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## **Group Listening Quizzes**

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### **Introduction**

The power of collaborative work among learners has been well documented in pedagogical research. Starting with Vygotsky's (1962) theory of Zone of Proximal Development, which posits the idea that learners are able to develop a greater range of skill with the help of peer collaboration or adult guidance than they can on their own, cooperative learning methods continued to flourish across a wide range of educational fields. At the turn of the century, Johnson, Johnson, and Stanne (2000) completed a meta-analysis of over 900 research studies that reported on cooperative learning methods, concluding that all of the studies they reviewed validate the effectiveness of cooperative learning over individualistic or competitive learning. Studies such as the one performed by Ravenscroft et al. (1995) corroborate these findings by showing that learners who were graded on team effort as well as individual effort performed better on exams than those in a control group that were graded solely on individual effort. Additionally, Clinton and Kohlmeyer (2005) reported a variety of positive effects of group work that manifested in learners some of which included significantly increased motivation to learn, increased enthusiasm, a belief that they had improved their problem solving abilities, higher ratings of their instructor's overall performance, and a belief that the instructor had helped them to learn more than those who were in the group that did not use group quizzes as part of their instruction. Due to its numerous effective benefits, group work has permeated ESL and EFL instruction for many decades. It has been included in the instruction of almost every skill. One such skill area that can greatly benefit from collaborative work is listening.

English language learners (ELL) at the university level have demanding expectations placed on them when it comes to the skill of listening. Once these learners enter university level classes, they are expected to listen to lectures, watch videos, and interact with native English speakers. Flowerdew and Miller (2014)

enumerate the listening difficulties ELL learners typically face in university such as speed of lectures, speakers' accents, vocabulary load, identifying the lecture structure and organization, and many others. Much of the information learners listen to is essential to their learning of the subject and therefore helping students develop their listening comprehension skills in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) listening and speaking classes is vital. Assessing listening comprehension to track and improve learners' progress in an EAP classroom can be difficult for a variety of reasons. One such reason is that we actually know relatively little about the processes students use when they attend a lecture in a second language (Field, 2011). Another such difficulty in teaching and assessing listening comprehension occurs because "the processes that learners engage in during listening cannot be directly observed and controlled" (Goh, 2014, p. 72). For example, when using quizzes with multiple choice questions to assess learners' comprehension, instructors may be unable to understand why learners chose the answers they did out of a list of possible choices. One potential solution for this is to have learners explain why they chose the answers they did but this is not part of the traditional practice of using multiple choice quizzes. This teaching tip discusses how group quizzes can be leveraged to assess listening comprehension in a way that allows students to access the many benefits of collaborative learning and provides us a glimpse into what is happening inside the minds of learners.

### **Group Listening Quizzes**

Using group listening quizzes is a way to assess listening comprehension that combines the method of using multiple choice quizzes to assess listening with the opportunity for learners to discuss answers within a group setting. In this approach, language learners in an EAP listening class are tasked with the assignment of listening to a lecture twice and taking notes. They are then given a multiple choice quiz to take which they first take individually and then again as a group. In preparation for group listening quizzes, it would be beneficial for learners to be taught and given practice in taking notes and have prior experience working with others in a group setting. Quizzes used can either be created by the teacher or taken from classroom materials or textbooks.

**Materials**

The materials necessary for this activity are: note-taking materials, video/audio equipment for viewing and listening to the lecture, and copies of the quiz. Copies of the quiz should include enough copies for each student to take the quiz individually and additional copies for the group quiz, one quiz sheet per group.

**Procedure**

**Step 1:** Prepare students for the lecture by explaining that they will listen to the lecture two times and that they should take notes as they listen both times. Tell students the title of the lecture and how long it is, then play the lecture twice.

**Step 2:** After students have listened to the lecture, pass out copies of the quiz to each student. Have students use their notes to take the lecture quiz on their own. Once they are finished, have them turn in their quiz to be graded. This individual quiz can be timed or not.

**Step 3:** Once students have turned in their individual quiz, put them into groups of three or four and give each group one new copy of the quiz. Allow students a limited amount of time to take the quiz again. Explain that the (entire) group will need to come to an agreement for each of the answers they choose. Encourage learners to discuss their answers and use their notes as evidence to support the answer they think is correct.

**Step 4:** Make sure to circulate and listen to students as they attempt to explain why they think an answer is the correct one. Listen for any break downs in listening comprehension or note taking and use that information to inform future lessons.

