Using authentic listening texts to improve listening and speaking skills

di *Helen Legge*

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DESCRIPTION

This pathway will encourage better listening and speaking in B1 students. We look at a brief description of why students have problems with these skills in the English language and we discuss how the teacher can help them to overcome these problems through strategies and well-planned teaching practices.

Specific reference will be made to:

- pronunciation features of the English language;
- strategies needed to deal with both listening and speaking tasks;
- adequate preparation provision to empower students;
- motivating students to participate fully;
- relevant student and teacher evaluation.

This pathway will assist teachers by making them think more about the importance of pre-task language and skills development mainly in the form of vocabulary introduction, the context and preparation time and by showing them how these elements can be incorporated successfully in a series of lessons.

Students will be encouraged to apply strategies and complete a listening task based on a podcast about sightseeing in London and will create and record an audio-guide to their own city.

Students will practise speaking skills and learn new vocabulary associated with sightseeing.

Teachers will learn about the essential aspects of a listening and speaking lesson and how to incorporate these in their lesson planning. They will also be introduced to the importance of providing relevant and useful skills practice, employing appropriate strategies.

Teachers will learn about how to reflect on and analyse classroom activities in order to improve as a teacher and offer students an improved experience.

The teacher is encouraged to analyse the reasons why students find speaking and listening so difficult and then the elements of successful lesson planning by observing the structure of a series of 5 lessons which lead up to, exploit and follow up 2 main tasks.

The first main task is listening based and the teacher will be encouraged to think about how to breakdown the lesson into a structured series of parts in order to provide students with as much preparation as possible before

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dealing with an authentic listening task – in this case a podcast. A podcast provides the perfect opportunity to practice real language skills and is easily accessible on the internet.

Contextualisation, relevant vocabulary practice and listening strategies will be integrated to allow students to approach the authentic listening task confidently.

The second main task on speaking follows on from the first as students are asked to provide an audio guide to their own city. This personalised task is recorded using software which provides the teacher and student with a piece of material which is easy to evaluate and it also creates a realistic task – both of these aspects contribute to motivating teenage students to use English.

Students are invited to use self-assessment grids to evaluate their performance in each task.

The technology used permits students to easily access authentic listening material in the safe environment of the classroom. When using authentic material students are challenged so the task needs to be right for the students' level. Students also need to be adequately prepared to deal with the material through contextualisation and vocabulary support. The added video element allows the teacher to create a more realistic situation which reflects our usual listening contexts where we have visual and contextual information to help us with our comprehension. A podcast can be retrieved time and time again so students can repeat the exercise at a later date to monitor improvement.

Recording software such as Audacity is an excellent resource for teachers. Recording students speaking provides the opportunity for both students and teachers to monitor their progress which is, in itself, a motivational factor in any learning experience. It also creates a realistic reason for completing the task and, with guidance and support beforehand, students can approach such a task more confidently.

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ACTIVITY

Step 1

Why

There are many reasons why students have difficulty with listening and speaking skills and it is the teacher's role to structure the lessons in order to provide students with the best possible opportunity to practise these skills productively. In this pathway, these problems are analysed and advice is given to provide better listening and speaking practice through careful lesson planning.

Why do students find listening so difficult?

Have I taught my students the features of pronunciation?

English is a stress-timed language. This means that our communicative words are stressed and the grammatical words are not – not all syllables or words have the same importance. The result is that when we speak, we have weak forms of words which are 'reduced' versions and which leads to the common impression we 'eat our words'.

For example, in the simple question "how are you?" we stress the content words "how" and "you" because they communicate the meaning of what we want to say. The consequence is that we reduce "are" to its weak form "ə'" and the resulting pronunciation is **/<u>haʊ</u>ə<u>ju</u>:/**.

An audio guide to the phonetic symbols can be found here: http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/activities/phonemic-chart

The symbols, although important, can be daunting for students so it's possible to focus on word and sentence stress in order to draw their attention to listening for "communicative", or key words. Any word with two syllables or more has one main stress. For example, 'hotel' (second syllable), "visit" (first syllable) and "breathtaking" (first syllable). All good dictionaries mark the stress of a word so you can teach your students to take responsibility for their own learning by finding out the pronunciation of a new word. On a sentence level, the same idea applies – some words (communicative) are stressed, while others are not.

