

Listening skills (1)

How to teach listening skills more effectively and creatively.

Many pupils react negatively whenever they are asked to listen to a recording of German. This is probably due to the fact that they feel they are **being tested** on their **knowledge** of the language rather than making **gains in learning**. Quite often their experience revolves around listening to a text (usually a dialogue) and then answering a series of prepared questions on what they have heard. In this way they are being asked to focus on the **content of the text** rather than **the form of the language itself**.

Here is an idea to try out next time your pupils listen to a German recording. The focus is on the **learning** not the text.

Select from the text (see below)** five or six categories of language that you want your pupils to listen out for, for example: colours, numbers, particular verb forms, words following a particular sequence: eg: what is the next word you hear after the phrase: *Können Sie uns.....?*

Give out these categories to different groups in the class and ask them to note down when they hear those words. This is a useful differentiation exercise in its own right.

Play the recording and watch the pupils as they write down the words they have heard. Their body language alone will tell you if they have coped with the task. Pupils who have heard the words they have been asked to listen out for will immediately write them down; those who are less sure will not be writing anything and this will tell you if you need to repeat the exercise.

When the recording has finished, invite the pupils to feedback each of the categories of vocabulary and write them on the board under the separate headings. If they have not managed to hear all of the vocabulary, then repeat the exercise, only this time give different pupils different items to listen out for. Repeat until all the vocabulary has been written down by the pupils.

**Here is a sample text in German:

Liebe Zuhörer. Können Sie uns bitte helfen? Wir suchen Dieter Meyer. Herr Meyer ist siebenunddreißig Jahre alt und wohnt in Duisburg.

Er hat lange schwarze Haare und trägt gern eine schwarze Mütze und ein rotes T-Shirt. Manchmal trägt er auch blaue Jeans und einen gelben Pullover.

Am neunzehnten Juli war ein Schulfest in der Friedrichs-Schule und Herr Meyer war auch auf dem Schulfest. Eine Frau hat ihre Tasche verloren. Die Tasche war grün und aus Stoff. Ein Kind hat seinen Rucksack verloren.

Der Rucksack war groß, braun, neu und aus Leder. Eine andere Frau hat eine gelbe Jacke verloren. Die Jacke war ganz neu und war sehr teuer. Haben Sie Herrn Meyer gesehen? Können Sie uns helfen? Rufen Sie die Polizei an. Die Nummer is 00 76 45 36. Vielen Dank.

Here is a list of the five categories you asked the pupils to listen out for:

Any numbers /dates	Können Sie uns...	Clothing	Colours	Adjectives (not colour)
37	helfen	Mütze	schwarz x 2	lang
19 Juli	(bitte) helfen	T-Shirt	rot	groß
00 76 45 36		Jeans	blau	neu x 2
		Pullover	gelb	teuer
		Jacke x 2	grün	
			braun	

For the purposes of differentiation, give more able pupils categories such as clothing or adjectives (because they have to understand the text and recognise the vocabulary to do this exercise). Give other pupils the “trigger cues” (*Können Sie uns*) because all they have to do is listen out for the trigger words and write down the next word or words they hear. When the pupils have completed this exercise they will be in a better position to move on to comprehension of the text.