

# Using Authentic Spoken Texts for Teaching Listening: Operationalizing the Diagnostic Approach

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## 要旨

本論文において、筆者は、フィールド診断法 (Field's Diagnostic Approach) に基づくリスニング教育に対する教授法上の論理的根拠を提供する。音韻縮約のような音声言語における特徴や、余剰性、ためらい、非文法性などの言語運用上の変異要素に学習者の注意を向けるために、いかに実際に用いられた音声言語データが利用されるかを記述し、言語的シグナルのマイクロ・マクロ両レベルにおける分析に焦点をあてた、リスニングへのボトムアップ型アプローチ法に基づく教育手順を詳述する。

## Abstract

In this paper, I provide a pedagogic rationale for teaching listening based on Field's Diagnostic Approach. I describe how authentic spoken language data is used to focus L2 listener attention on features of spoken language such as phonological reduction and performance variables such as redundancy, hesitation, and ungrammaticality. A teaching procedure is detailed, based on a bottom-up approach to listening focusing on a micro and macro level analysis of the linguistic signal, in which learners work with authentic spoken texts to improve listening comprehension.

## Introduction

Much of what happens in a listening class has traditionally been geared toward the measurable outcomes of a listening activity. However, recent work on listening has attempted to shift the emphasis to alternative approaches which place more focus on the learner perspective and the actual teaching of listening, with instructional procedures focused on what goes on during the process of listening and then diagnosing a specific area in need of more explicit teaching attention. This leads us to consider better ways to support learners while listening, and to develop materials based on such a diagnostic approach. The teaching materials and approach described in this paper focus on supporting listeners as they learn to cope with streams of authentic spoken language. The listening material selected includes brief streams of natural English provided by well-known actors in response to interview questions during the American television program *Inside the Actors Studio*. We begin by rationalizing the need for more emphasis on approaches to teaching listening through bottom-up processing. Then, after detailing the teaching context, a description of the selected

authentic spoken language samples is provided, along with a rationale for selection of the materials. This is followed by a detailed discussion outlining how the listening materials are used to help learners deal with the many problematic features of natural spoken language.

## Issues in Teaching Listening: Shifting Focus to the Linguistic Signal

Wilson (2003), for one, has identified a dichotomy in approaches to listening instruction, noting that bottom-up approaches based on how the learner processes what has actually been said have been undervalued in the literature in favor of the top-down processing of language input that focuses on listening for gist, guessing meaning from context, and the development of metacognitive strategies (see Goh, 1997; 2007, and Vandergrift, 1999; 2005 for example). Graham (2008) has noted that even when evidence has shown that bottom-up processing issues such as difficulty with hesitation and speed of delivery cause problems, the remedy is often to teach compensatory top-down strategies instead of providing tuition in tackling the linguistic signal. While top-down processes are no doubt valuable for the second language learner, and the teaching of listening should strive to incorporate both top-down and bottom-up skills improvement in listening lessons, there is clearly a strong emphasis on the development of top-down strategies in the research on listening. However, John Field's (1998; 2003; 2008; 2009) body of work on listening over the past twenty years suggests that teachers need to pay more attention to the actual linguistic signal if we are going to teach listening rather than merely test it. Field's work has been influential in shifting the focus, at least to some degree, back towards the bottom-up processing skills required of L2 listeners. Wilson's (2003) call for "discovery learning", in which students are aided in recognizing their precise listening weaknesses through collaborative text reconstruction exercises, is yet another reaction to the "excessive emphasis on top-down approaches" (p. 341) in the literature, and he suggests more work on sound and word recognition through practical classroom activities "that shift the balance toward "bottom-up primacy"" (p. 341).

