

# Lend Me an Ear - Teaching Listening Strategies for World Language Learning

By Jill Robbins

This month we examine the National Standard of Foreign Language Learning relating to Interpretive Communication. Interpretive Communication refers to the



understanding of material that is read or heard. Often language teachers do not use recorded materials because students react with dismay; “I can’t understand a thing!” When a teacher gives support before the listening task through instruction in strategies, students are able to break down the flow of sound into comprehensible language. The strategies-based instruction (SBI) approach developed by Cohen (1998) can be summarized with the graphic shown here. Students are guided to apply strategies before, during and after a language task. If students are supported through these three phases of a

task with learning strategies, they can successfully finish the task and develop their own repertoire of strategies to apply to other learning contexts.

To develop listening comprehension skills while expanding social studies knowledge, the Spanish teacher can use a foreign language podcast, such as our Culture Club Teen Hangout podcast (see [http://nclrc.org/about\\_teaching/podcast\\_training.html](http://nclrc.org/about_teaching/podcast_training.html)) to provide authentic language models and listening content. The following lesson plan follows the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA-FL), which integrates language, content, and learning strategies instruction.

[[http://nclrc.org/about\\_teaching/topics/lang\\_learn\\_strat.html](http://nclrc.org/about_teaching/topics/lang_learn_strat.html)]

## Preparation

At the beginning of class, the teacher begins by asking students in Spanish what they know about Puerto Rico. What languages are spoken there? Is it part of the United States? Where is it?

She guides students to a map to see the location of the island and shows a photo of a typical scene from a travel web page. Next, she asks students to think about how they usually get information when they are listening – perhaps they listen for specific words, as when the sports report is on and they hear the name of their favorite team, then take note of the game score. She confirms the fact that they already have some strategies for listening, which they can apply to listening in Spanish, too.

## Presentation

The teacher explains that she will play a short excerpt from the beginning of the podcast and show a strategy to use *before* she listens. I’m going to listen to the beginning of this podcast to find out who is speaking, and why they made the podcast. This strategy is

setting a goal. I'm also using what I know about podcasts because I know that at the beginning there is usually an introduction telling who is speaking and why they made the podcast."

She opens up the application iTunes on her computer and makes sure the speakers are turned on, then selects the Podcasts section and the "NCLRC Language Resource" then "Culture Club Hangout Interview" and forwards to :24 seconds into the podcast, where Adrian introduces himself in Spanish. She plays the segment to :55 seconds. "While I listen to this, I am thinking, 'I should hear a name.' I *did* hear a name, the interviewer is Adrian. Now that I have heard this, I can summarize for you by saying, 'This podcast is for teachers and students of Spanish, and it will be an interview with a young woman who is from Argentina but lives in Perú.' I'm going to use one more strategy here: after listening, I can personalize by thinking of how useful this will be to me in classes; I can let you hear native speakers of Spanish talking about their lives. I'm also thinking about how useful it is for you to hear different accents in Spanish from the young man, who is from Puerto Rico, and the young woman, who is from Argentina."

**Practice:**

Now, the teacher hands out the list of questions in Spanish. She directs students to read the questions and think of what they want to know about the student in Puerto Rico. Are they interested in fashions? If so, they might pay special attention to questions 19 – 21 (using iTunes the teacher can go directly to those questions by choosing the top menu for "Chapters" and selecting the question.) Or, if they want to know what Natalia thinks about the US or American food, they would choose to focus on the responses to questions 25 and 26.

The teacher displays a list or gives students a handout with the strategy reminders:

Use one or more of these strategies:

BEFORE LISTENING: Think of What I Know, Set a goal

WHILE LISTENING: Focus on Key words

AFTER LISTENING: Summarize, then Personalize It - Make it My Own

She reminds students to begin by setting a goal, and then plays the podcast through once. Then, she asks students which questions they want to hear again, and uses the Chapters menu to select and play those questions and responses. After they have heard the answers, she asks them to summarize by telling their neighbor in Spanish about what they learned. She suggests that they can draw a picture of a young person in the styles that Natalia described, or make a statement to Personalize, such as "*A mi me gusta escuchar música con el ipod.*"

A student interested in politics may comment on Natalia's opinions about American foreign policy, "*Los Estados Unidos son una democracia generosa que ayuda a todos.*"

**Self-Evaluation:**

When the class has finished discussing the podcast, the teacher asks them to think about the goals they have set for themselves. "Were you able to meet your goal? Write an entry in your learning journal about how you could understand what you were listening to. Did using the strategy that you chose help you to remember or understand what you heard? What other times can you use it?"

**Expansion:**

The teacher asks her class to try using the same strategy in the evening when they listen to Univision or a Spanish radio station. She gives them a list of podcasts that they can download for their own practice, and asks them to summarize something they have listened to at home in Spanish for the next class.

One way to expand this lesson into mainstream content classes would be a collaboration with the Social Studies teacher. Students could have the opportunity to continue learning about Puerto Rico and practicing their listening strategies as they watch a movie, *La Guagua Aérea*, ([IMDB: http://imdb.com/title/tt0143284/](http://imdb.com/title/tt0143284/)) about Puerto Rican Immigration to the US. The Social Studies teacher might discuss the film contents in English, and plays segments which have subtitles in English. The Spanish teacher could give her students the assignment to respond to the movie in Spanish.

In conclusion, teaching listening comprehension strategies can give students the tools they need to be successful in language learning, and provide motivation for students to understand authentic, interesting content.