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Think about this example – "I'd like to book a ticket". Ask students to identify the content words while you say the phrase – I'd like to book a ticket* – so these are the stressed elements and the other, grammatical or structural words are reduced to weak sounds with /ə/ - /ədlaɪktəbʊkətɪkɪt/.

*ticket has two syllables so one of them will be stressed and one will not.

What can I do to help my students?

Teach them about how the English language sounds and always offer pronunciation practice of new language. It is a good idea to make sure students hear a word before they see its written form in order to avoid some pronunciation problems. Offer students the chance to listen to authentic English as much as possible.

Have I prepared my students adequately?

Teachers need to remember that real life listening almost always takes place in a contextualised environment. If I go to speak to a receptionist in a hotel, I don't expect him or her to ask me a question about my salary. The context helps us predict what we will hear and therefore makes the listening experience easier.

What can I do to help them?

Prepare students with a well-planned lesson, listening strategies and advice. A widely-accepted[1] approach to a listening activity follows a simple procedure to incorporate into your lesson plan:

Pre-listening (predict information): setting the context, providing students with language and encouraging students to predict the content of the listening material. This is also important for motivating students to listen.

While-listening (focus on content): This is giving students a reason to listen. A clear, accessible task allows students to listen for specific information. As teachers, this often includes a gist listening task (a simple, general comprehension task for first listening) and a more detailed task (where students listen to answer a series of questions during the second listening).

[1] Adapted from http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/a-framework-planning-a-listening-skills-lesson

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Post-listening (develop content): This is where we can give students the opportunity to react to the text and the task by asking them for their opinion on what they heard and how they felt about the task.

Have I chosen the right materials?

It used to be incredibly difficult to find authentic material, but with the technological world we live in today, there's no excuse! It's important to choose the material with the age and interests of your students in mind.

You might be interested in the history of knitting, but they probably won't be! Find out what interests them and apply that to your lessons.

How can I help them?

Provide your students with a varied range of resources – show them where these materials come from and encourage them to access them too. Students can find audio material everywhere - you tube, podcasts, itunes, music and films are just some examples.

Why do students find Speaking so difficult?

Have I taught the importance of features of pronunciation?

The same reasons apply to speaking difficulties as they do to listening difficulties. The stress-timed nature of English which we explained in detail before with regards to listening, has the same consequences for students who are learning speaking skills.

What can I do to help them?

Teach them about how the English language sounds and provide good models of pronunciation – use audio resources if you are not comfortable with focusing on your own pronunciation, for example, using websites like www.howjsay.com or most electronic dictionaries also provide an audio file for the pronunciation. Teach language in chunks because giving students the pieces of language necessary, not just the individual words, helps fluency. If a student is piecing together a group of words, his/her pronunciation will be stilted and hesitant.

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Once students are aware of weak forms in connected speech, they can attempt to focus on this when speaking and aim for as natural a pronunciation as possible.

Have I prepared my students adequately?

Provide your students with the language and context they need in order to speak successfully. There's no point setting a speaking task if the students don't have the language to do it. Use contextualisation with visuals to elicit words and phrases students already know and to introduce new language clearly.

What can I do to help them?

Plan your lesson appropriately: provide a context, a pre-speaking phase (where language is introduced and practised), the speaking task (give them a reason for speaking) and post-listening tasks (related writing task or peer assessment task). Provide strategies to help when they can't remember a word or lose track of what they are saying – these are realistic and relevant tools to have. Some examples of speaking tasks are:

Questionnaires and pair work for form filling, mini-presentations, guessing games (back to the board), video blogs/diaries and role plays.

Am I motivating my students?

Students, especially teenagers, can feel uncomfortable using English with their classmates and feel it is unrealistic to do so.

What can I help them?

Insist on English in the classroom – a lot of daily classroom interaction provides a safe environment for students to practise. Provide your students with a varied range of tasks and give them a reason for using English. With teenagers a scoring system for using English in the classroom can also help, many examples of which can be found on teaching sites.

Something which really motivates students is recording them while they are speaking. You can do this with various tools, either using a video recorder or simply a microphone, or by using any of the software now available on the internet, such as 'Audacity' or the site www.vocaroo.com or even by creating a podcast or videoblog.