Further to this, Sheerin (1987) is frequently cited for highlighting the classroom reality that listening instruction all too often means the testing of listening comprehension rather than the actual teaching of listening. She makes a strong case for the use of transcripts to support the listener, noting that "listening with a transcript is an underrated learning activity and is certainly an important resource for remedial work" (p. 128). She suggests, for example, that transcripts can be used effectively to deal with features of spoken language such as phonological simplification. This idea that we need to significantly re-think how we approach the actual teaching of listening has been taken up in force by Field (1998; 2003; 2009) whose alternative diagnostic approach is based on the idea that "wrong answers can be seen to be of more significance than correct ones" (1998, p. 111). This is a concept that is intuitively appealing to the language teacher. What Field terms as "breakdowns of understanding" (p.112) can be revised based on need and he provides helpful suggestions in dealing with these, particularly in the area of phonology. Noting that "we should not lose sight of the primacy of signal" (2003, p. 325), Field has placed principal focus on the importance of helping listeners deal with lexical segmentation. This micro focus on the signal, along with a macro focus on features of spoken texts such as identification of redundancy, hedges, stallers, and topic markers, should be addressed in conjunction in the teaching of listening because both are needed to help L2 listeners cope with authentic

speech. Indeed, as Thorn (2009) laments, the oft-neglected aim of simply helping students to listen more effectively should surely be our primary goal.

## The Teaching Context

The decision to use authentic spoken language data for listening has been influenced by the interests and needs of a small group of intermediate-level EFL learners studying in their second year at a Japanese university. Students were enrolled in the English Program for International Communication (EPIC), which is a single-semester six-course intensive language program consisting of both skills-based and applied courses. Each of these courses is further divided into a series of learning modules comprising the four skills (Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing), along with applied language study through Media and Cultural Studies units<sup>1</sup>. The listening modules are important because many of the students have never taken a dedicated listening course prior to enrollment in EPIC although some students have received limited instruction in high school classes. This instruction is usually supplementary in nature, with language lessons still focused more generally on reading and translation of English passages than on listening, even after listening became a part of the university Center Test. As well, most listening instruction is delivered through commercially prepared EFL texts based on audio files designed so as to control for speed, vocabulary, sound quality, and familiar grammatical patterns. At university level, with its continued emphasis on traditional grammar-translation, there is still very little opportunity for students to work with authentic spoken language in meaningful and challenging ways. The guiding principle in the EPIC listening modules is therefore that the listening comprehension practice should aim to help students function better when confronting authentic spoken language. The target CEFR-J outcome for listening that we are working toward with this EPIC unit of instruction is B2.2:

*“I can follow a variety of conversations between native speakers, in television programs and in films, which make no linguistic adjustments for non-native speakers”*

At the beginning of the EPIC Program, students were asked to complete a written self-assessment and language learning profile. All of the intermediate-level learners taking the course rated listening as an area in need of work. During an oral follow-up session based on their language learning profiles, it was discovered that their exposure to listening had been limited and students expressed a strong desire to work with spoken rather than written language. This limited exposure to listening had been through the traditional approach of focusing on the target vocabulary and grammar presented in English lessons using texts and listening materials designed for pedagogical purposes. None of the students had previously worked with authentic spoken language and, in spite of worries about not being able to understand ‘real’ English, each student considered their weakness in this area as something that needed to be addressed to improve their overall command of the language.

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete EPIC Program course map, with detailed modules/units of instruction, see Appendix 1.

## Rationale for the Selection of Authentic Listening Material

Selection of listening material for this teaching approach was thus based primarily on the idea that students needed significantly more exposure to authentic spoken language. ‘Authenticity’ is a controversial concept in ELT – pedagogically, politically, and even in terms of evolving definitions<sup>2</sup>. But for the purpose of this approach to teaching listening it primarily involves use of materials that embody the naturally-occurring genuine features of native-speaker English that EFL pedagogical materials do not capture. Authenticity implies the potential of ‘culture-rich’ learning materials while acknowledging that, without support and gradation of the pedagogical tasks associated with how authentic materials are used, authenticity can also place a ‘culture-bound’ burden on learners. The relative accessibility of an authentic text lies in how we expect learners to interact with that text. While the natural quality of the authentic language data is of primary importance, how this data is used in the classroom requires sensitivity to ensure that authenticity remains ‘culture-rich’ and not ‘culture-bound’. Authentic texts, and the authenticity of tasks and activities that students do in conjunction with these texts, have driven the pedagogical approaches that teachers use in the EPIC Program, and the concept of authenticity is a pillar of the broader EPIC curriculum.