—

### **References:**

- Chamot, A.U., Barnhardt, S., El-Dinary, P.B., & Robbins, J. (1999). *The Learning Strategies Handbook* [<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0201385481?ie=UTF8&tag=strategiclear-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0201385481>] . White Plains, NY: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Cohen, A. D. (1998). *Strategies in learning and using a second language*. Harlow, England: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Sanchez, L. R. (1994). *La Guagua Aérea*. San Juan, P.R.: Editorial Cultural Inc. <http://www.amazon.com/Guagua-Aerea-Luis-R-Sanchez/dp/1567580513>

## Podcast transcript:

Información General:

1. Nombre: Natalia
2. Apellido: Rodríguez
3. Ciudad y País en que reside: Guaynabo, Puerto Rico
4. Ciudad y País natal: Buenos Aires, Argentina
5. Idioma oficial de su país: Español
6. Lengua materna: Español
7. Otros idiomas: Inglés

Entrevista:

8. ¿Por qué cosas se conoce a tu país?

La carne, el mate, el gaucho, Martín Fierro, el Tango

9. ¿Qué es lo que te gusta de vivir en tu ciudad?

Me encanta ir a comer todos en familia salir a pasear por lugares turísticos como es el Obelisco, Porto Madero...

10. Describe a tu familia

Mi familia es generosa, humilde, somos sociales, divertidos, amigables

11. Describe a un buen amigo/a. Habla de su personalidad y apariencia física, ¿Porqué lo escogiste como amigo/a?

Bueno, mi amiga es bajita, pelo rubio, largo, medio enrolladito, es una persona bien inteligente, tiene mucha mente para todo es, por decirlo así, como una poeta porque escribe muchas cosas, y son muy buenas

12. ¿Qué haces comúnmente con tus amigos? ¿Cuando te encuentras con ellos? ¿Dónde suelen ir? ¿Qué transporte utilizan? (carro, bicicleta, bus, a pie..)

Vamos siempre en auto casi siempre a San Juan. Pero, Depende hay muchos otros lugares a los que vamos como los Pubs, o algunos lugares mas chicos que San Juan

13. ¿Cuántos días a la semana vas al colegio? ¿Cuántas horas pasas en el colegio cada día?

Voy 5 días a la semana, si es que no pasa ningún accidente, generalmente de 8 de la mañana hasta las 12:10 de la tarde o hasta las 1:05 de la tarde

14. ¿Cuanto duran tus vacaciones de verano? ¿Cuántas vacaciones / días feriados tienes durante el año?

¿Qué tipo de feriados son?

Las vacaciones son a partir de finales de mayo como hasta principios de agosto, feriados tengo cada tanto casi todos los meses hay feriados

15. ¿Qué materias estás estudiando en este año?

Inglés, Español, Historia, Historia del Arte, Arte como electiva, Humanidades y Precalculo

16. ¿Cual es la materia que más te gusta y porqué?

Historia del arte, porque me gusta mucho el arte me apasiona mucho y es la carrera que pretendo seguir, o sea no Historia del Arte, sino diseño de interiores y tiene mucho que ver

17. ¿Cual es la materia que menos te gusta y porqué?

La materia que menos que me gusta es las matemáticas por el hecho de que no, por lo menos para mi vida en un futuro no le veo mucho uso y la verdad que me aburre bastante

18. ¿Qué sueles transportar en tu mochila para ir al colegio?

Libros, cartuchera, anteojos, y la comida

19. ¿Qué está de moda para las chicas en este año?

Escuchar música con los ipods, tirarse en el piso a hablar sobre su vida diaria y ahora mismo por lo menos para nosotras las seniors hablar del senior trip todo el tiempo

20. ¿Que esta de moda en ropa?

De ropa siempre usan los leggings, los Jeans ajustados hasta los tobillos, zapatitos sin tacon y camisas sueltas bien largas

21. ¿Qué está de moda para los chicos en este año?

Bueno yo siempre los veo usando los Crocs o bermudas o camisitas así sueltas

22. ¿Cual es tu libro favorito?

Todos los de Stephen King

23. ¿Cual es tu grupo o cantante favorito?

Coldplay y Los Babasónicos

24. ¿Cual es tu comida favorita?

Asado o empanadas, cualquiera de las dos

25. ¿Te gusta la comida americana?

Ehh...mas o menos, es muy grasosa

26. ¿Qué opinas de los Estados Unidos?

Bueno la verdad que no estoy muy de acuerdo en muchas de las cosas con las que toman decisiones no estoy de acuerdo en que sean una potencia mundial y que la gente sea tan ignorante y tan cerrada no se, muchas cosas en las que no estoy de acuerdo y se crean superior a los demás

27. Si un/a estudiante americano/a viniera a tu país, ¿Donde lo/a llevarías?

En Puerto Rico lo llevaría al Morro al viejo San Juan y en Argentina lo llevaría mucho por Puerto Madero, Palermo Hollywood, El Caminito, El Obelisco, La Boca

28. Piensa en tu futuro y completa esta frase: "En diez años estaré....."

Seguramente licenciada en diseño de interiores, casada, con hijos si Dios quiera, trabajando en lo que me gusta y viviendo en el país que se pueda dar la oportunidad"

¡Muchas gracias por responder a estas preguntas!

For a complete list of language learning strategies, see

[http://nclrc.org/about\\_teaching/topics/lang\\_learn\\_strat.html](http://nclrc.org/about_teaching/topics/lang_learn_strat.html)