TEACHING NATURAL SPEECH UNDERSTANDING

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1. *SOME PROBLEMS IN UNDERSTANDING NATURAL SPEECH*

In my French pronunciation and conversation classes at the University of Hawaii, I have been sending my students to watch French films whenever showing on campus or in the vicinity. They would come back and give a report both on what they had understood and on the difficulties they had encountered in understanding it. One of these students started his report in the following manner: "Have you ever sat in a movie house unable to understand why the audience is laughing? Have you ever felt the frustration caused by that laughter, by the coos and ahhs, and by your knowledge that the film you are watching has won several international awards? This is what I experienced Saturday night when I went to see *Claire's Knee...*".

Of course, being fully conscious that frustration is not always the best introduction to learning motivation, I have tried to offer my students some practical ways to comprehend a spoken message. I already reported at the eighth international congress of phonetic sciences in Leeds on some exercises which can be performed in a language laboratory (Niedzielski 1975b). These exercises, based on dictation and phonetic transcription, can serve as a preliminary step taken in a controlled situation in view of preparing the students to face the real world.

There are many other situations than the cinema where listening skills are of crucial importance. For instance, in any normal conversation between two people, each person, on the average, is speaking fifty percent of the time and listening the other fifty percent not counting, of course, listening to one's own voice. It follows that listening comprehension is a vital part of

being able to converse, for how is it possible to talk to another person for any length of time if one can't follow what s/he is saying? Unfortunately, the other person's speech is the one area of language over which a student has virtually no control.

The biggest problem one might notice is psychological: When confronted with a steady flow of sounds hitting him/her at a nerve-wracking speed of up to 200 syllables a minute, the student seems to experience some type of anxiety which prevents him/her to do what s/he has been doing naturally in his/her own language. Redundancies and other various contextual clues are either not perceived or not utilized. In this connection, it should be noted that a sentence spoken fast often sounds quite different from the same sentence spoken slowly. Compare, for instance, "It's raining in New York today" with "t's rainin'n N'York tday'. Contractions like "N'York" are no problem for native speakers of English because when they miss one clue to meaning they can grasp it from another clue in the linguistic, situational, and/or metalinguistic context(s). The same applies in French "Tu l'as jeté?" /tylaʃte/ and "Tu l'as acheté?" /tylaʃte/ for /tyla:ʃte/. Native speakers rely heavily on redundancy to cope with speech in which for one reason or another they miss some of the significant signals, as in the case of interference from noise both in the popular and technical sense. However, many if not most individuals find themselves psychologically unable to follow the same process when they become foreign language learners.

These learners need help to become effective listeners, i.e. people able to think and interpret as they listen without visual support. Since the ultimate goal is to prepare them to participate in spontaneous conversations, they must be trained to understand spontaneous or natural speech.

The number of recent publications—reports, articles, or even books on the subject of teaching or learning "the listening skill" attests to its importance (e.g. Mac Carthy 1976:212, Voss 1977:1, Levy 1978, Forrest 1980:109, Frommer & Ishikawa 1980, Scanlan 1980). In addition, a questionnaire sent out by Henrichsen to five hundred teachers/learners revealed that, out of twenty topics, listening comprehension be given the highest priority in a LF or TEFL program (Henrichsen 1979).

2. SOME DEFINITIONS

It was mentioned above that the main reason why FL learners do not understand natural speech is because they do not utilize the various clues offered by the contexts. Let us first define these terms. What is natural speech, how does it differ from other types of speech presented in FL classrooms? What are linguistic, situational and metalinguistic contexts?

2.1. *Natural speech*

Natural speech is spontaneous speech. It contains repetitions, hesitations, mispronunciations, grammatical errors, even contradictions. It can never be emphasized enough that spontaneous speech, even that of educated persons such as university faculty members and nationally known figures in radio debates, is by no means the same as the elegant, polished style written French. If students are to understand spoken language, they must be trained with materials utilizing spontaneous speech with all its features, both recorded and later transcribed graphically for temporary, transitional visual support. The well known principle underlying this requirement is that individuals learn only what they are taught.

2.2. *Artificial version*

For the longest time FL students have been taught to listen to and speak a written language instead of being prepared to hear and understand natural speech. It is a well known fact that, instead of being the other way around, textbooks used in conversation classes have been written first and accompanying oral exercises recorded later. At best, these recordings have been only a kind of flawless voicing or reading aloud of the written language. Such reading aloud may be useful in acquiring a good pronunciation (Niedzielski 1975a) but it has very little to do with conversational skills, and artificial versions should never constitute the basis of a program intended to prepare students to communicate spontaneously.

2.3. *Cleaned-up versions*

Two types of cleaned-up versions may be used in initial stages of a program teaching conversational or listening skills.

In one type, the oral materials recorded spontaneously through interviews (e.g. *Sur le Vif* published in 1977 by EMC Corporation in Saint Paul, Minnesota) are transcribed into a neat looking written language without any feature of spontaneous speech.

The other type of cleaned-up version consists in reading aloud a written text based on the transcription of a spontaneous conversation. Many characteristics of the spoken language are preserved, such as: interrupted thoughts, false starts, hesitations, internal contradictions, or apparent incoherence.

Essentially, both types differ from the spontaneous version of a conversation, defined above as natural speech, because their written transcription exhibits neither grammatical errors or incongruities nor mutual interferences in the interlocutors' utterances.

2.4. *Linguistic context*

Each discourse in any language contains grammatical, redundant markers and semantic, cohesive ties. These characteristics constitute the foundation of a linguistic context for each word in the text.

Gender or number markers are examples of grammatical redundancies. These are particularly developed in French which respects the so-called principle of "Conservation de l'information vers la droite", which states that once gender or number has been introduced in a sentence it is indicated as many times as possible till the end of the sentence.

Cohesive ties are a set of semantic resources linking a text with what has come before (Chapman 1980). These may include conjunctions, anaphoric pronouns, such paradigmatic associations as reiterations and synonyms, as well as syntagmatic associations like collocations and referential connotations.

