**Lesson 3**

Building Background Knowledge on the Topic

When we hear lectures as part of a university course, we use our knowledge of the subject to help us understand what we hear. It is a good idea to do some background reading on the topic before a lecture so that you can become familiar with some of the terms and ideas that are likely to be discussed by the lecturer.

Other ways to get background knowledge include:

* speaking to people who have knowledge about the topic.
* doing research in a library or online.
* seeing a movie about the topic.

One way to become familiar with the technical vocabulary of a particular subject is to try organising it into word groups. Surprisingly, you may find that you understand more than you think you do.

Inferencing

Inferencing is really just a more academic word for guessing. In fact, guessing is an essential part of listening, even in our first language. It helps us cope with situations such as when any of these happen:

* The information the speaker gives is incomplete.
* We hear a familiar word, but used in an unfamiliar way.
* We can’t hear what the speaker is saying.

An effective listener, especially when listening to a foreign language, regularly uses guessing as a main strategy.

Previously gained knowledge of the target language, the learner’s own language, or some other language can provide linguistic clues to the meaning of what is heard or read. Suffixes, prefixes and word order are useful linguistic clues for guessing meaning.

In addition to clues coming purely from knowledge of language, there are clues from other sources. Non-verbal behaviour, such as the speaker’s tone of voice, facial expression, emphasis and body language (gestures, distance, posture, and relaxation versus tension) helps learners understand what is being said. Knowing what has already been said frequently gives important information for getting the meaning of what is currently being said and for anticipating what will be said.

Perceptual clues concerning the situation aid the listener’s understanding. These clues can be audible or visual. Graphs, pictures, tables and appendices can help readers get an idea of the meaning.

Another important source of clues to meaning is the text structure, that is, introductions, summaries, conclusions, titles, transitions, and ways of dividing the text. It is possible to obtain many clues by noticing the speaker’s structural organisational use of words, phrases, numbers, and letters that indicate importance or priority; for instance, first…, second…, third…; the most important idea is…; or the two main points are… Structural clues are often given, like By way of introduction; We will now turn to…; So far we have covered…; and In conclusion.

General background knowledge (including knowledge of the target culture, knowledge of the topic under discussion, and general world knowledge of current affairs, arts, politics and literature) helps language learners to make guesses about what they hear or read. Research indicates that associating newly heard information with prior knowledge is a powerful and very frequently used way to guess the meaning of a listening passage. All listeners make mental association with prior knowledge, but when compared with ineffective listeners, good listeners make more of these associations, make them more personally meaningful, and intentionally use them for guessing.

**Organising input (continued)**

So far we have seen the shopping list and T-formation formats to write down our notes. Another way of organizing input is by using diagram notes.

Diagram notes can take different names such as *word map*, *semantic map*, *mind map*. Basically they are the same because they require students to indicate the main word or idea and to link this with clusters of related words or ideas by means of lines or arrows.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Resultado de imagen para shopping list | Imagen relacionada | Resultado de imagen para mind map |

***Pre-listening Tasks***

A) How much do you know about wind energy? Choose the best option for each multiple choice questions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. As an engineer working with renewable energies you would:  a) place wind farms in valleys and low lying areas  b) place wind farms where weather fronts are calm  c) place wind farms on elevated sites  d) build wind farms everywhere | 6. Learning about renewable energy sources:  a) is necessary for the future  b) will help future decision making  c) shows you other ways to create electricity  d) all answers a, b, and c |
| 2. Wind power turns the kinetic energy of wind into:  a) direct heat  b) solar energy  c) hydroelectric power  d) both mechanical and electrical power | 7. Wind energy is:  a) an important energy source  b) kinetic energy  c) movement of energy from the air  d) all answers a, b, and c |
| 3. Wind power:  a) is one of the oldest renewable technologies  b) was used by early sailors  c) is used to pump water  d) all answers a, b, & c | 8. Some of the devices used in wind power are:  a) turbines  b) sails  c) windmills  d) all answers a, b, and c |
| 4. Wind:  a) is moving air  b) is created by the sun’s energy  c) has power proportional to the cube of its speed  d) all answers a, b, and c | 9. Wind is:  a) caused by convection  b) a determiner of weather  c) a form of fossil energy  d) a and b |
| 5. You will likely most often see wind turbines:  a) on rivers  b) on hilltops  c) on lakes  d) in cities | 10. Hot air:  a) is heavier than cold air  b) rises  c) sinks  d) a and c |

*Taken from:* http://www.infinitepower.org/pdf

*B) Read the text to learn some information about wind energy. Then complete the word map below with vocabulary from the text. Can you add any other words?*

*Wind Power*

For centuries, people have harnessed the wind's energy for power, to sail ships (the ancient Egyptians) or to power windmills to grind grain (the Persians). The Dutch are famous for their windmills, which have formed the basis for the design of the modern wind turbines that we see today.

Wind is caused by sunlight unevenly heating the surface of the Earth. During the day, air over the land heats up more quickly than air over the water, making it expand and rise. As it does so, cooler, denser air rushes in beneath it, creating an air current

Turbines harness this energy by working like an old-fashioned windmill with rotor blades that face into the wind. When the blades are spinning, they drive a shaft that is connected to an electrical generator by a gearbox. Most wind turbines produce electricity when the wind is blowing at 10-30mph. One 1.8mW wind turbine produces enough electricity for 1,000 households every year.

Turbines tend to be built together, as "wind farms", to produce more electricity in places that have strong, steady winds. Wind farms can be onshore - on ridgelines, at the tops of rounded hills, open plains and gaps in mountains; near shore - on land within 3km of a shoreline, or offshore - generally 10km or more from land.

Wind energy is now available for both large and small-scale electricity generation, with huge technological advances over the past 20 years. Wind is really a form of solar power, so it has similar benefits of being clean, abundant and free. Some estimates suggest there is enough wind to generate one-third of the world's electricity. Small wind turbines can be used in remote places to power homes that are too far away from the national grid.

The major problem with wind power is that it is intermittent, so it can only be used to generate electricity when the wind is blowing strongly enough. Good sites for wind turbines are often quite remote, either offshore or up on mountainsides, far from the cities where the energy is most needed. Another argument against large-scale wind farms is their impact on the natural landscape. A further argument is the threat to birds if wind farms are not appropriately positioned.

Adapted from: http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2007/dec/10/windpower.renewableenergy

**History**

1. sail ships

2.

**Windfarms**

Turbines built together on:

**Wind**

**Technology**

Rotor blades

**Definition**

Sunlight

**Cons**

intermittent

**Pros**

clean

**First Listening**

Watch the video Wind Power and take notes. Use telegraphic language, conventional symbols and abbreviations. Write down your notes in one of the formats you already know.

**Second Listening**

The teacher will now play the video a second time. Look at your notes and listen carefully for points where, during the first listening:

* You didn’t catch what the speaker said.
* You didn’t have time to note all the details.
* You misunderstood what was said.

**After listening**

After watching the video, compare the content of your notes with those of another student. Ask yourselves the following:

* Have you included the same information?
* If you missed any points, has your partner made notes on them?
* If there were points (words or sections) that neither of you could understand, can others in the class help?

Now compare the form of your notes. For this you will need to put them side-by-side. Look for differences between the ways in which you have used:

* abbreviations
* symbols
* telegraphic language
* spatial layout
* emphasis

**Follow-up**

Look for information about Wind Power in Argentina to discuss in class.