If we consider the concept of authenticity along a spectrum or continuum, the materials selected from *Inside the Actors Studio* can be regarded as very close to authentic. Interview answers comprise unstructured language, filled with hesitations, false starts, self-corrections, hedges, and stallers. Field (1998, p. 115) has argued for a more systematic introduction of, and explicit focus on, such features of natural speech. The interview answers are also spontaneous and unscripted with natural rhythm, intonation, and pronunciation. The language data falls a little short of purely authentic material in the sense that it is a mediated program with both the interviewer and the interviewee aware of cameras and an audience, and fully aware that poor material can be edited out later. As actors, the interviewees are also professional speakers. This means that while perhaps not quite at the level of unrefined authenticity found in an ordinary unfiltered conversation between native speakers of English who are unaware that their chat is being recorded, the language presented in this program may be slightly easier for listeners to access given that it will not consist of the extremely messy features found in raw unselfconscious spoken interaction. Further, finding and recording purely authentic listening materials is a time-consuming task for teachers, especially in terms of providing material that is interesting to students. Raw authenticity can be daunting for learners in that the very richness of the language data can be overwhelming even to intermediate level students. In this regard, the level of authenticity from this kind of spoken language sample can be viewed as a bridge toward helping learners cope with, at a later stage in their language learning, purely natural speech interaction samples from everyday conversations.

The material, deliberately selected extracts from interview answers provided by guests on the American interview program *Inside the Actors Studio*, was chosen for several other reasons as well. First, the program is easily available on DVD and through Internet sources. It also provides much needed visual support for

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<sup>2</sup> A more detailed discussion of authenticity in ELT can be found in Gilmore’s (2007) state-of-the-art review.

learners. Cautioning against an over reliance on audio recordings, Ur (1984) has noted the value of being able to see the speaker while listening; that is, listening can improve when students are trained to recognize available visual cues. With this material, there is also great ease in stopping and replaying the stream of speech at the precise area in need of attention. The program also has strong motivational value for students, with popular movie actors as interviewees. Research on motivation in English language teaching (Peacock, 1997; Guariento and Morley, 2001) has noted the motivational value of giving the learner exposure to the 'real' language found in authentic texts<sup>3</sup>. Selected answers to interview questions from popular actors like Johnny Depp, Natalie Portman, and Russell Crowe certainly serve this end well and, as Corbett (2003) has shown in his analysis of mediated texts, students gain the advantage of working closely with a 'cultural product'. Another benefit of these materials is that students are exposed to both male and female models with different accents, personalities, and speaking styles. The interview format also allows us to focus unidirectionally on features of interactional speech as well as slightly longer narrative streams in which the actor will tell a brief uninterrupted story or personal experience. Finally, the length of the selected streams of speech, even the slightly longer extracts, is quite manageable for students. It is important to be able to work with controllable units of spoken language data. Longer extracts of spoken text, for example those found in university commencement speeches are valuable when exploring spoken language at the discourse level<sup>4</sup>, but the compact nature of short interview answers helps to keep the listening focus on the primacy of the linguistic signal.

## Teaching Application: Procedural Discussion of Language Data Use

In Field's (2003, p. 112) alternative approach to the design of a listening lesson, much less time is given over to the pre-listening stage which is usually influenced by top-down strategies – as little as five minutes. Following a brief pre-listening activity that might include, in our case, information about the television program itself, questions about the actors and the movies they have appeared in and, in Extract 1 for example, some discussion of native American heritage and to establish context, our first spoken samples are taken from the very beginning of an interview with the American actor, Johnny Depp. To begin the listening lesson, students are asked to transcribe only the initial series of introductory questions the interviewer uses to establish rapport. These questions are generally easier for students to cope with than the actual interviewee responses, the reasons for which we will discuss later. After yet another brief warm-up listening exercise in which students get used to the speech patterns of the interviewee by listening for gist and noting down in brief the answers to a series of 6-8 introductory questions by the interviewer (see Appendix 2 for the transcribed questions and answers), certain extracts are culled for teaching focus based partly on problems encountered while listening. During this listening activity, it is most often found that students cannot manage to catch many of the key points the actors make in their responses to interview questions, even in very brief streams of

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<sup>3</sup> As this specifically relates to the EPIC Program course design, Lingley (2005) has reported on how findings from motivation research, including the use of authentic materials, have been used to strengthen the curricular foundation of EPIC.

