you often feel misunderstood, even in French?
Who understands you best?
Can you remember an experience where you had a really big misunderstanding?

Activity Eight – What's happening...

Look at the images and say what's happening in them and why there is a misunderstanding.