**Step 5:** Once each member has agreed on one answer for each question, have the students submit their group quiz to be graded. Make sure that the students know that they will get a grade for both quizzes (their individual and their group quiz). Teachers may opt to weight one quiz slightly more than the other or put the different quiz scores into different categories depending on the grading categories of the course. For example, I prefer to put the group quiz under the grading category of engagement which measures students' participation and the individ-

ual quiz under the listening proficiency category which measures the students' actual listening ability. This way, they will receive credit for the work they did on both quizzes and students are less likely to get upset when teammates choose incorrect answers.

**Step 6:** In subsequent group listening quizzes, make sure to rotate group members to provide variety and practice in negotiating meaning with different groups of peers.

### **Adaptations**

Adaptations for group listening quizzes can be made according to class sizes, proficiency levels, and EFL or ESL contexts. For example, group sizes can be larger or smaller based on the number of students in the class. In addition, depending on students' proficiency, the teacher can increase or lessen the number of times the students are allowed to listen to the lecture and the amount of time they are given to take notes. Finally, the number of lectures and listening quizzes could increase or decrease depending on whether the class is being taught in an EFL or ESL environment to help provide enough comprehensible input.

There are also multiple adaptations that may help to increase learners' motivation. One example is to make the group quiz score worth slightly more than the score for the individual quiz. This can increase learners' motivation to do well on the group quizzes due to the higher impact the quiz will have on their grades. Another way to adapt this assignment to help increase group participation is to mix the groupings. Having students with mixed proficiency levels in each group will help scaffold the listening activity for lower proficiency learners and provide more opportunities to negotiate meaning as well as opportunities for peer mentoring. Allowing higher proficiency learners the opportunity to collaborate with lower proficiency learners can be motivating for some students (Oxford, 1997). A third way to increase motivation is to make the group quiz a game where each group competes with other groups to get 100%. To increase the stakes, a timing factor can be included. The time factor could be determined by the teacher or can be determined by which group finishes first, meaning, the time to take the quiz is done for everyone as soon as the first group finishes. To increase the spirit of com-

petition, the answers can be reviewed as a class. Because the groups share their answers out loud in class, each group can compare their scores with other groups to see which group has achieved the 100% goal. This can possibly create a positive feeling of collaboration and accomplishment through friendly competition.

### **Benefits**

There are multiple potential benefits of using group listening quizzes. One substantial benefit is the opportunity for students to verbalize their thinking processes. As they discuss their own thinking processes in relation to the lecture they listened to, they can compare their thinking with their peers' mental processes and fill in the gaps between the two. As teachers circulate and listen to the group discussions, they are also privy to these insights and can use them to inform and improve their teaching. Another benefit is increased participation particularly among students who have a high level of listening comprehension but are quiet and reserved. These students often will get full points on their individual quizzes but may allow louder more confident students to persuade the group to choose the wrong answers during the group quiz. Providing the opportunity to take both quizzes allows these students to see their ability in the individual quiz which could then give them the confidence to speak up during their group discussion in order to get full points on their group quiz as well.

There can also be a significant increase in negotiation of meaning among learners. The opportunity to discuss the answers in small groups allows students the opportunity to define the meanings of terms in the lecture and in the listening quiz itself as well as clarify information in their notes. This negotiation also gives learners practice in using the terminology specific to the topic in the lecture. Because the group quizzes are graded, learners have an added motivation to argue for the answers that they feel are right. Increased use of speaking strategies such as using speech acts of persuasion and argumentation can also manifest themselves in this approach because students need to learn how to argue for the answers they believe are right. Providing instruction and feedback on useful phrases for dealing with persuasion and disagreement can further student learning in this area (Wong and Waring, 2020).

After the first group quiz, learners will often see the advantages of taking good notes. Clear and thorough notes help them to answer the quiz questions and persuade their group members of the correct answers by providing evidence with which they can convince their peers. This can increase learner motivation to work on improving their notes and apply note-taking strategies learned in class.

### Conclusion

Group listening quizzes can be one way to access the power of collaborative learning, thereby potentially increasing learner motivation and negotiation of meaning among learners. It can be a beneficial tool that encourages peer interaction, scaffolding of learning, and even mentorship. Learners have opportunities to develop pragmatic competence in the act of persuasion and participate in deeper cognitive processing of materials that they listened to. And finally, both teachers and students have the opportunity to get a glimpse of the mental processes that learners are using as they are listening to materials within the classroom through the conversations they have during group quizzes.

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