<sup>4</sup> For a closer examination at how the use of longer streams of narrative speech have been piloted for vocabulary and listening purposes in the EPIC Program, see Lingley (2007).

speech of 10-15 seconds. Listeners have trouble sifting through the authentic features to extract meaning and can become frustrated or lost when this happens. To address this weakness, the teacher should be prepared to focus on both the micro and macro level features of the spoken text that might unexpectedly arise during this stage. However, teachers must also be prepared based on what is already known about the learners. It is important to note here that this teaching procedure is not only a narrow diagnostic approach based on what arises in a particular lesson. Teachers with extended experience working in a particular EFL context with learners of a certain level will already be aware of the kinds of problems that will arise for listeners and can accordingly prepare lessons based on a much wider diagnostic understanding of listener level.

The first extract is selected for teaching focus because it includes several natural speech features such as redundancy, hedges, reduced forms, and performance variables that students will have to negotiate as they become more familiar with naturally occurring spoken English. This first extract is in response to the question, “*Do you have any native American ancestry?*”

### Extract 1:

*Yeah, apparently, yeah. Er, my family comes from Kentucky -- they've been there for many, you know, many, many generations and erm, my grandmo- my great-grandmother was er had a lotta Cherokee blood. (12 seconds)*

The first thing we notice about this particular speech sample is the short length. It is suggested here that, when dealing with authentic texts, students at intermediate level first be presented with plenty of these short streams of language, learn to identify certain key features of spoken language, and then proceed by tackling progressively longer streams of speech as they build up skills and confidence as listeners. This is in line with Moore (2017) who cautions that sensitivity is needed when teachers work with authentic materials. But even as a very compact sample, there is much packed into the interviewee's response that might prove difficult for the English language learner. Lexically, the extract is not particularly dense but items like ‘*apparently*’, ‘*great-grandmother*’ and especially ‘*Cherokee blood*’ may cause some difficulty. We can find examples of stallers (‘*er*’ and ‘*erm*’, and one lengthy pause after ‘*Kentucky*’) and vague language hedges (‘*you know*’) which help the speaker buy time to construct what follows next in his response. Buck (2001) points out that “the ability to comprehend spoken English must include the facility to deal with these hesitation phenomena” (p. 41). To this end, Field (2009) notes that hesitation employed by the speaker can be used by the listener as well – “it gives the listener time to review what has been heard” (p. 272). Regarding reduced forms, there is one rather easy example of cliticization involving end consonant deletion (‘*hadalotta*’ = had a lot of) which can effectively draw the learners’ attention to this phenomenon, as well as a morphological example (‘*they've been*’). It is interesting that Japanese L2 learners will often transcribe this as ‘*they have been*’ but unsurprising given that Field (2003) notes that “learners’ expectations of what they will hear are sometimes unduly influenced by exposure to the written language” (p. 330). Field (1998, p. 114) recommends lexical segmentation exercises to focus on reduction in which learners transcribe a section of authentic speech in order to develop sub-skills.