Why use these tools?

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Audacity is software which is quite well-known in teaching circles and it is a useful tool which allows teachers to record an audio text of varying length. When it is combined with a suitable task, depending on the students' level of English, it is a motivating, interesting and even fun way to encourage students to speak.

You can find out more about Audacity in the following section.

How and what

PODCASTS are a fantastic way to introduce authentic language to students in short, manageable quantities. As in my example, they are sometimes accompanied by video which helps students to understand what is being said as they have visual clues to help them.

This podcast which is called "What's on in London?" comes from itunes (www.apple.com) where there are many, free materials in English on various themes, but podcasts can be easily found on other sites. Podcasts are basically an audio file, this means you can pause them, rewind them and listen to them as many times as you like. For these reasons they are very useful for learners of English and teachers too! How can this particular podcast help students to become better listeners (and therefore speakers) of English?

It is authentic English. It has been created for speakers of English, not for a classroom so the language is challenging, but with the help of the teacher and by applying the right strategies, students can learn to deal with this level of language. This goes back to my point about PREPARATION for listening tasks. In any listening task, the students should not be expected to listen and understand without having previously been taught some of the language in the podcast. So for this podcast, which is centred around sightseeing in a city (London), the teacher needs to provide relevant vocabulary items. I have chosen to do this by showing students some of the famous landmarks of London and then encouraging them to add others they know about.

This also, very importantly, sets the context for students who clearly see that the topic is about the city of London. In the lesson I have also chosen to ask students to provide me with as much vocabulary as possible before introducing anything new, by asking them questions like "What can tourists do in London?" before showing them the expressions I selected for the task.

In this phase it is imperative that the students HEAR the language before they SEE it. Drilling expressions in the classroom as new vocabulary is

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introduced, will help students to recognise the sounds when they hear them in the listening task. Once the language has been heard, the teacher can show the expressions and ask students to think about how many syllables there are or which words are important ones and therefore, where the stress is.

One technique teachers can use is to 'beat' out the word like a drum or clap it, using softer beats for the unstressed syllables. This can also be used as a game when reviewing vocabulary as the teacher or student beats out a word on the desk and the others have to guess which word it is.

The listening lesson is planned to introduce the listening task only after preparation has taken place. This follows the commonly accepted 3-step approach to listening:

- a pre-listening task;
- a while-listening task;
- a post-listening task.

It is also widely accepted that students should listen once for general meaning (gist listening) and then again to answer more specific questions (detailed listening). In the attached lesson, students create their own gist listening task (which personalises the task) as the teacher asks them which landmarks they expect to hear about in a guide to sightseeing in London. Students can then tick their ideas off as they hear them in the listening task. The teacher can also ask them if there were any landmarks they did not know about in order to stimulate vocabulary use in preparation for the detailed task.

This also allows students to hear the listening task once without the pressure of finding specific, detailed information and it is important to remind students of this as part of their listening strategies – focus on the task you are given and do not worry if you do not understand everything you hear.

For the detailed task (the main listening task) other strategies are applied.

This time students are being required to concentrate on specific pieces of information. For this reason it is important to allow students time to read the questions BEFORE they listen again. In this way, students can begin to associate the parts of the task with what they heard in the gist listening and so, prepare themselves for the second attempt. Remind students that it is important to focus on the questions in the task.

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Once students have completed the task as best they can, they check their answers and fill in a self-assessment grid for listening.

For the speaking part of the lessons, the same concepts apply.

Prepare your students with language.

Teach language in chunks.

Focus on pronunciation before students see the words and provide students with ways of managing what they say and how they say it (strategies).

For example, I provide my students with prompts to help them remember what they need to ask/talk about. These are simply short expressions or words NOT full text or otherwise the students will read and their pronunciation will be compromised.

It is invaluable to allow students time to prepare for a longer speaking task such as making an audio guide in this lesson. This does not mean permitting them to write down what they are going to say (for the reasons mention before), but it means allowing them time to think about what they can say, to prepare prompts to help themselves with relevant expressions and vocabulary items. This will give them more confidence to approach the task and therefore motivate them to do it as well as they can.

Nowadays, however, we cannot think only of writing with pen and paper. We are living in the world of digital natives and the digital writer is more common. The explosion of social media has made writing a key skill for everyone worldwide and young people have a greater need to learn digital skills quickly so that they can express themselves in various contexts.