2.5. *Situational context*

A certain continuity or even progression exists in the setting, the event structure and the episodes of any discourse. The verbal theme of one phrase is similar to the verbal theme of the preceding phrase of the same interlocutor. Semantic and syntactic expectancies set up by one phrase are fulfilled in the next phrase (Hirsch 1977:97). The listener must recognize not only the lexicon and the structures but also this continuity as well as the rules of discourse observed in situations where communication is taking place between people (Richards 1980:413).

2.6. *Metalinguistic context*

Almost any utterance and every conversation has a cultural content determined by the culture of the sp   n community in whose language the conversation is taking place. To understand it, the listener must possess a certain knowledge of this community, its history, geography, art, customs and institutions. Of course, one cannot expect the FL learner to have such a complete prior knowledge. Instead, one must somehow provide him/her with the information indispensable to understand a particular conversation or other oral discourse.

3. *SAMPLE COURSE*

In 1976, a friend of mine, emeritus professor of Chinese, joined my conversation class and, dissatisfied with the materials available on the market for the teaching of French conversational skills, he showed me what he was doing in Chinese. That was the impetus I needed to further my research and improve my techniques.

3.1. *Basic materials*

Basic materials are spontaneous conversations as defined above under natural speech. However, the first unit is a cleaned-up version.

3.1.1. *Spontaneous recordings*

First of all, I recorded some spontaneous discussions of subjects selected out of a list recently complied, on the basis of their general appeal, by about 150 students in the French division at the University of Hawaii. (The structure of information texts lends itself better to the designing and developing of learning strategies (cf. Pugh 1980:9, Natalicio 1979:176). My interlocutors were two other native speakers and professors of French in the department. I gave them a few days to research the topic in order to have them come to the recording session with up-to-date information. However, to ensure spontaneity, I did not tell them what precise questions I would ask them.

To increase the variety in materials and speech styles, I selected excerpts from a panel discussion broadcast over radio France Culture. (Using radio programs for language work has recently attracted renewed interest, e.g. Forrest 1980, Scanlan 1980).

Presently, the topics discussed range from studies, leisure and narcotics to individual well being, social welfare and work management. The recordings vary from ten to twenty minutes, for as Voge states: "...establish and work within a familiar contextual framework, avoiding frequent movement from one subject area to another whenever possible. Ideally, lessons are based on an ordered sequence of situational or semantic paradigms, rather than syntactic or structural paradigms" (p. 8).

3.1.2. *Integral written transcription*

The second step was to transcribe all these spontaneous recordings. This work proved to be quite lengthy and at times very difficult, especially when more than one person spoke simultaneously. This transcription is a full and faithful writing down of everything on the tape, including repetitions, redundancies, hesitations, errors, and other features that actually occur in speech. Sounds of hesitation, laughter, agreement, and other interjections or exclamations are noted according to established conventions, such as in *Micro Robert, Dictionnaire du Français Primordial* (Paris, 1971). In some cases, new graphic symbols had to be created to represent various nuances of hesitation or (dis)agreement because they could not be found in any dictionary or other book. In this respect it can be said that this course is in line with some of the newest recommendations published on both sides of the Atlantic (cf.

Voss 1977: 1, Frommer and Ishikawa 1980: 502). Some other phonetic features encountered in the recordings are also represented in the transcription and in explanatory notes, such as linking and/or contraction of words and stammered expressions in which part of a word is repeated.

Overlapped speech is indicated by shading. Vertical juxtaposition of the graphic representation of the speakers' utterances clearly shows the beginning and the end of each actant's participation. It thus allows to represent simultaneous speech by two or more speakers and to keep track of who said what, when, and where.

In addition, the transcription is provided with a system of numbers for ease in reference. Because the first unit is a cleaned-up version, of the second type defined above, numbers are assigned sequentially to the remarks made by the various speakers. In the other units, the numbers are based on the timing device to be found on tape recorders. Each number represents four seconds. The numbers can help locate the place on the tape corresponding to a particular passage in the transcription. A short sample of transcription can be seen in table 1.

Three persons are speaking almost simultaneously. One voice is transcribed in lower case, another in lower case underlined, the third in capital letters with a dot under each letter which normally would already be capitalized. With a more versatile typewriter, or in professional printing, other styles of characters can be used, especially if more than three persons participate in the conversation.

When reading the transcription, just as when listening to the recording, it is best to follow what one speaker says, then another, and so on. Let us examine, for instance, what happens between numbers 132 and 134. One speaker says: "pendant qu'ils étudient, tandis qu'en France les étudiants- c'est difficile de travailler, c'est difficile de travailler. Ca paraît-" (Hyphens indicate false starts and/or a break in grammatical sequence. Dots are used to show that a speaker's utterance is continuous and lasts as long as that of another speaker within a shading box). Another person concurs and tries to add something: "Ah oui, d'accord d'accord alors alors". Finally, he gets his turn and may continue almost undisturbed (except for "ça paraît"): "C-est-à- -dire que, bien qu'en théorie et en principe tout le monde puisse aller à l'univer [...]". The third interlocutor's contribution is: "Exac- exactement. C'est c'est c'est leurs conditions de vie."

The differences between this integral transcription of a spontaneous conversation and the texts generally used in conversation classes are obvious. As Richards (1980) points out, people don't normally speak in perfect grammatical and complete sentences. This is especially true when more than two persons participate actively in a conversation, because they have to struggle

apparently to obtain their turn in speaking. Of course, this competition depends on sociolinguistic norms prevailing in a given society, on the general personality of the participants and their particular enthusiasm for the topic being discussed. No wonder students, trained with neat literary texts, find themselves unable to understand natural speech and to engage in conversation with normal speakers of the target language.

Not only sentences are syntactically irregular, but they also exhibit some grammatical errors (like "C'est difficile de travailler." pour "Il est difficile de travailler.") and, at times, the logic which determines their sequential arrangement is difficult to recognize. For instance, what is the antecedent referred to by the word *C'* in "C'est économique finalement."? It is never stated explicitly. It is actually the general idea that, in France, only children from well-to-do families go to the university because the others cannot afford food and board expenses as it is difficult for them to find gainful employment. How far we are here from a well structured paragraph!