Through analysis of authentic spoken English texts, learners are also interested to find that native speaker language can display performance variables such as repetitions, incomplete utterances, false starts, and repair. For example, the speaker provides us with an example of a false start when he backtracks in mid-stream (*my grandmo- my great-grandmother was er had a lotta ...*). Exposure to such language at this macro level, some of which might even include ungrammaticality and messiness of performance, plays an important role in preparing the learner for authentic speech. Messiness of spoken language poses other challenges for students. Learned pronunciation often changes significantly in natural spoken English, and unclear pronunciation in continuous ‘real’ speech can obscure word boundaries<sup>5</sup>. Many Japanese learners remark that native speaker spoken language causes them difficulty even when they perceive themselves to be fairly proficient in English. The learner may not be consciously aware that this is because spoken language is not always as neat, correct, and ‘packaged’ as the language they have been exposed to in their standard EFL classes. Explicit attention to such ‘messy’ language-in-use examples can help the learner to better cope with spontaneous speech. A transcription activity which calls for students to write down every speaker utterance including hesitation, repetition, and hedges, can focus the learner on this point. It is also a worthwhile activity at this stage to have students listen again to only the interview questions, which have been carefully prepared and are for the most part more clearly enunciated, and then compare them to the interviewee speech samples. Students find the language and questions of the interviewer, James Lipton, much easier to transcribe and considering why this is so is an important lesson for the L2 listener. Comparing these natural speech samples with material such as rehearsed dialogue found in sitcoms, for example, is also effective in drawing attention to features of natural speech. Students will find that rehearsed dialogue between actors, while exhibiting many of the same features noted above, is easier to manage and transcribe. Both are valuable resources to be mined by the teacher of listening.

Another extract of similar length from the same set of introductory questions posed by the interviewer can be used to reinforce some of the same macro features identified in Extract 1. In response to the question, “*What was your father’s profession, Johnny?*”, the interviewee twice repairs his speech on the fly. Closer examination of the language sample through a student transcription for example, can be preceded by a variety of teacher questions checking general comprehension.

## Extract 2:

*My pop was er a civil engineer and erm he worked for various cities, you know, Frankfurt, Kentucky and then he worked, and then we moved to Florida, and he worked at, for the city down there. (12 seconds)*

In this extract, we see yet more examples of vague language (*‘you know’, ‘the city down there’*) and significant messiness (*‘then he worked, and then we moved’, ‘he worked at, for the city’*) that serve to make

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<sup>5</sup> Speed, accent, listener fatigue, speaker elaborations and improvisation, and vernacular and colloquial language are still other variables which the L2 listener must cope with when dealing with authentic English. A summary of these can be found in McCarthy, O’Keeffe and Walsh (2010, p. 94) in their discussion of words in text and discourse, as well as in Ur (1991, pp. 105-112).

a rather simple utterance quite inaccessible to L2 listeners. Add to this the cultural references that appear in Extracts 1 and 2 (place names such as Kentucky, Frankfurt, and Florida, and culture-bound language like ‘*Cherokee blood*’) and there is very good reason to see why such speech samples can be problematic for learners. Drawing attention to such messiness, and even letting learners know that they cannot be expected to know about culture-bound language, helps to reduce learner anxiety. Such exercises at least partially explain why failure to understand occurs in listening.

## Dealing with Longer Streams of Narrative Speech

In the next stage of our listening lesson, we move on to slightly longer streams of speech by the same actor, helping students build upon some of the same features identified in the introductory listening activity. Prior to that, however, we can make a slight shift in focus to consider the lead-in question to Extract 3 which provides us with the one notable exception to the interviewer’s generally well-enunciated questions. Referring to the guitar, Lipton demonstrates another kind of reduction when he assimilates ‘*how did you*’ in asking ‘*howdja learn to play it*’. Drawing on Gimson (1994), Field (2003, p. 331) suggests that we can use such examples to alert learners to the systematic aspects of assimilation. Phonological reduction in general (cliticization, assimilation, and elision) is a very common feature of spoken language and learning to identify this phenomenon is essential for effective listening. Turning back to our target interviewee speech data, the following extract is Johnny Depp’s reply to this question.

### Extract 3:

*I stole – a chord book. I’m admitting it now for the first time. I actually st- yeah I, I er, I er stole a chord book, a Mel Bay chord book from er from a department store. It helped – a lot to er sort of, you know, at that age, you know, twelve, thirteen, fourteen years old, you know, things are going haywire inside so er, you know, the guitar sort of saved me there. (25 seconds)*