Summary

There are many reasons why students have difficulty with listening and speaking skills and this pathway guides a teacher to identify how to structure lessons in order to provide students with the best possible opportunity to practise these skills productively. In this pathway, these problems are analysed and advice is given to provide better listening and speaking practice through careful lesson planning. We look at why students have problems in these areas, particularly at phonological aspects, and also at how the teacher can resolve these problems by:

- teaching pronunciation awareness;

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- staging a skills lesson to provide pre-task activities in order to prepare students for the task;
- teaching strategies to approach listening and speaking tasks;
- motivating students.

The pathway also elaborates how to integrate these aspects into your teaching in order to make listening and speaking lessons more focused with specific tasks and structure. The attached lesson plan demonstrates how these concepts combine to make the teaching experience more structured and the learning experience more productive.

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Step 2

Activity steps

- **Lesson 1**: Listening task preparation. Introduction of vocabulary and speaking practice related to sightseeing in a city.
- **Lesson 2**: The listening task (Podcast). Pre-listening, while-listening and post listening tasks.
- **Lesson 3**: Preparation for speaking task. Review of vocabulary and language from listening task. Students describe landmarks in their own city.
- **Lesson 4**: Students learn about software "Audacity".
- **Lesson 5**: Students create audio guide to their own city.

Lesson 1

This lesson focuses on the preparation for the listening task (Pre-Listening phase) through the presentation of necessary vocabulary and pronunciation practice. This allows students to prepare for the listening and consequent speaking exercise by creating a context and a language bank, which can be used during both activities.

Materials

- Visuals of London landmarks
- Worksheet lesson 1 – speaking prompts

Content	Timing
1. Use visuals of famous London landmarks to present students with the idea of a short trip to London. These help to encourage students to provide as much information as possible about the city from their **own experience**, contributing to a small knowledge bank about the city which is recorded on the board. **Brainstorm any vocabulary** associated with tourism,	6-8 minutes

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using the question "What can tourists *do* in London?" to elicit language like "go sightseeing", "visit a museum", "take the underground" "watch a musical", with specific emphasis on pronunciation through various techniques - remember, as each vocabulary item comes up, the teacher needs to **drill the pronunciation**, **draw attention to the stressed syllables** and THEN **write the word or phrase on the board** (a useful and motivating way to practise pronunciation is "clapping" the syllables with light claps for the unstressed parts and loud clapping for the stressed parts). It is also useful to build words into short phases or "chunks". Give students **time afterwards to copy the vocabulary** from the board **and to mark the stress.**	10-15 minutes
2. Present a model question (**worksheet**) by asking "Have you ever been to London" to a student. A brief language focus could follow to draw attention to the different grammatical structures for questions (present perfect or past simple) if necessary and draw attention to **sentence stress** for questions. Show students the speaking prompts which will **help students formulate the same questions** (speaking prompts doc), to **use appropriate vocabulary** (remind students about the vocabulary from the first part of the lesson) and **to record** briefly, in note form, what their partner says so he/she can report back to the class after the speaking activity has taken place (attach visuals of document 'prompts for speaking activity 1' here). **Prompts allow the students to feel more confident** in a speaking exercise. Tell students to look at the prompts for 1 minute and to think of the questions and answers they might hear. Then they work with a partner and ask and answer the questions, making short notes about their partner's answers. **Observe, listen and make notes** and then ask the students to feedback to the class about what their partner said.	8-10 minutes (language focus) 2-3 minutes 1 minute 5-6 minutes 5-6 minutes

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Worksheet

Work with a partner. Ask the questions and write notes about what your partner says.

Remember your sentence stress!

Have/been/London?	
No	**Yes**
Would like/go?	When/ go?
What/would like/see?	What/do?
Who/would like/go with?	Who/go with?
What/favourite landmark?	What/favourite landmark?

Lesson 2

This is the main listening task and is carefully structured in three parts:

- a pre-listening task,
- a gist and a main listening task,
- a follow up task.

