

Designing Asynchronous Listening Exercises for Spanish Language Learners

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Presentation aims

- Reflect and discuss with other language practitioners –and language students- what makes a good listening activity
- Reflect about the challenges and potentials of asynchronous (listening) exercises – an inclusive practice for flexible learning

Some theoretical framework about listening

- Krashen's (2003) comprehensible input theory for language learning:
 - Second language acquisition when being exposed to language (*input*) that students can understand (*comprehensible*)
- Daniel Cassany (2022) about the teacher's role in the digital age:
 - A curator – finding appropriate material that can be turned into comprehensible input
 - A mediator – being a bridge between the material and the student
- Particular aspects of listening as a language skill:
 - Often, oral texts cannot be repeated – which adds stress and anxiety to listeners
 - Very context-dependant and subject to extreme variation (e.g. speed, accent, background noise, tone...)
 - It requires strong attention and it is very tiring

How do we listen?

- Through a series of sub-skills - discriminating sounds to a series of cultural cues (e.g. speaking louder, or lower), and (para/extra-) linguistical elements (e.g. context or gestures).
- Two processing ways:
 - Top-down, or synthetic process: meaning > linguistic elements
 - Bottom-up, or analytic process: linguistic elements > meaning

Sources: Martín Leralta (2013, 2018, 2025); Bodie (2011); Bloomfield et al (2010); Field (2009)

Designing asynchronous listening exercises

Two key moments:

1. Find **adequate input**: not too long, not too much density of information...
2. Turn it into appropriate **pedagogical resource**

1. Finding a good input source

- Where to find it? YouTube (careful going down rabbit holes!), public television and radio, recommendations from colleagues...
 - I tend to avoid language books because of copyright issues + debates about authentic language input
- Not too long nor information / lexical dense. 5 mins (hard limit), without unnecessary complications
- Coherent with course's learning aims – similar topics, relevant grammar in context...
- Interesting, relevant for the students, and fun
- ? Reflecting linguistic variation
- ? Topics around social justice – e.g decolonising Spanish teaching?

2. From input to pedagogical material

- **Scaffolding** is important – apply captions or transcriptions whenever possible
 - Technical side note – Word does good transcripts if you add an audio file; GenAI tools are also helpful here. For captions, Microsoft Clipchamp is a good option
- Exercises *challenging* but *doable*
- Attend to both **top-down (synthetic)** and **bottom-up process (analytic)** e.g. true/false questions and vocabulary exercises.
- Important: should be self-corrected, so open-ended questions are not advisable

...and GenAI?

- Environmental concerns to the side, I have found it useful to:
 - Transcribe
 - Suggest first round of comprehension questions / vocabulary – followed by heavy editing
- Not useful to:
 - Curate material
 - Adapt to specific students / course needs
 - Provide fully-realised pedagogical material

On to some examples...

Brief publicity stunt...

I Aberystwyth University's Forum for Language Pedagogies

- Friday 22nd January 2027
- Room - TBC
- Currently looking for contributions from language practitioners across the University (inc EFL and Cymraeg)
- Interested in participating? Get in touch with us: fec16@aber.ac.uk; eas17@aber.ac.uk; thp42@aber.ac.uk
- [Submit your proposal here.](#)

Gracias :)

- Questions, feedback, suggestions, comments, constructive criticism... all welcome!
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