In this extract, there seems to be more real-time processing of language. This particular stream of speech is filled with many of the same features identified in Extracts 1 and 2, and the learners may now be ready to try on their own to identify these features with this more difficult text as part of a longer listening stage. Field (1998; 2003) calls for the use of repeated playbacks in this stage and these can be used here to help the listeners identify and filter out some of the fillers, redundancy, and hesitation. This can be done by simply getting learners to count how many times they hear ‘*you know*’ (4). Unfortunately, however, more is required when it comes to processing the meaning and function of ‘*you know*’ in the linguistic signal. It is much more than just a matter of marking such items – students will also need to know that ‘*you know*’ serves two different functions that will help the listener to follow the discourse. The first and the fourth ‘*you know*’ are used as interactional signals and serve to involve the listener in the exchange. The second and third examples function as discourse markers to signal the provision of related information and a temporary change of direction. Learners can also be asked to count the ‘*sort of*’ hedges (2), or be asked to listen for examples of filled ‘*er*’ pauses (5), or try to find examples of repetition and repair. This can be done individually first and



then collaboratively with a partner to check their answers. It would involve repeated replays, and such tasks involve meaningful interaction both with and about the listening text, as well as the flexibility to depart in other directions to meet student needs where necessary.

As noted, Sheerin (1987) has suggested the use of transcripts to support listeners and Extract 3 provides a nice chance to do different kinds of transcription work. Transcripts can be used in a variety of ways. For example, a transcript could be manipulated for use as a gap fill, or extra spaces could be provided before each word of the text so that students can listen and fill in any repetitions, filled pauses, hedges, or other target feature. Or it might simply be used as a “while listening” activity. Though it is too time consuming for the teacher to prepare full transcripts of all the data to be studied, key extracts can be transcribed in advance and distributed to students after they have listened several times and attempted a transcription of their own. Students can also work together or with the teacher collaboratively to prepare transcripts which the teacher can then keep as part of an expanding bank of transcription material to be exploited in future listening lessons. In contexts like Japan where the learner not only wants to catch every word but to know the correct spellings too, the provision of supplementary transcripts goes a long way toward accommodating learning styles.

#### Extract 4:

Our fourth and final extract is yet another from Johnny Depp, a slightly longer narrative stream in which he recounts how he dropped out of high school in response to the question, *How long did you stay there?*

*I was **there** until I think I was about ff-, around fifteen I left. I went **back** two weeks later and I thought, you know what, **this** is crazy. I, I should go back, and I went back and I spoke to the Dean of the school and he said, “Johnny, **we** don’t want you to come back”. Yeah, he said, “Listen”, you know, **he** was really sweet actually, he said, er, er, you know that, “you have this music thing”, he said, “I think you should run with **it**, you should f-, you should, **that’s** your passion, you should go with **that**”. So I did. (28 seconds)*

Compared to Extract 3, learners find this one a little easier to deal with. Again, it is not at all lexically dense, though some tuition in colloquial language use (*‘this music thing’*) and idiomatic language use (*‘you should run with it’* and *‘you should go with that’*) will be helpful. The real problem for the listener in being able to fully comprehend this extract is in determining, for example, what is and what is not quoted text. Recounting a story can involve changes in tense, confusion about reported speech, and significant redundancy making it difficult for the learner to follow. As part of his suggestions for developing listening sub-skills, Field (1998, p. 114) suggests helping students with work on expressions of reference and we are provided opportunities to revise this in listening instruction in such cases when a speaker recounts a brief personal story. Asking students to identify what the reference items (indicated in bold font in Extract 4) refer back to will help the teacher determine whether students have a sound comprehension of the text at macro level. It is also important to provide the same kinds of explicit sub-skills focus using listening material from different speakers. As the telling of brief personal narratives is fairly common in interview interaction, we can easily provide students with other examples of speakers recounting an event, or a more abstract feeling. The same

procedures as above can be repeated with other interviewed speakers to focus on discourse level deixis. It is suggested here that this kind of graded procedure from shorter to longer texts focusing on selected bottom-up listening processes as they arise in a listening lesson adequately addresses worries raised by Goh (2007), for example, who sees risk in bottom-up approaches “becoming decontextualized and some teachers returning to drills involving sound discrimination” (p. 207). Pedagogically sound, learner-centered approaches to bottom-up listening involve much more than sound discrimination drills.