Contrary to fluent or "native" speakers, foreign language learners are disconcerted by this partial or total absence of well formed sentences and paragraphs. They need help and this help can only come from being exposed to and familiar with natural speech.

How each recording and its transcription can be used depends on the learner's level of proficiency in the listening skill. Some well advanced students may be able to concentrate on listening to the tape recordings, making out as much as they can and only occasionally refering to the transcription. Other students will need more help and will avail themselves of the various aids or exercises which follow. It should be noted that, although developed empirically, these correspond remarkably with the most recent findings on the various stages involved in the listening process (Massaro 1978: 6 reproduced in our table 2).

3.2. *Aids and exercises*

Although it is recommended that they be used according to the progression suggested below, which has been tried in several classes, whether they are all necessary depends, of course, on the students' proficiency and motivation.

3.2.1. *Résumé*

The general contents of the recording are presented in a lexically and structurally simplified summary in the target language. Recent research has shown that prior knowledge of the subject matter discussed or otherwise pre-

sented in a text (oral or written) should be imparted to the learner through such a summary or a set of notes (Lunzer 1980: 4). Furthermore, "information retrieval and the recall of text are affected by the manner in which prior knowledge has been organized" (Langer & Nicolich 1980:2). Thus, numbers are provided over some vocabulary items to help students in two different manners: in locating the expression if necessary in *Definitions and explanations* (our 3.2.2.), and in finding roughly parallel passages in the complete transcription. A recording of the Résumé is available for use as an introduction to the conversation or as a follow up in a different form.

e.g. Les jeunes Américains vous posent souvent la question à propos des jeunes Français. Les Français aussi se posent la question sur les Américains. Souvent il y a des deux côtés des préjugés.

3.2.2. *Definitions and explanations*

Additional prior knowledge is provided in three sets of bilingual notes. Table 3 shows how this semantic index provides essential linguistic, cultural, metalinguistic knowledge, without which much misunderstanding occurs. (Cf. Donaldson-Evans 1980, Scanlan 1980: 404.)

Presented chronologically as thought units rather than in single words, the definitions and explanations are numbered like in the complete transcription and given in English, rather than French, because the aim is to offer the students a quick aid to understanding the rapid flow of conversation and not to slow them up by having them decipher the meaning of each item. This is in agreement with recent findings which show that any available associations between prior knowledge and the discourse to be understood must be brought to the student's awareness (Langer 1980: 1).

Most lexical entries are either idiomatic expressions or definitions directly based on the particular text and unavailable or difficult to find in most monolingual or bilingual dictionaries. The cultural notes include items which are either absent in the source culture or contain different associative or connotative meaning in both cultures. The section called discourse analysis consists of explanations of various features of pronunciation, errors needing correction, and other miscellaneous things that need to be clarified for a thorough understanding of the material, such as whose utterance follows or answers whose when more than two persons are interacting.

3.2.3. *Exercices de contexte*

As their name suggests, these exercises are specifically designed to accustom students to do in the foreign language what they do naturally in their own language, i.e. utilize all clues available in the linguistic and situational contexts

(Cf. our 2.4. and 2.5., also Wardhaugh 1976). They are essentially auditory discrimination exercises based on listening difficulties frequently encountered by American students of French.

Two types of exercises are used: first, with visual aids, second, without (see table 4). All choices proposed in the first type have been found in transcriptions produced by students working with no visual, textual support. Like Frith (1978:45), we may note that some alternates preserve the sound but not the visual appearance of the target word. This exercise resembles parts of the UCLA English as a Second Language Examination Form I (cf. Oller & Streiff 1975:28). Both types of *exercices de contexte* involve intensive listening. They are rather short, and contextual clues are quite obvious. For instance, the words to be identified are either reiterations of, or in syntagmatic association with, words present in their immediate context (cf. Natalicio 1979:173). When discussed cooperatively in class or in small groups, these associations can develop students' sensitivity to contextual clues (cf. Martin 1968).

3.2.4. *Cloze*

Already familiarized with cloze techniques in the *exercices de contexte* students are now asked to combine extensive and intensive listening skills in filling blanks in the transcription of longer passages of the recordings or even the entire recording. In fact, the double aim in these exercises is to have the students understand as much as possible as fast as possible and to develop their inferential faculties. A good approach is to listen to the entire passage, with as few interruptions as possible, and to write on a transparent sheet placed over the transcription, all the missing expressions easily heard and recognized each time the tape is played. Whenever a subsequent listening proves that an expression was misheard and/or miswritten it is rewritten or corrected.

Here again, two types of cloze exercises are utilized and presented in order of difficulty. Both types, however, share the characteristic that deletions are functional rather than determined by a mathematical ratio. In another paper, dealing with contextual approaches to reading, I have reviewed some of the advantages of such functional, lexical or structural, deletions (Niedzielski 1981). If, in order to bolster instrumental motivation, a cloze passage is used as a test, the following scoring procedure can be used:

1 point for a word of the same grammatical class
2 points for a synonym or homonym
3 points for the exact replacement of the deleted word

3.2.4.1. *Lexical cloze (Restoring cognates)*

Generally, lexical deletions measure the understanding of substantive content. If the words, or expressions, deleted are similar in sound and in meaning in the source and target languages, it becomes easier to recognize them. In addition, content words are usually longer than function words and thus perceived better. Finally, such words exhibit a higher frequency of paradigmatic associations (reiterations, synonyms...) and, thus, a higher level of textual cohesion (cf. Lunzer et al. 1980, Voss 1977: 2). For all these reasons it is advised to exercise lexical cloze before structural cloze. As a matter of fact, Oakeshott-Taylor (1976: 8) discovery that "on the whole, stressed words were easier to restore" was generally confirmed in my classes at the University of Hawaii (see also Groebel 1980:55). However, Oakeshott-Taylor's comment (1976:20) that "... students feel that cloze tests require skills which bear little relationship to real language use" was disproved by my students, most likely because this program utilizes only functional deletions (cf. Hirsch 1977: 99). Table 5 provides a sample of both types of cloze exercises, lexical and structural.