Materials

- Podcast "What's on in London"
- Listening task detail doc
- Listening task answers doc

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Content	Timing
Review what was done in the last lesson through a vocabulary activity where students must compete to come up with as many things tourists can do or see in London as possible in one minute. Ask students "Can you remember the last lesson?" and listen to what they say. Then tell them they need to work in small groups or pairs and have 1 minute to write down as many things tourists can do in London. Time them and, once a minute has passed, see who has the most words. Then ask them to read them out, correcting pronunciation if necessary, and ask the others to listen and add anything they had not thought of.	5 minutes
Pre-listening task Now tell students that they will listen to a **podcast** about visiting London ("*What's on in Londo'"* podcast). Ask students if they know what a podcast is and whether they think it will be easy or difficult to listen to. Tell students about **listening strategies**. 1. When they listen they need to listen for **KEY WORDS** to make sense of the content, NOT try to understand every word, nor give up if they can't understand a lot. 2. The importance of focusing on **the task**. What have they been asked to do while they listen? This is the information they need TO LISTEN FOR. Now ask them to work in pairs and ***predict*** what landmarks in London they think the podcast will include and to write them in their notebook (this is **necessary for the gist listening activity**).	5 minutes 5 minutes
Gist listening activity Once students have written their predictions, tell them to **listen and simply check if their predictions about the content were correct,** ticking the ones in their notebooks, which are in the podcast. This is the **gist exercise** - a simple and achievable general comprehension task, in this case based on students' own ideas and therefore also a personalised task. Tell students that they only **need to focus on the task** and that they do	9 minutes (audio-video)

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not need to understand every word. Students listen, do the gist exercise and check their answers together in pairs.	
Main listening task Remind students of the previously mentioned listening strategies and how it is important **to focus on the questions in the task in order to guide your listening**. Point out to students that if the students thought the listening material was difficult (and they probably will), the **task** was achievable/doable. This is **an essential part of building confidence when faced with authentic listening material**. Tell students they now have 2 minutes to **first** read the questions (so they know what to listen for) and **then listen and answer**. Hand out the listening task and allow them 2 minutes to read it before playing the podcast/video again. Students check their answers together and are encouraged to comment on their performance in the listening task (with a comment on how they felt doing the task – with **associated self evaluation for listening grid**).	2 minutes 2 minutes 9 minutes (audio-video) 6 minutes
Conclude by asking students to comment on which places they would particularly like to see which were in the podcast and why they would like to see them (**Post-listening task**).	Homework

Detailed listening task

What's on London podcast/video

Part 1.

Watch and listen to the podcast about landmarks in London.

Which landmarks does it mention?

Part 2. Listen and watch again and answer the questions.

1) Holland park is one of London's _____ parks.

a) biggest

b) most sporty

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c) most romantic

2) The park provides _____ for any artist.

a) stunning inspiration
b) some inspiration
c) a sunny situation

3) The park provides _____ for any artist.

a) highlights
b) light places
c) highest points

✏

4) What's in Kensington?

a) Shops and restaurants
b) Expensives houses
c) Museum and shops

5) Which important historical person was born in Kensington Palace 1819?

_____

6) What can you see at the Serpentine Gallery?

_____ art, _____ and _____ installations.

7) What is directly opposite the Albert Memorial?

The _____ _____ _____.

8) How many galleries are there in the Victoria and Albert museum?

a) 45
b) 105
c) 145

9) The Natural History Museum is possibly the UK's _____ museum.

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10) Some stunning features in the NH museum include the wonderful _____ and _____ galleries.

✏

11) High Street Ken is one of the _____ and most _____ shopping places outside central London.

12) Which of these types of shops can you find on Kensington High Street?

a) Fashion boutiques
b) Supermarkets
c) Jewellery shops
d) Pubs
e) Art dealers
f) Restaurants
g) Bars

✏

13) What's in Piccadilly Circus?

a) Clowns
b) Huge neon signs
c) A palace
d) The statue of Eros

14) What is Shaftsbury Avenue famous for?

_____

15) "One place well worth visiting is St. James' church". Why?

a) A world-influenced market
b) A famous tomb
c) A famous treasure
d) Amazing concerts
e) Stunning architecture

✏

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16) How many people visit the London Eye each year?

a) Over 5 thousand
b) Over 3.5 million
c) Over 5 million

17) It's a _____ feat of design and engineering.

a) Stunning
b) Scary
c) Breathtaking

What's on London podcast/video. If students are weaker, pause the podcast at the symbol ✏ and allow students to check together before moving on to the next part.