## Student-centered Listening

The pedagogical and diagnostic approach I have described in this paper, focusing on examples of spontaneous speech provided in the Johnny Depp interview, is only the first stage of a much larger listening module in which students work with a spoken text of their choice and present it to the class. The way that this module is operationalized in the EPIC Program involves first repeating the same procedure described in this paper with two other actors. I always begin with Johnny Depp to introduce this project-based unit, which can take up to 2-3 classes. I then use the Russell Crowe interview (one class), and conclude the instructional phase with the Daniel Radcliffe interview (one class). Students, either individually or in pairs, then choose an actor they like and begin the long process of repeated listening to transcribe the introductory Q&A part of the interview. Student transcriptions must include all hesitation, repetitions, voice-filled pauses, and false starts. This involves both collaborative peer work and support from the teacher. Students are then asked to identify and transcribe a longer stream of speech from their selected interview data which addresses some aspect of culture, language, or humor. The unit is concluded with student presentations in which they lead the EPIC group in the same way I did with the Johnny Depp interview data. They discuss difficulties in transcription, provide gap-fill activities, and identify some of the interesting linguistic and cultural aspects of their interview data. This listening module takes up to 8-10 classes to complete.

## Assessment

Assessment of listening is controversial. The development of listening comprehension is a long-term process, especially in EFL contexts. It is also, as Buck (2001) cautions, “a very individual and personal process” (p. 29). Some researchers make the case that learner time should be spent practicing, and that listening need not, or indeed cannot, be assessed in standard ways. The way that I operationalize and assess the EPIC listening module is very much influenced by this philosophy. With respect to the pedagogical approach demonstrated in this paper, a final assessment is done by simply using another actor on test day and getting students to 1.) write down all the interview questions because many are often similar and the interviewer is a constant, and 2.) select one or two of the interviewee answers and get students to transcribe them as best they can. Another way that students are assessed for this unit is based on the way that they interact with their selected spoken language samples, both collaboratively with peers and in their consultations with me. Transcription of authentic spontaneous spoken language is extremely difficult for EFL learners and does not lend itself to results-based assessment. The very process of attempting to unpack a spoken text at this level is a worthy classroom activity which needs to be rewarded or assessed in creative ways. In the end, upon completion of

the listening unit, teachers will have a strong sense about how students have performed in trying to understand such difficult materials, and where students are in their respective individual listening comprehension process.

## Conclusion

In supporting learners as they make their first steps with authentic spoken language, a dual emphasis on the bottom-up processing of input through micro level attention on the signal, and a macro level analysis that aims to help the listener to filter out redundancy and performance variables and identify features of spoken interaction, is helpful in bringing into focus the meaning of authentic speech. A practical teaching procedure based on the use of authentic listening materials has been presented, drawing primarily on the work of Field who has called on teachers of listening to incorporate more actual listening in their lessons and to guide learners to recognize features of spoken language based on problems that arise while listening. The procedure outlined has called for a degree of gradation in using authentic materials as listening input. First, there is the need to have visual support and the material suggested provides for this. Second, the mediated nature of the listening materials supports learners as they build toward richer and more purely authentic spoken interaction. Finally, emphasis has been placed on the need to first present authentic streams of English to students in very brief extracts and then build up slowly to longer narrative streams. In line with Field's diagnostic approach, the lesson is based on identifying features of spoken language that students find difficult and then focusing teaching attention in that area. This teaching approach helps prevent the formulaic presentation of listening lessons based on the mere checking of comprehension.

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Appendix 1: EPIC Program Course Map/Units of Instruction

Teacher	EPIC Foundation Unit	Module 1	Module 2
(EPIC 1A/1B)	Self-access learning CEFR_Japan	Speaking I (Interaction) <i>Issues in Contemporary Society/Culture</i>	Writing II <i>Applied Genre Writing (film reviews)</i>
	MS Word specs	Cultural Studies I <i>Gender and Language</i>	Listening II <i>Authentic listening/Actors Studio</i>
(EPIC 2A/2B)	Email	Listening I <i>The 1960s</i> <i>Listening/Cultural Resources</i>	Cultural Studies II <i>Interview Project</i> <i>Raising Bilingual Children</i>
	Presentation	Media I <i>TED Talks/Presentations</i>	Reading II <i>English Debate</i>
(EPIC 3A/3B)	Google Docs Grammarly	Writing I <i>Five-paragraph Essay</i>	Speaking II (Production) <i>Poster Presentations</i>
	Extensive Reading	Reading I <i>Rhetorical/Discourse Structures in Newspaper and Magazine Articles</i>	Media II <i>Project-based Instruction (Life in Kochi)</i> <i>Writing for Digital Production</i>