3.2.4.2. *Structural cloze (Restoring function words and unstressed words)*

After having worked through the lexical cloze transcription, students are given a structural cloze transcription. Although table 5 juxtaposes both transcriptions, it must be realized that students see only one transcription at the time. However, their long term, and perhaps subliminal, memory helps them to recognize and restore the function words and other short unstressed words deleted in this structural cloze transcription because they have heard them more than once and seen them in the lexical cloze transcription.

The removal of function words, such as noun determiners, focusses the listeners' attention on larger units of meaning in the passage (cf. Louthan 1965). It also forces them to pay attention to fine points of acoustic information hardly perceptible (e.g. *ce* in *ce que*). These two abilities are extremely important in developing the general listening skill. The first is basic to infer meaning from contexts. The second must be developed because the non-native speaker, relatively deficient in lexicon and in structure, depends heavily on acoustic information (Voss 1977:2) and because it just happens that the most frequently used words are the few, rather content-empty, structural function words. (Lefevre 1964:81).

3.2.5. *Exercices de vocabulaire*

After having begun to strengthen their inferential, cognitive, and acoustic, perceptual abilities in contextual and cloze exercises, students are now systematically exposed to exercises which will enrich their lexicon.

Two types of *exercices de vocabulaire* are utilized. Represented in table 6, they drill the lexicon introduced in the *Definitions and Explanations*. Type A presents lexical items sentence by sentence like in a reverse glossary where the definition is given and the item has to be produced. Type B generalizes the use of lexical items to other contexts in new stories made up of several sentences. To help the student, the items are provided at the beginning of each exercise in a list which also includes other, superfluous words.

3.2.6. *Expressions idiomatiques*

Lexical enrichment is continued with idiomatic expressions. Again, two types of exercises are used for this purpose (see table 7). First, in A, students are asked to match expressions which are semantically equivalent. They know that all expressions in one column have "synonyms" in the other column. Students are thereby reminded that there are more than one way to express a thought unit and, at the same time, they review the meaning of some newly encountered idiomatic expressions, i.e. utterances which are used with an unusual meaning or which cannot be translated word for word. The second exercise (B) is slightly more difficult because the students have to decide whether two utterances are equivalent or not. They must now perceive nuances in meaning and judge whether some colloquialisms are to be taken at face value. In some cases they are confronted with some deceptive cognates.

3.2.7. *Expressions avec mots apparentés*

Sensitivity to deceptive cognates is the goal of the next series of exercises. A whole course could be based on cognates (see for instance Niedzielski 1981), and Petra Hammer has actually set one up on the role of cognates in foreign language study. She has found that among over eleven thousand English-French cognates, the ratio of good and deceptive cognates is approximately eleven to one (1978 a) and that 1837 are of high frequency and utility in French (1978 b:7). The reason would be that the study of cognates develops the cognitive assimilation process, one of Piagetian two basic principles underlying cognitive growth and based on the acquisition of similarities (Hammer 1978 b: 11—12). Of course, not all languages have as many cognates as French and English, but some can be found in any pair of languages, because of some common Latin, Greek, English, French, Arabic or other roots. In this set of materials an average of fifty cognates have been found per recording.

Table 8 illustrates a possible exercise with cognates. It performs what is generally suggested by Kalivoda (1980: 11), for new words, that is "it directs the student to write a new sentence using the word for creative use of the language". In this exercise, the English word in CAPS is an obvious cognate

of the French word found in the text. Some of these cognates are good cognates like ATTACH, others are deceptive cognates like ATTEND which never means "attendre". Deceptive cognates are followed here by the capital letter "I" (incorrect). Most good cognates listed here are not the best translation for the French word found in the context provided in the particular conversation: therefore they appear before the English word which is best in this context.

3.2.8. *Exercices de correction*

Accuracy of the listeners' understanding can also be measured through an exercise which is called *exercice de correction* and which is sometimes considered as a game. Essentially, an idea or expression in the conversation is misquoted to the student who must correct it. For instance, one can propose: "La question que les Américains posent parfois, c'est: pourquoi les jeunes Français étudient-ils?" or "Pour les jeunes Américains, être étudiant c'est uniquement faire des études." while, actually, the recording said "posent toujours" and "ce n'est pas seulement étudier, c'est aussi travailler". The problem is one of text reconstruction, which requires and develops abilities in feature extraction, internal generation and matching of semantic storage. "The starting point is a modified and unacceptable version of the text and the solution is an acceptable version. There is a built-in goal, and built-in feedback. These problems are therefore more gamelike, which is one reason for their popularity over the years" (Lunzer 1980:4).

3.2.9. *Exercices d'imagination*

Once students have demonstrated their ability to perceive correctly basic information provided, they are asked to show that they can also anticipate what may be or could have been said next by the speaker(s). Listening anticipation is an essential part of efficient listening which utilizes linguistic, situational and metalinguistic contexts. Therefore, in these exercises, students are asked to imagine endings to interrupted thoughts signaled by false starts; they must also complete elliptic structures, recognize redundancies in hesitations, and/or follow the speakers' logic and reasoning through various features of spontaneous speech.

The following examples taken from unit 4 illustrate some of these cognitive activities:

A. Remplacez les mots soulignés par des expressions plus explicites déterminées par le contexte linguistique.

les Ecoles Centrales d'Arts et Métiers et tout *ça*[024]

B. Inventez une fin aux phrases interromtpues en vous servant du contexte situationnel.

ça serait des élèves, les — [030]
C'ETAIENT LES BOU—[040]

3.2.10. *Prononciation rapide*

All the exercises presented so far can be performed without having the students pronounce a single word in the target language. This should appeal to proponents of the "Silent Way". For the remaining exercises, it will be preferable, or even indispensable, to involve speaking skills.