Answer sheet

Part 1.

Watch and listen to the podcast about landmarks in London.

Which landmarks does it mention?

Holland Park, Kensington, Piccadilly Circus, The London Eye

Part 2. Listen and watch again and answer the questions.

1) Holland park is one of London's _____ parks.

a) biggest
b) most sporty
c) **most romantic**

2) The park provides _____ for any artist.

a) **stunning inspiration**
b) some inspiration
c) a sunny situation

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3) The park provides _____ for any artist.

a) **highlights**
b) light places
c) highest points

4) What's in Kensington?

a) Shops and restaurants
b) Expensives houses
c) **Museum and shops**

5) Which important historical person was born in Kensington Palace 1819?

_____**Queen Victoria**_____

6) What can you see at the Serpentine Gallery?

_**Contemporary**__ art, _**Sculpture**__ and _**Artistic**__ installations.

7) What is directly opposite the Albert Memorial?

The __**Royal**__ __**Albert**__ __**Hall**_.

8) How many galleries are there in the Victoria and Albert museum?

a) 45
b) 105
c) **145**

9) The Natural History Museum is possibly the UK's _**greatest**_ museum.

10) Some stunning features in the NH museum include the wonderful _**Life**_ and _**Earth**_ galleries.

11) High Street Ken is one of the _**trendiest**_ and most _**popular**_ shopping places outside central London.

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12) Which of these types of shops can you find on Kensington High Street?

a) **Fashion boutiques**
b) Supermarkets
c) **Jewellery shops**
d) Pubs
e) **Art dealers**
f) **Restaurants**
g) **Bars**

13) What's in Piccadilly Circus?

a) Clowns
b) **Huge neon signs**
c) A palace
d) **The statue of Eros**

14) What is Shaftsbury Avenue famous for?

__**Theatre/Theatre shows**__

15) "One place well worth visiting is St. James' church". Why?

a) **A world-influenced market**
b) A famous tomb
c) A famous treasure
d) **Amazing concerts**
e) **Stunning architecture**

16) How many people visit the London Eye each year?

a) Over 5 thousand
b) **Over 3.5 million**
c) Over 5 million

17) It's a _____ feat of design and engineering.

a) Stunning

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b) Scary

c) **Breathtaking**

Lesson 3

Students prepare for a speaking task in stages, in order to have the opportunity to incorporate the new vocabulary from the previous lessons in short tasks, each of which allows them to gain confidence with the skill and topic before the main speaking task.

Materials

- Worksheet

Content	Timing
Language review: ask students to think of the key vocabulary items from the previous lessons which come to mind when you show them visuals or say the names of the landmarks which they met through the listening task and in the lessons.	5 minutes
Pre-speaking phases, which ensure students have the necessary language needed for the main speaking task. They also allow the teacher time to see how much language the students have learnt and to check pronunciation. Tell students to think of a landmark in their own city, which corresponds to one of the vocabulary items (for example, "there's a breathtaking view from here". The teacher tells the students that they need to do this for 6 different vocabulary items and therefore, 6 different landmarks. Students do this in small groups of 3 or 4. Teacher observes and assists if necessary.	6-8 minutes
Now tell the students to describe the places to the class without saying which place it is and the others in the class need to guess which place they are referring to. Give an example so it is clear e.g. "'it's one of the most famous places in the city – where is it?".	10 minutes
Once finished, the class can vote on the best description.	2 minutes

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Now tell students to work in pairs and think of 3 places teenagers would be interested in visiting in their city and how they could be described. They need to **quickly make notes on how they will describe the places**, using the vocabulary from the previous lessons. They also need to think about how to make the places sound interesting for people of their age who might want to visit their city. See Worksheet.	10 minutes
Once the descriptions are clear, tell students that they will be used for a speaking exercise so they need to reduce them to prompts or key words. Tell them this is to create more natural-sounding English, as it's important **not to read from a script, but from key words or prompts**. Students adapt their notes to make prompts.	5 minutes
Students are now told to work with another pair (to form groups of 4) and to practise speaking about their landmarks to each other. The group needs to decide which description was the best.	10 minutes
Feedback to class.	2 minutes

Worksheet

Speaking – planning the audio guide.