**Applied Courses****Media (Media I/II)****Cultural Studies (Cultural Studies I/II)****Skills-based Courses****Reading (Reading I/II)****Speaking (Speaking I/II)****Writing (Writing I/II)****Listening (Listening I/II)**

1. Each EPIC teacher is responsible for a combination of skills-based and applied courses, and four separate modules of instruction
2. EPIC courses are divided into 12 compact units of instruction to ensure that students receive a variety of skills and applied instruction from each course instructor
3. In principle, each unit of instruction should average 6-8 classes. However, in practice is may be necessary to lengthen/shorten units based on learning needs
4. Each EPIC teacher is responsible for a 2-3 class Foundation Unit at the beginning of the EPIC Program. The following EPIC-related items are covered in the Foundation Unit: (Email communication/etiquette, Word document formatting, Google Docs, introduction of Extensive Reading component, CEFR-J descriptors and outcomes, presentation skills, self-access learning)
5. A special EPIC Diploma is awarded to students who complete all six courses with a course grade of B or higher, with a CEFR-J reference point of B2.1 or higher.

## Appendix 2: Transcript of introductory Q&A

The following is a transcript of the introductory set of questions and answers between the interviewer, James Lipton, and the interviewee, Johnny Depp.

Q: Tell me first about the name Depp. Do you know its origin?

A: *No, I, I don't really know the origin but I do know what it means in German.*

Q: What does it mean?

A: *---idiot.*

Q: Now, a question that has come up far more frequently than I would have expected on this stage – do you have any native American ancestry?

A: *Yeah, apparently, yeah. Er, my family comes from Kentucky -- they've been there for many, you know, many, many generations and erm, my grandmo- my great-grandmother was er had a lot of Cherokee blood.*

Q: You were born in Kentucky?

A: *Yeah.*

Q: What was your father's profession, Johnny?

A: *My pop was er a civil engineer and erm he worked for various cities, you know, Frankfurt, Kentucky and then he worked, and then we moved to Florida, and he worked at, for the city down there.*

Q: Did your mother work as well?

A: *Yeah.*

Q: What did she do?

A: *My Mom was a waitress.*

Q: She was?

A: *Yeah, she worked in, you know, little diners and stuff.*

Q: Your mother's name is?

A: *Betty Sue.*

Q: You said, by the time I was 15 we had lived in about 20 houses.

A: *Probably more.*

Q: Why so much moving?

A: *We were like gypsies, you know, we just kept moving, moving, you know.*

Q: When did you get your first guitar?

A: *I think I was about 12.*

Q: How did you ('Howdja') learn to play it?

A: *I stole – a chord book. I'm admitting it now for the first time. I actually st- yeah I, I er, I er stole a chord book, a Mel Bay chord book from er from a department store. It helped – a lot to er sort of, you know, at that age, you know, twelve, thirteen, fourteen years old, you know, things are going haywire inside so er, you know, the guitar sort of saved me there.*

Q: What high school did you go to?

A: *I went to, er, Merimar High School.*

Q: How did you ('didja') do there?

A: *Well, before or after I left?*

Q: How long did you ('didja') stay there?

A: *I was **there** until I think I was about ff-, around fifteen I left. I went **back** two weeks later and I thought, you know what, **this** is crazy. I, I should go back, and I went back and I spoke to the Dean of the school and he said, "Johnny, **we** don't want you to come back". Yeah, he said, "Listen", you know, **he** was really sweet actually, he said, er, er, you know that, "you have this music thing", he said, "I think you should run with **it**, you should f-, you should, **that's** your passion, you should go with **that**". So I did. (28 seconds)*