Inspired by the belief that it is easier to understand something one has already pronounced, "rapid speech exercises present some expressions which—as it often occurs in natural speech—were pronounced so quickly that the sound glides from one syllable to another like in a slur. These utterances, re-recorded in isolation and in larger contexts, are accompanied by their written transcription. Consequently, the student is able simultaneously to perceive, recognize, understand and even repeat "difficult" sound combination.

e.g. (from unit *4*)

On vérifie sa famille pronounced /ɔ̃ve : fisafamij/
Si l'enfant est intelligent, il doit passer certains examens et aussi on vérifie sa famille[072]
Un petit peu pour ça /œ̃tpøpuʀsa/
Je crois que c'était un petit peu pour ça

Needless to say that, although some of these slurred expressions are difficult to understand even for "native" speakers, they were all selected on the basis of difficulties encountered over the years by my own students. This exercise is much preferable to the teachers' general first impulse of slowing down the speed of their speech when they see that students do not follow" (Kalivoda 1980:9).

3.2.11. *Questions*

These ask for factual information and are designed to reinforce students' episodic memory and their ability to express single thought units orally. The originality of these questions is that they are presented in such a sequential manner that all answers put together produce a paraphrase of the original text. This arrangement is based on the observation that "the meaning of a composition is the sum of its individual assertions as linked together by the inter-assertional relationships, and these inter-assertional relationship are the sum of the implicit questions and the implicit answers" (Gray 1977:16).

Making these implicit questions explicit renders the meaning of the discourse more evident, and, thus, helps students to understand it.

e.g. (for Unit 1):

1. Quelle est la première question posée dans ce texte?
2. Quelle est la première définition proposée pour le bonheur?
3. Nommez une caractéristique générale du bonheur.
4. Pourquoi est-ce que les jeunes se droguent?
5. Comment la famille est-elle définie?
6. De quoi faut-il aussi parler quand on parle de la drogue?

3.2.12. *Discussion*

Once the entire content of the recording has been reviewed through questions and answers, traditional debates are introduced to give students the opportunity to manipulate the knowledge they have acquired through the listening exercises and to hear again the information paraphrased by their colleagues. However, the following innovations are recommended:

First of all, the topics based on the recordings are preferably imagined or chosen by the students themselves to ensure high motivation. For instance, on the general topic of "Advantages of educational systems in France and in the United States", students chose to debate: "A fixed curriculum, or a major and electives?", "Liberal education versus practical training?", "Co-curriculum activities and hobbies". Although the titles are given here in English, they are discussed in class in the target language.

When the topics have been selected, all the students who volunteered to discuss them prepare both pro and con arguments because they find out only at the time of the debate which side they must represent. This tends to prevent them from learning their part by heart and makes for more spontaneous interchanges of ideas within the group of debaters.

3.2.13. *Exercices divers*

In addition to all previous exercises, which may constitute the core of a program designed to help FL learners to understand the target language spoken naturally by "native" fluent speakers in any environment, many other activities can be suggested. They should depend on the students' abilities, interests, and learning strategies. Concerning the first factor, Tinkler (1980: 29) states that "there are many subskills making up the general listening comprehension skill—including the ability to discriminate phonemes, recognize words; identify stress, intonation, and syntactic patterns; retain selected and summarized portions of what is heard; anticipate the development and conclusion of the

speaker's utterance; mentally check and challenge the ongoing utterance being listened to; and work out the communicative intentions of the speaker." At the beginning of a course in listening skills, it is advisable to find out as much as possible about each student's interests and learning strategies to be able to reinforce these when they are productive and to expose him/her to other strategies which will maximize his/her sub-skills or abilities.

Within the general atmosphere of individualizing instruction, the following exercises can be used to develop some of these abilities. They are listed according to the stages described by Massaro (1978) and reproduced in our table 2.

3.2.13.1. *Sensation and feature detection*

To help listeners hear the sounds thrown at them, two approaches can be used. Either the recording can be played on one of these speech compressors which can slow down or speed up speech considerably without any distortion (.e.g. Lexicon Varispeech allows speech rates ranging from 1 to 5), or the students may be advised to stop the recording after every few words or phrases and thus create lenghtier pauses during which they may realize what they heard (Kalivoda 180:9). In some cases, the learner can repeat sounds without understanding them. It is an activity universally practiced in first language acquisition which can be useful in second language learning too.

3.2.13.2. *Perception and primary recognition*

When working with a cleaned up version, students may be asked to identify and report all false starts, hesitation marks, attention claimers, connectors, pauses and other phenomena of natural speech present in the original spontaneous recording but not reproduced in the final transcription.

With any recording, students pick out words or sentences that they recognize and, as a group, reconstitute parts of the discourse by first writing what they hear and then rearranging it when the text is replayed (Kahler 1980). A variant of this exercise consists in stopping the tape at any time and having the students say what word(s) they heard last, second to the last, or predict what will come next (but the latter activity involves also conception which is the next stage in our listening model).

It might be advisable to begin work on perception exercises only after some practice in French syllabification. As a student of mine once wrote: "a major difficulty in hearing sounds is with syllabification. I do not divide words into syllables while pronouncing them. Since every French syllable contains a vowel sound, it is easy to see why I miss the vowel sounds." Actually, listening for vowel sounds helps in determining syllables and, consequently, words (Niedzielski 1975 b).

3.2.13.3. *Conception and secondary recognition*

Drawing on their knowledge of syntactic rules, students identify key words, i.e. only the words that are absolutely necessary for understanding the idea of each sentence (Mueller 1974). They can either repeat them orally or jot them down. The first activity reinforces mostly the students' mastery of perceptual codes, while the second improves as well that of conceptual codes as students must transform oral stimuli into written symbols. At this stage, the art of note taking (e.g. Plaister 1976) can be introduced.

In my phonetics classes, I have had students compare the speakers' speech with a theoretically ideal pronunciation and indicate divergent features, such as missing liaisons, or linkings, wrong assimilations, as well as regional or stylistic intonation.

To check their grammatical knowledge and sensitivity, students may identify and report differences between the recorded natural speech and its ideal written model, such as all missing and/or all superfluous function words.

3.2.13.4. *Rehearsal and internalizing*

It was mentioned above (3.2.2.) that available associations between prior knowledge and the discourse to be understood should be brought to the students' awareness. This can be done through group discussion, in the source or the target language, of the *résumé* and/or of the *definitions and explanations*.

Later, students may be asked to relate in the target language, utterances they hear, or read, to what was said earlier, to the real setting of the conversation, to the interlocutors' experience or their state of mind in order to be able to interpret and internalize these utterances (Gunter 1974:82).

