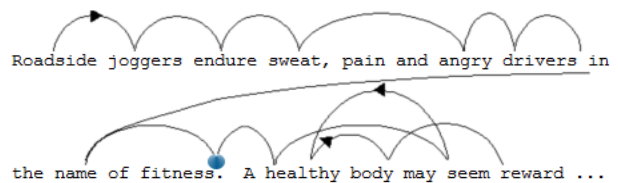


Learning English listening skills

1. Sources of comprehension difficulties

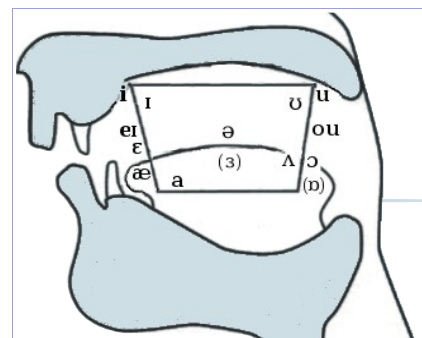
1.1. Mental processing in an L2 (second language)

- Working memory and attention
- Less automatic processing
- Reading
- Mental load



1.2. Basic distinctive features of English

- Vowels
- Consonants
- Stress & rhythm
- Dialects or varieties of English



2. Listening to native English

2.1. Vowel system

1. Natives make clear distinctions between short and long vowels.

short		long (glided)	
/ɪ/	bit	/i:/ or /iy/	beet
/ɛ/	red	/ei/ or /ey/	raid
/ɔ/	taught	/ʊʊ/ or /ou/	tote
/ʊ/	look	/u:/ or /uw/	Luke

1. The schwa /ə/ is extra-short compared to normal short vowels like /ʌ/; the /ə/ only occurs in unstressed syllables, and /ʌ/ in stressed syllables, but otherwise they sound almost the same.

ùnforgéttable /,ʌnfər'getəbəl/ or /,ʌnfər'getəbəl/

2. The short vowels should not be written /i/, /e/, /o/, /ɔ:/, /u/ as they are in some dictionaries, nor should the long /ei/ be written as /e:/.

2.2. Vowels across dialects

The following occur in the UK, Australian (Aussie or “Ozzy”), New England (N.E.), and Southern US.

1. dropped /r/ after vowel, vowel is even longer ^[UK, N.E.,Aussie]	hard, harbor, sort
2. /r/ → /ə/ ^[UK, N.E.,Aussie]	hire, here, there, hair
3. /r/ added at end of words ending in vowels; between vowels between words ^[UK, N.E.,Aussie]	idea[r] of it, saw[r] and conquered
4. /ɔʊ/ → /əʊ/ ^[UK, Southeastern US]	boat, locomotion
5. more back vowels or low vowels ^[UK, N.E.,Aussie]	castle, hard, hot, bottle, park my car, Boston Harbor
6. /əɪ/ (or /ɜɪ/) → /ɛɪ/ ^[UK]	per person
7. Unglided vowels /e/, /o/ ^[Scottish, some Aussie]	taking the train or the boat
8. /ai/ → /æɪ/ ^[Aussie] /au/ → /æʊ/ ^[Aussie]	today mouth
9. drawl (drawn-out syllables with exaggerated intonation) and nasalization (nasal quality on vowels before /m/, /n/, /ŋ/ ^[Southern US])	I can't find him. I have no idea where he could be.
10. /ai/ → /a/ ^[US: South, Southeast]	I want my new iPad
11. vowels lengthened, changed before /ŋ/ ^[colloquial US, Southern US, African-American]	thing → /θɛ:ŋ/, /θeɪŋ/, /θei:ŋ/

2.3. Consonants

1. /l/ vs. /r/	clear tongue contact for /l/, none for /r/ - English /r/ is a vowel-like consonant	rare, lair, rail, really
2. North American dark /l/	The jaw is not as open, so /l/ is less clear; especially common at end of words, & after vowels /a, ɔ, u, ʊ, ou/	bull, ball, mollify
3. /t/ → /D/ i.e., /t/ sounds somewhat like /d/	/t/ before unstressed syllables in North America (& some Aussie)	a little bit of bitter butter
4. /t/ nasalized	/t/ “nasalized” before /n/ of unstressed syllables	the button on a carton
5. /t/	some UK: /t/ “swallowed” before some unstressed syllables	a little bottle
6. trilled /r/	Scottish, Irish, Indian, some UK & Aussie	three per person