Work with your partner. Make notes in the table.

	Landmark no.1	Landmark no.2	Landmark no.3
What's the name of the landmark?			

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Why is it interesting for tourists and teens?			
What phrases can you use to describe it? (don't forget to mark the stress).			

Lesson 4

Learning about software.

Content	Timing
Teacher explains the benefits of recording for evaluation and progress. Introduce the free software "Audacity" to record and save students' work in mp3 format. (http://audacity.softonic.it/download)	5 minutes 40 minutes
The teacher introduces the recording software "Audacity" and tells students that they will follow a step-by-step guide to learn how to use this software with the aim of recording their audio guides. It's **essential that students know how to use the tool before they attempt to record their work** so the teacher needs to **provide a step-by-step guide to using the tool and offer the opportunity to practise** before the official recording takes place. This concept is equally valid for the teacher. It is also useful to have a paper guide to refer to when	10 minutes

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completing the task. With this tool, once students have recorded themselves, they can save the recording as a mp3 file so the contributions of the entire class can be grouped in a folder and played using a widely-known media player.	
Practice: students practise using the software, following the guide, by simply recording their prompts a few times, not by trying to speak at length. The aim here is to learn how to use the software, not to do the speaking task. The teacher assists. Once students are confident with the use of the software, They can start recording their audio guides as DRAFTS, just so they have practise with combining the two elements. Alternatively the students can be recorded by video recorder if the school has one available.	10 minutes 10 minutes
The teacher explains to students that the speaking task, which will be done in the next lesson will be an assessed task and shows them the elements he/she is looking for and will be marking on.	10 minutes

Lesson 5

The main speaking task.

Students will elaborate the previous lesson's material in order to create an audio guide to their city for young people.

Content	Timing
Remind students that they will be recording themselves today	5-6 minutes

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and that the recording will be used to assess their speaking skills – review how. Students follow the guide from the previous lesson and use their prompts in order to record themselves speaking about their respective places. Teacher monitors and guides but should not correct or interrupt at this stage.	30 minutes
Once all the recordings have been finished, they can be stored as an Mp3 and transferred to an audio CD which the students could then take home. Self Assessment grid – student Self-assessment grid – teacher	15 minutes at the end of the lesson for students to complete the self-evaluation grid

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Step 3

Student Listening Self-Assessment

Think about the task, read the "can dos" and tick the boxes.			
B1 Listening skills	**I can do this and it's not difficult**	**I can do this but it's difficult**	**I can't do this yet**
I can understand the **main points of a long discussion** about something I am familiar with if the speakers do not talk too fast and they use standard language.			
I can understand **a radio interview** on subjects about which I know something about but the people involved have to speak **slowly and clearly** and I must be able to hear some things more than once.			
I can understand when people speak at **normal speed** on familiar or carefully prepared subjects.			

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If the speaker speaks slowly and clearly, I can understand the **main points** and the important details in stories and announcements of a certain length.			
I can understand most of what is said in many **television programmes** about subjects which interest me personally, for example interviews, short presentations or news programmes, if the speakers talk slowly and clearly.			
Listening Strategies	**I can do this and it's not difficult**	**I can do this but it's difficult**	**I can't do this yet**
I can listen for key words.			
I can use the context to help me predict what words the speaker might use.			

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Student Speaking Self-Assessment

Think about the task, read the "can dos" and tick the boxes.			
Fluency	**I can do this and it's not difficult**	**I can do this but it's difficult**	**I can't do this yet**
I can speak for a long period of time with just a little hesitation and correction.			
I can speak for quite a long period of time, but sometimes I have to pause to think about and correct what I am saying.			
Vocabulary	**I can do this and it's not difficult**	**I can do this but it's difficult**	**I can't do this yet**
I use a variety of different words when I speak on a topic and I can express myself well with few mistakes.			
I sometimes use the same words when I speak but I can express myself quite well. I make some mistakes.			
Grammar	**I can do this and it's not difficult**	**I can do this but it's difficult**	**I can't do this yet**

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I can use some complex grammar structures well most of the time. I can express myself clearly.			
I can use simple grammatical structures well and I can sometimes use more complex ones. I can express myself clearly most of the time.			