It may be opportune here to teach them how to use the so-called *Wh* question in order to enhance questioning and even interviewing techniques. Nation (1979) offers an interesting approach to the traditional complaint that students do not know how to ask questions. He asks the students what they want him to do in order to help them prepare questions to answers they know he will ask on the passage they're listening to.

Any topic well understood can usually be paraphrased, summarized or expanded. Therefore, students may be asked to summarize a passage in the source or target language, to give it a title, or, conversely, to expand it by adding elements of their prior knowledge. Biggs and Dalwood (1975:19) suggest the following helpful approach: students jot down all nouns and verbs appearing in a passage or pronounced in a speaker's argument, and, using these as an outline, they repeat that text in their own words.

3.2.14. *Indices*

All notes appearing in the *definitions and explanations* accompanying each unit are summarized alphabetically in an appendix called *indices* because it synthesizes all linguistic, cultural, and metalinguistic information already provided in these notes. Each entry is followed by a number consisting of a digit referring to the unit in which the expression appears for the first time, a period, and three digits indicating the side number in the transcription. However, if an expression requires a lengthy definition or explanation, only the number may be provided. The reader is thus referred to the first appearance of the expression and its glossing. Occasionally, more than one number is given because there are more than one detailed note for the item. Whenever more than one translation is supplied for a word, the first indicates the meaning in the first appearance, the others correspond to other instances when the word is used. The following excerpt illustrates all these types of entries. One may compare the definition given in it for *allez-y* with that provided initially and represented in our table 3.

agreement see 2.096, 3.007, 3.008
ah expresses disappointment 1.172
ah expresses rejection of a previous speaker's statement 1.145
ah Oh, I get it! 1.094
ah That's just the point that I was making. 1.063
ah variable meaning 1.142
Ah bon? Oh yeah? 2.065
aisé easy, in comfortable circumstances, well-off 1.054
allez-y! go ahead! 4.073
alors que whereas 3.048

une ambiance environment, surroundings, atmosphere 2.176

4. *PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS*

As already mentioned, the main purpose for this course is to help students acquire an adequate, functional listening comprehension in order to be able to communicate in authentic situations—as opposed to artificial classroom environment. We have seen that a major hurdle is the fact that FL learners experience some type of anxiety which seems to paralyze them and prevent them from utilizing the various listening sub-skills or abilities which they normally exercise in their own language.

To judge whether the course is successful and justified, one may ask these two questions: are the students helped sufficiently to be able to understand various forms of spontaneous speech, and which authentic situations can be

presented to them to verify their newly acquired skill? The answer to the first question will be found in quotes from students themselves. A short description of various listening situations will provide the response to the second question.

4.1. *Pedagogical success*

The "diaries" I request in my phonetics and/or conversation classes have changed. Instead of stressing problems encountered in listening to French recordings or watching French films (cf. our 1.), more and more students relate success stories and want to share their rewarding experience with their present and future fellow students. Some quotes from their journals constitute excellent illustrations of some of the benefits students feel they have derived from the course.

4.1.1. *Overcoming inhibition*

A very shy student wrote in 1978: "It is possible for a person to master his fears, for such fears exist only in the mind. [...] As a result of French 301, I have improved in my pronunciation and gained confidence in listening to French. Perhaps I can channel the knowledge of what will help me overcome my inhibitions and the confidence I have gained from this class into my other classes in English."

4.1.2. *Developing a positive attitude*

Another extremely apprehensive student reported in 1980:
"This project is a journal of my personal efforts and my attitude changes in French 302, as I tackled what was for me the most difficult part of the course—listening to the tape recordings. [...] Listening to these tapes was a unique learning experience which taught me a lot and helped me listen to spoken French with greater ease."

4.1.3. *Listening for enjoyment*

A different level of satisfaction seems to be reached by students who either come to the course with a sufficient amount of self-assurance or soon lose their inhibition while performing the listening exercises described above. One of these students wrote the following in 1979:
"Here are some concluding remarks for the listening of French tapes which would be appropriate at this time. Listen to them in order to get your ears geared for French (not only the ones for the assignment, but others for your

personal enjoyment). It is preferable to listen to tapes that have spontaneous discourse with native French speakers as it will help you enormously in acquainting yourself with idiomatic French, or at least it will give you a taste of it."

So many students have asked me to help them decipher French songs, that I now give the choice for term projects between either writing a journal of problems and successes or transcribing a song and bringing the records or tape to class in order to teach the song to fellow students.

4.2. *Listening situations and increasing levels of dificulty*

Natural speech may appear easier to comprehend when it is accompanied by some visual aids. On the contrary, it may become more unscrutable when reproduced over certain electromagnetic devices. A graded approach may be used in introducing learners to more and more difficult discourse.

4.2.1. *Audio-visual transmission*

Videotapes and films are generally easier to understand than strictly oral broadcasting systems. They offer several types of help, such as situational context, gestures, lip movements, facial expressions, etc... Videotapes with subtitles are probably the easiest because they can be stopped and rewound whenever necessary. At the upper end of the range in increasing difficulty, one would find films without subtitles.

4.2.1.1. *Oral transmission*

In addition to the radio broadcasts mentioned above—news reports, plays, debates—there are other listening situations which are void of any visual aid and may present considerable obstacles. One of the best known is the loud speaker announcement at the airport upon arrival in a French speaking country or, later, in any railroad station. Although it might be the most frustrating experience, it is closely followed by instructions or information received over the phone. Instead of sending unprepared students into an "immersion" program abroad—which too often means "drowning" them—it makes more sense to precondition them and confront them with these situations before departure in the more relaxed atmosphere of a classroom or language laboratory.

A typical advanced listening program may start with old gramophone recordings, followed by tapes of short wave radio broadcasting, then go on to telephone conversations with one person's voice passband filtered, and pursue with loud speaker announcements using various voices and various styles.