2.4. Stress and rhythm

Stressed syllables are longer and louder, and have intonation changes (rise, fall, or rise+fall). **Content words** (nouns, main verbs, adjectives, adverbs) have more stress than **function words** (minor words). [ˈ] = primary (main, strongest) stress; [ˌ] = secondary (minor) stress; [˘] = unstressed.

a. Word stress

English syllables have three different stress levels:

primary stress	e.g., [ˈ] or [ˈ a]:	accéntuate the pósitoive, elímínate the négative, látch on to the affírmative
secondary stress	e.g., [ˌ] or [ˌ a]:	accéntuàte the pósitoive, èlímínàte the négative, látch on to the affírmative
unstressed	/ə/ or /ɪ/	əccéntuàte thə pósitoive, èlímínàte thə négətive, látch on tə thə əffírmətive

Furthermore, there are several kinds of stress in English:

word stress	clear stresses, especially on content words	accéntuàte the pósitoive
compound stress	Usually, main stress on first element of compound words, or on last letter of abbreviations	báckbòne, fíeld mòuse, the Wítte Hòuse, ónion chòpper, gréenhouse, bád-mòuth FBI, SAT, CIS, ENT
phrasal stress	In phrases, more stress on more important word: [1] adj. + noun , [2] adverb + adj.	a white hóuse it's vèry ínteresting
sentence stress	In a clause or sentence, the most important word is stressed	I grew up in a white house , but I doubt I'll ever live in the White House.

b. Sentence stress

Within sentences or clauses, the major words, called content words (nouns, main verbs, adjectives, adverbs) are more strongly stressed than the other minor words (function words). Usually the last (or near last) content word word in a clause is more important for the meaning, and thus has more stress than other content words.

The mechanic cheated the unsuspecting **customer**, so the customer then **sued** the mechanic.

c. Intonation

Minor (function) words are often very short and hard to hear for non-native speakers. The levels of word stress (primary stress, secondary stress, unstressed) and the fact that content words have more stress than minor words gives English a distinctive rhythm.

Some dialect differences in intonation exist; e.g., UK, Aussie, California: more rising intonation at the end of sentences as signal to include the conversational partner in the dialogue.

d. Linking (liaison)

Between words, the same or similar consonants are linked together, and vowels are linked together with no breaks.

We all live in a yellow submarine.

e. Reductions

1. Minor words are often reduced and pronounced quickly:

a = /ə/	your = /jəɹ/	for = /fəɹ, fɜɹ/
the = /ðə/	them = 'em /əɪm/, /ɪm/	to = /tə/, /tə/
you = /ju/, /jə/	or = /əɹ, ɜɹ/	because → 'cuz

2. /h/ can be deleted in pronouns: *his, he, her, him*

3. Some difficult clusters can be reduced:

month~~th~~ → /mʌns/ the six~~th~~/month Just~~t~~/do it.

4. Note the difference between *can, can't*; for *can*, the vowel is usually a very short /ə/, while a full short is always heard in *can't*:

can /kæən/ → /kən/ can't = /kænt/

5. In some words, an unstressed syllable can be deleted, in a [' ~ ~] sequence of syllables, especially if /l/ or /r/ occur between syllables [2] and [3].