Teacher Self-Assessment: Listening Lesson

Think about the lesson you taught. Read the statements and tick which box is true for you.			
When planning a listening lesson…	**This is always true for me**	**This is sometimes true for me**	**This is not true for me**
I can take various motivational factors into account in the language learning process.			
I can take the emotional needs of the students into account (sense of achievement, fun, etc.).			
I can create a collaborative atmosphere which invites students to deal with listening tasks confidently.			

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I can select listening tasks which are significant and relevant and which encourage participation at different levels.			
I can evaluate and select materials to provide varied types of listening materials.			
I can plan my lesson to include a pre-listening stage so students can approach the listening material fully prepared.			
I can help students to use listening strategies (Key words, gist listening and detailed listening) to apply during a listening task.			
I can plan activities to help students identify features of the spoken language and help them understand how to apply these in a listening context.			
I can choose and prepare comprehension and follow-up tasks to create a bridge between listening and speaking skills.			

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Teacher Self-Assessment: Listening Lesson

Think about the lesson you taught. Read the statements and tick which box is true for you.			
When planning a speaking lesson…	**This is always true for me**	**This is sometimes true for me**	**This is not true for me**
I can take various motivational factors into account in the language learning process.			
I can take the emotional needs of the students into account (sense of achievement, fun, etc.).			
I can create a collaborative atmosphere which invites students to participate in speaking tasks confidently.			
I can select speaking tasks which are significant and relevant and which encourage participation at different levels.			
I can evaluate and select varied materials to stimulate oral production (audio-visual, authentic material, etc.).			

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I can help students to use compensation strategies (paraphrasing, simplification, etc.) during a speaking task.			
I can evaluate and select techniques to allow students to recognise and pronounce English words and phrases correctly.			

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RESOURCES

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Teaching English. An article which focuses on the problems students have with speaking tasks and how the teacher can help.

http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/teaching-speaking-skills-1 (visited May 2013)

How to podcast tutorial. The author explains how to create a podcast in a clear and simple way with an Audacity tutorial included.

http://howtopodcasttutorial.com/podcast-tutorial-four-basic-steps (visited April 2013)

Itunes Tutorial

https://www.apple.com/support/itunes/

Quicktime for iTunes

http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/

Audacity Tutorial

http://audacity.sourceforge.net/manual-1.2/tutorials.html

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SINTESI IN ITALIANO

Il percorso è, in pratica, un'indagine per analizzare e capire concetti centrali collegati alla preparazione e allo svolgimento di lezioni per migliorare la produzione e la comprensione orale al livello B1.

È un percorso con una particolare enfasi sulla pianificazione di una serie di lezioni dove si pratica la comprensione o la produzione orale e che riguarda in modo specifico:

- i problemi degli studenti nel raggiungere le competenze linguistiche per queste abilità al livello B1;
- suggerimenti pratici per risolvere tali problemi dal punto di vista didattico con riferimento agli aspetti fonologici della lingua inglese, all'applicazione di strategie che aiutano gli studenti ad affrontare una prova di comprensione o produzione orale e anche alla motivazione degli studenti;
- un concetto molto importante, ovvero quello di preparazione *pre-task*, dove l'insegnante dà potere agli studenti fornendo loro linguaggio e contesto per sostenerli nello svolgimento delle prove di abilità.

Questi elementi sono definiti come i concetti chiave di una serie di attività che servono a far comprendere l'applicazione del concetto stesso nella didattica. Sono affiancati da materiale per valutare (e aiutare ad auto-valutare) i progressi degli studenti in queste due abilità e come auto-valutare i progressi dell'insegnante. L'insieme integra questi concetti ed elementi per dimostrare come offrire agli studenti un'opportunità di praticare le abilità di comprensione e produzione orale in un ambiente coinvolgente e stimolante.

La tecnologia usata – podcast e Audacity recording software – permette agli studenti di accedere ad un testo d'inglese autentico in un ambiente controllato e di sostegno. Un podcast può essere riascoltato quante volte si vuole e quindi si presta come strumento molto utile sia per un insegnante, che per uno studente. Inoltre, la registrazione delle prove di produzione orale non solo coinvolge gli studenti, ma offre un'opportunità sia a loro che agli insegnanti di monitorare i loro progressi.

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