TABLE 1

129
DINAIRE EN FRANCE ET TOUT LE MONDE PEUT ALLER À L'— À L'UNI-
VERSITÈ". Umh-humh! ET ÇA, CE N'EST PAS VRAI. JE LEUR
130

130 AI DIT: "MAIS, EN FRANCE, Pou- LES ÉTUDIANTS QUI ÉTUDIENT SONT
DE LA FAMILLE BOURGEOISE, EN GÉNÉRAL ET ....
Pourquoi

ILS VIVENT À LA MAISON, EN GÉNÉRAL. ÇE N'EST PAS VRAI PARCE
131
ce n'est pas vrai?

132
132 QUE ICI LES ÉTUDIANTS PEUVENT TROUVER UN TRAVAIL OuiPENDANT
QU'ILS ÉTUDIENT, Exac- TANDIS QU'EN FRANCE exactement.
183
LES ÉTUDIANTS — C'EST DIFFICILE DE TRAVAILLER, C'EST
Ah oui...d'accord...... d'accord......alors.........alors
C'est c'est c'est leurs conditions... de vie.
DIFFICILE DE TRAVAILLER. C'est-à-dire que, bien qu'en théorie
134

134 et en principe tout ......le......mon de puisse aller à l'université,
ÇA...PARAÎT
en réalité tout le monde n'y va pas parce que ils- Ç'EST ÉCONOMIQUE
FINALEMENT.
135
Umh-humh!   C'est démo- c'est démocratique ṾMH-HUM!
136

136 sur le- euh, euh, sur le plan légal, *officiellement* officiellement mais sur le plan financier
137
pratique ce n'est pas démocratique parce que *Umh-hum!* les universités il n'y en
a pas dans tous les les petits trous. Il n'y en a pas autant
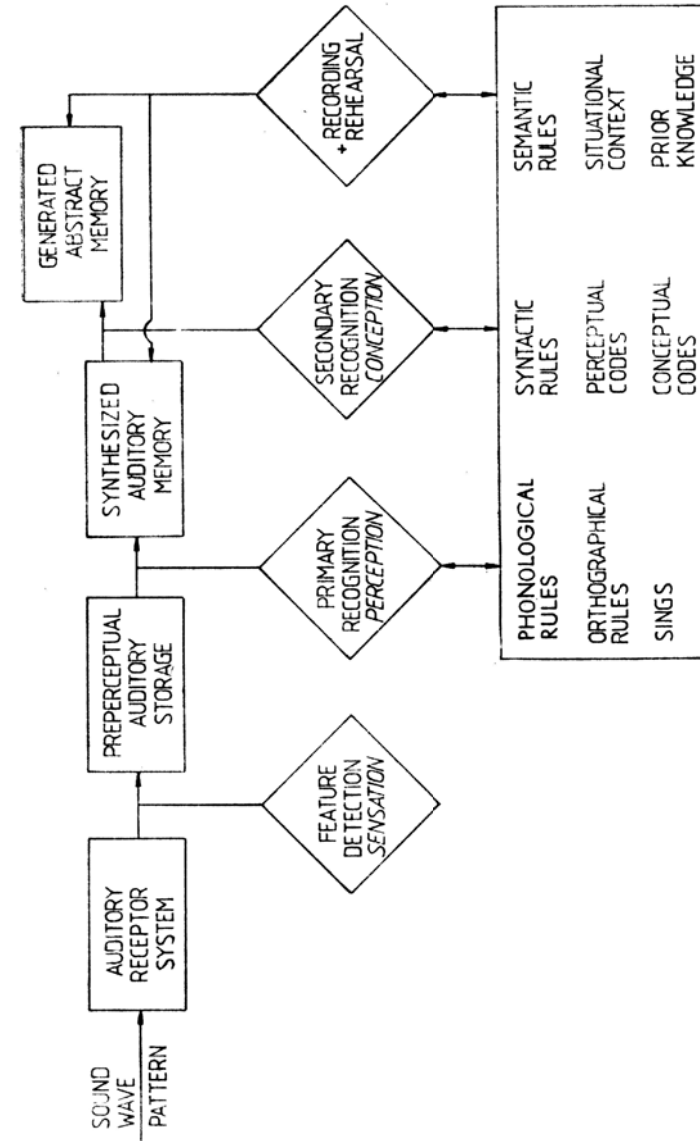
TABLE 3

DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

1. LEXIQUE

    007 *le préjugé*   préjudice, bias
    009 *en effet*   indeed

...

    027 *se mélanger les pédales*   become confused (a term derived from cycling)
    028 *faire*   to study at (a school)
                to study (a subject),
        e. g. *Il fait H. E. C.*: He's studying at l'Ecole des Hautes
    Etudes Commerciales and *Il fait son droit*: He is studying law

2. NOTES CULTURELLES

...

    079 *le brevet* a traditional examination now abandoned, that used to be given after
           three or four years of post-elementary education.

3. ANALYSE DU DISCOURS

...

    067 *hé*! exclamation of surprise

...

    073 *Allez-y!...Vas-y*! Go ahead! (Note the shift form formal to familiar as the
        speaker remembers she is speaking to a close friend)

TABLE 4

EXERCICES DE CONTEXTE

A. Complétez le texte suivant en soulignant parmi les mots suggérés celui que vous entendez:

[143] Aussi, moi, je pense que je suis pas [de corps / de tort / d'accord / des cors] avec elle quand

[t'elle / telle / telles / elle] dit que c'est une question d'éducation, euh, [que / qu'eux / creux / qu'une]

finalement, si on donnait que [dix / douze / que douze / que deux] dix-huit heures de travail

aux [gens / agents / Jeans / hommes] ils sauraient pas quoi [faire / taire / c'est / fait] du reste. Il [font / t'on / faut / son] pas
                reitaration

tou-sous-estimer les gens. Euh, [quoi / crois / je crois / roi] que les [uns / agents / hommes / gens] ils sont

capables de [venir / devenir / des venirs / d'y venir] [146] très intelligents du [joug / jure / jeux / jour] au lendemain.
                                              ↑— — — —↑
                                         collocation

B. Complétez le texte suivant en inscrivant les mots que vous entendez et qui manquent dans la transcription ci-dessous:

[146] Euh, je pense à ...., hein, entre guillemets, euh, et ben, il y a eu des des.............. très très chouettes en soixante—huit. Tous .... gens, ils ont eu-été .... de de faire des choses qu'ils n'ont........................ jamais fait, euh, de briser avec _ _ _ *l' habitude* lub pisany et tout ça. Enfin, je veux dire, ...,
      — — — — —
    ↑_ _ _ collocation _ _ _↑
que c'est pas forcément qu'une .... d'éducation. Je crois que si on était dans une ....qui ... qui· --Qu'est-ce que vous dîtes? "Dans une................
qui." C'est-à-dire c'est pas du[152]............................ au lendemain.

