

TRANSCRIPTION OF PODCAST # 2

Hello and welcome to the podcast series on Listening strategies for French Immersion students, produced by the faculty at the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute of the University of Ottawa.

This podcast is part of a series to help improve your listening strategies and to provide practical tips on note taking in the context of academic courses in your second language.

PODCAST #2: Preparing for the lecture

This pod cast will help by providing you with tips on how to prepare for the lecture. This is probably the most crucial component of successful academic listening. By preparing for the lecture in advance, you reduce the demands that will be made on your short-term memory during the lecture, which will free you up to take more careful and detailed notes.

Student: What are some of the tips that can help me prepare for a lecture?

Prof: Well, you can start preparing even before you come to class. The first thing you can do is to familiarize yourself with the topic by doing the reading for the day's class. This acquaints you with the topic and gives you some details about the topic that might be new to you.

Student: Why should I bother if the professor is going to present the topic anyway?

Prof: Because comprehension is a process of matching what you already know about a topic with what the speaker tells you about the topic. Therefore, the more you know and can predict beforehand, the easier it will be for you to slot new information into the mental framework that you have already developed for this topic. This allows you to take notes that are more effective and more complete.

Reading in advance also allows you to look up unfamiliar French words on the topic.

Once again, knowing what these words mean before class begins allows you to recognize these words when the professor uses them. Instead of wasting time during the lecture trying to figure out what unfamiliar words mean, your mind is free to focus on further details and to write more complete notes. So, you can continue to follow along with greater attention as the professor lectures,

Preparation before class allows you to identify in advance what the main points are likely to be. It may even be helpful to actually write out some of these main points before the lecture, as a guide for your listening. You can then monitor or check your comprehension during the lecture against these points. The next podcast, ‘monitoring and problem-solving’, gives more information on what to do during the lecture.

If the reading for the lecture involves a particular perspective on an issue that you have already discussed in class, it would be good to develop critical listening skills by predicting how the professor might respond to that perspective. In addition to developing your own opinion or perspective on the topic, your approach to listening for class will then become more critical as you monitor the professor’s position on the topic as you listen. Whether you agree or disagree doesn’t matter; the fact that you thought about it beforehand and listened to understand the professor’s perspective will lead to greater engagement and deeper learning.

Previewing the topic and the associated vocabulary in advance is crucial for maximizing what you will understand from the lecture, what you will be able to record in your notes, and what you will be able to retain after class.

Student: Okay. So I know how I can prepare for the lecture before class. Any tips on how to prepare for the lecture after I get to class?

Prof: You start by choosing where to sit. Noisy areas with bad lighting are not conducive to attentive listening. Choose to sit close to the front or other areas of the room where it is easy to hear the professor and see the screen. Setting the right conditions for directing your attention, free from distractions, is a hallmark of the skillful listener.

Another key pre-lecture strategy is to clear your mind so that you can concentrate and focus. As difficult as it may sometimes be, you need to let go of thoughts about last night's movie or tonight's party. This frees your mind to focus on the lecture, your questions, and meaningful note-taking.

Student: Okay. Now what should I look for once the professor has started the lecture?

Prof: There are a number of useful cues that you will want to listen for that can direct your listening.

Note the points that the professor highlights in the introduction or overview to the lecture; they can clue you into the purpose and organization of the lecture. This is another good reason, by the way, for not getting to class late.

Knowing the purpose of the lecture helps you prepare for what you should pay attention to. There may also be information about how the lecture will relate to an assignment or an exam.

Pay attention also to how the professor relates the new topic to earlier lectures. This is important information about how this topic fits in with what has gone before and what is yet to come,.

The professor may begin by summarizing the previous lecture, providing an opportunity for you to compare the summary with your notes on that lecture. Before continuing with the new lecture, the professor may ask if there are any questions relating to the previous lecture. This is the time for you to ask for clarification about important points from earlier lectures, if you need to.

The professor may also state how many parts are in the lecture. This allows you to develop a brief outline, against which you can check your notes after the lecture.

Sometimes, the professor defines key terms. Check these against the new words you prepared for the day's class. If a word is still unclear, now is the appropriate time to ask.

In conclusion, preparing for the lecture allows you to be a proactive listener who can focus and who knows what to listen for. It does require a significant amount of preparation before class; however, when you set yourself up for the lecture as discussed in this podcast, you are setting yourself up for success.

Thank you for listening to this podcast on effective listening strategies brought to you by from the faculty at the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute of the University of Ottawa.

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