

# Using Radio Ambulante in the Spanish Language Classroom

Listening is the very first skill employed by the L2 learner when she enters the classroom.

Her very first hours in the language are dedicated to acquiring the sounds and the meanings of language through listening.

Our students tell us that they need to develop their listening in order to be effective communicators in the target language.

In order to know what to say, and how to respond, they first need to know how to listen. And yet, in the L2 classroom, teachers tend to devote very little time to teaching listening actively. Why is this?

For one, many teachers assume that listening is a passive skill that students “will just get” if we give them large amounts of input. The problem here is that the type of listening is not the type of listening that our students want to learn. They want to be active participants in the listening. Active listening is a form of active interpretation; the listener is constantly interpreting messages in relation to the surrounding context of the message, while also working to formulate an appropriate response.

Far too often the type of listening activities we employ are comprehension-checkin exercises. Here students are put in the awkward role of eavesdropper with little ability to ask for adjustment, clarification, or contextual cues, all of which are tasks that need to happen as a part of effective listening and effective communicating in the second language.

Effective listening is hard work. In a conversation, the listener that carries 80% of the responsibility for effective communication. That burden on the listener **grows** when listening in a second or third language.

L2 students can acquire listening proficiency over time, but often it is at a pace that is much slower than what they desire or need in the real world. Learning to listen, and listen well, requires time and patience.

## Further thoughts about Teaching Listening & the L2 classroom...

*“When you think about it, the way we have approached communication -- by focusing on the speaker-- is really upside down, Unless you listen first, you have no way of knowing what to say. Effective communication begins with listening, not speaking.” -- David Nunan, “Listening in Language Learning”*

*“Listening is the Cinderella skill in second language learning. All too often it has been overlooked by its elder sister, speaking. For most people being able to claim knowledge of a second language means being able to speak and write in that language. Listening and reading are therefore secondary skills --means to other ends, rather than ends in themselves.” -- ibid.*

## Further Reading....

1. [Teaching language in context \(2<sup>nd</sup> Edition\)](#), by Alice Omaggio Hadley, Heinle and Heinle, 1993.
2. [Tips for teaching listening: a practical approach \(1<sup>st</sup> Edition\)](#), by Jack C. Richards and Ann Burns. Pearson Education ESL, October 2011.
3. [Methodology in language teaching: an anthology of current practice](#), edited by Jack C. Richards and Willy A. Renandya.



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## Official Radio Ambulante Sites

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## Audio Subscription Links

- [iTunes](#)
- [SoundCloud](#)
- [Stitcher](#)
- [ivoox](#)
- Transcriptions [also available](#).

## RA in the Press

- Premio de Gabriel García Márquez del Periodismo, [Winner in the category of Innovation](#)
- [This is Radio: This is Daniel Alarcón](#) by Transom.org
- [El País \(article\)](#)
- [Sounding Out!](#)
- More links available [on the RA website](#)

# Teaching Strategies for Teaching Listening

## Personalize the Listening Experience

- **Give learners a choice.** Materials should be based on a wide range of authentic texts, including both monologues and dialogues.
- Learners should be given the opportunity to **progressively structure their listening** to build competence (e.g. listening to a text several times, working through increasingly challenging texts).
- **Make instructional goals explicit** to the learner: Learners should know what they are listening for and why.
- Give learners an opportunity to **apply their own background knowledge and experience** into the listening activity.
- Encourage learners to **develop a reflective attitude** to listening and to develop skills in self-monitoring and self assessment (e.g. what worked? what didn't?).

## Building Strategies

- Strategies for listening are not one size fits all. **Encourage experimentation**, trial and error. Most importantly, model this for your students.
- Have students create listening journals with private reflections that **chronicle listening accomplishment and failures**.
- Provide listening opportunities in contexts other than L2 audio. **Have students create and listen to sound** to be shared: music, ambient sound, small radio stories.
- **Talk to colleagues** in ESL, Music, Theatre (especially Improv), Dance, and others about how they encourage listening. It's not just language teachers who deal with these issues!

Join us!

Do you use Radio Ambulante in your language classroom? Would you be interested in talking with other teachers about how they use Radio Ambulante with their students? Would you be interested in helping us build a collection of exercises, tips, ideas and tools for the classroom?

Are you thinking about using Radio Ambulante in the classroom, but aren't sure how?

We want to hear from you! Email us and let us know what you are doing! Please consider joining one of our online meet ups!

## Contact me!



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