TABLE 5

CLOZE TRANSCRIPTION (Restoring Cognates)

000
Les les jeunes (   ) vous posent souvent la(   ) à propos des des
jeunes (   ). Ils vous (   ) quels sont leurs (   ) de vue, leur (   )
002
de voir, quelles sont leurs (   ) [...]

CLOZE (Restoring Structure Words)

000
Les les jeunes Américains vous posent souvent la question (   ) propos des des jeunes
002
Français. Ils vous demandent quels sont leurs points (   ) vue, leur façon (   ) voir,
[................]; ils aiment savoir (   ) que les Français pensent là-dessus [...]

TABLE 6

EXERCICES DE VOCABULAIRE

1. Choisissez un des mots suivants et complétez les phrases suivantes:

ordure   Nanterre   éplucher   partir à zéro   se mélanger les pédales
étape   préjugés   mépriser   c'est économique travail au noir
racine   affaire   débouché   s'y connaitre

1. Jean a acheté tous ses livres à moitié prix à la librairie Saint Germain.
On peut dire qu'il a fait une bonne _____ .
2. Pierre est son plus grand ennemi. Il se sent mal chaque fois qu'il le voit, tellement
il le _____ .
3. Ce puzzle est vraiment compliqué. Je m'y _____ .
...
11. Les carrières les plus recherchées sont les carrières qui offrent le plus de_____ .
12. La partie de la plante qui se trouve en terre, s'appelle la _____ .
13. Ce qui est non-consommable ou non-utilisable est jeté aux _____ .
14. _____ est situé au Nord-Ouset de Paris.

B. Complétez le texte suivant en vous servant de la liste de mots ci-dessous:

bac   stage   poursuivre ses études
c'est tout   D.E.U.G.   s'inscrire
maitrise   haute école   mi-temps
concours   rentrer   histoire de bourse

Aprés avoir passé son _____ à la fin de ses études secondaires, Henri décide
de s' _____ dans une_____ de la région parisienne. Il a passé le_____d'entrée
mais il a échoué. C'est une _____ qui le convainc de _____ à l'Université de
Nancy. Après deux semestres d'études universitaires, il passe avec succès le _____ .
Il décide de poursuivre jusqu' à la _____ , mais il n'a pas assez d'argent. Il lui
faudra donc travailler à _____ . Avant de _____ dans la vie professionnelle,
il a fait un _____ de six mois._____ , l'histoire d'Henri est terminée.

TABLE 7

EXPRESSIONS IDIOMATIQUES

A. Pour chaque expression de la colonne I, trouvez dans la colonne II une expression
équivalente ou synonyme. Dans la colonne vide écrivez la lettre minuscule de l'expres-
sion choisie.

1	1. Ah bon?	a. si tu permets
2	2. à la limite	b. avec une fréquence de
3	3. à raison de	c. après toute considération
4	4. c'est comme tout?	d. c'est vrai pour tout?
5	5. c'est l'un dans l'autre	e. c'est profitable?
6	6. c'est rentable?	f. s'arranger pour
7	7. dans le fond	g. c'est remarquable
8	8. disons	h. avoir lieu
9	9. en matière de	i. les deux côtés de la medaille
10	10. faire en sorte que	j. à la base
11	11. il est frappant de voir	k. en ce qui concerne
12	12. retomber sur la tête	l. pour ainsi dire
13	13. se faire	m. vraiment?
14	14. si vous voulez	n. se retourner contre vous

B. Si l'expression de la colonne II est équivalente ou synonyme de l'expression qui lui
correspond dans la colonne I, écrivez V (vrai) dans la case vide de la même ligne; si elle
ne lui est pas équivalente, écrivez F (faux).

1.	[020]je suis enfin bien d'accord		1	je commence à être bien d'accord
2.	[022]mon intention, si vous voulez		2	mon intention, pour ainsi dire
3.	[024] on parlait des Chinois		3	on ne parle plus des Chinois
4.	[032] je voulais mettre l'accent		4	je veux encore mettre l'accent
5.	[043]la polarisation s'est faite au départ sur le travail		5	...quand le travail a été fini
6.	[155]je me demandais		6	je ne me demande plus
7.	[070] à une échelle...collctive, justement		7	à une échelle...collective, exactement
8.	[074] c'est pas rentable		8	ce n'est pas profitable
9.	[078] ça suffit, quoi		9	que'st-ce qui suffit?
10.	le bien-être c'est être en état de surmonter		10	le bien-être consiste à pouvoir surmonter
11.	[113] il faut faire en sorte que		11	il faut arriver à
12.	[153]vous avez un tas de gens		12	vous avez beaucoup de gens
13.	[168]ça été extrêmement loin		13	ils ont beaucoup voyagé
14.	[170]ils étaient tout aussi aliénés		14	ils étaient tous fous

TABLE 8

EXPRESSIONS AVEC MOTS APPARENTÉS

Write a complete sentence containing each word translating the English obvious cognate of each French word listed below:

Sample: Il m'a donné un bon conseil.

(conseil translates ADVICE which is the English obvious cognate of the French word Avis found at number 094)

054 Attache	tie	
	ATTACH	saisir, s'attacher à
229 Attendre	to wait for	
	ATTEND (I)	assister à
094 Avis	opinion	
	ADVICE	conseil
074 Boule	bowling, ball	
	BOWL (I) (container)	bol
096 Caravane	camping trailer	
	CARAVANE	convoi, caravane
199 Chaîne	channel	
	CHAIN	chaîne
043 Change	exchange	
	CHANGE	(petite) monnaie

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