[1] stressed + [2] unstressed + [3] unstressed

in~~t~~rest, choc~~o~~late, cé~~l~~try, cómp~~t~~rable, prób~~a~~bly, ré~~v~~erence

f. Blending / contraction

Consonants in function words can blend together, leading to contractions (cf. in Korean, e.g., 왕십리 sounds like “왕십니” - Wang-ship-li → Wangshimni); here are some common colloquial contractions.

original	contraction	original	contraction
what do	whadda	should have [+PP]	shoulda [+ PP]
what are / do you	whaddaya, whacha	could have	coulda
would you	wouldja	would have	woulda
don't you	dontcha, doncha	must have	musta
let me	lemme	may have	may
give me	gimme	might have	mighta
bet you	betcha	going to [+ verb] ¹	gonna
got you	gotcha	want to	wanna
let me	lemme	(have) got to	gotta
don't know	dunno	have to	hafta
		has to	hasta

1 This is for the immediate future, e.g., “I'm gonna go now.”

3. Listening to Korean English

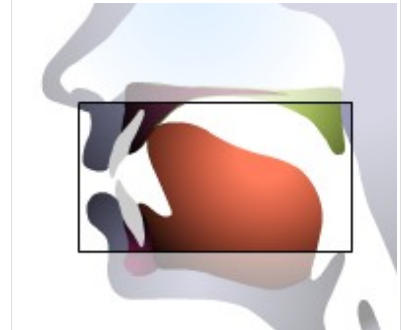
3.1. Vowels

1. Koreans may fail to distinguish long and short vowels, e.g., *ship* = *sheep*, *cynic* = *scenic*
2. /æ/ may sound more like /ɛ/, e.g., *affect* = *effect*²

3.2. Consonants

The following consonants in Korean English will be unclear.

1. /p/- /f/ and /b/ - /v/ distinctions, e.g., *fullness* sounds like *pullness*
2. /l/- /r/ distinction, e.g., *Crown* / *Clown Hotel*
3. /z/³ sounds like 스
4. /ð/, /θ/ sound like 스, ㅍ, /s/
5. English palatal consonants /ʒ dʒ tʃ/ sound like 스, /ʃ/ as in 시⁴
6. Extra /i:/ after /z ʃ ʒ dʒ tʃ/ at the end of words [받침], e.g., *cheese*, *English*, *beige*, *judge*, *church* (e.g., *fish* sounds like *fishy*)
7. Extra 으 vowel after word-final consonants [받침], e.g., *gas* pronounced like 가스
8. Consonant clusters: extra vowels inserted, leading to extra syllables (see next section)
9. /wu:/ sounds like /u:/, /yi:/ like /i:/ as in *woo*, *year*
10. voiced vs. voiceless consonants: **voiced** sounds made with clear glottal (vocal cord) vibration



s – z	tʃ – dʒ	p – b
f – v		t – d
ʃ – ʒ		k – g
θ – ð		

3.3. Stress and rhythm

1. Monotone – no clear word stress, sentence stress, or intonation
2. Swallowing or cutting off syllables, e.g., *energy* → *energ-* /ɛnɛrdʒ/
3. Extra syllables inserted for consonant clusters, e.g., *somatoform disorder* cf. *smartphone disorder* (신체형장애, 身體型障礙)
4. Incorrect word stress, e.g., *Willy* sounds like *Will Lée*

2 Note the vowel /æ/ of ‘bad’ versus /ɛ/ of ‘bed’ in standard English; the jaw is very low and open for /æ/.

3 The /z/ is produced just like /s/ with the tongue in the very same position as /s/, but with vocal vibration. To practice, start with /s/ and vibrate the vocal cords to produce /z/.

4 For the English palatal consonants, the tongue is curled up, with the tongue tip touching or pointing toward the palate (the roof of the mouth, 구개, 口蓋). In Korean, the tongue is flat, with the upper surface of the tongue near the tongue tip contacting or coming close to the palate.

3.4. Konglish words & expressions

Go to www.tinyurl.com/kentlee7, then → ‘EAP aids’ for handouts on word choice issues.

4. Strategies and techniques

1. Mental rest
2. Extensive reading
3. Listening to English media, e.g., Youtube, Ted.com⁵ – including media with subtitles
4. Expose yourself to other varieties of English (dialects) such as British and Aussie
5. Try shadowing techniques (sometimes)

4.1. Criteria for materials

- motivation, interest
- in your field and related fields
- in other fields
- for contents and information
- for pleasure, leisure
- different genres

5 TED.com allows you to download videos with subtitles, though the process of getting the subtitled videos can be tricky. This may be easier using the Firefox web browser with the DownThemAll! plugin (add-on) for Firefox.