

The cover features a large, stylized number '1' composed of overlapping geometric shapes: a dark blue triangle at the top, a black triangle at the bottom left, a green triangle at the bottom left, and a yellow triangle at the top left. The background is white with a light blue dot pattern in the upper right corner. The title and volume information are presented in a clean, sans-serif font.

ISSN: 2615 3785

Vol.2 / edsi 5 / October 2019

# International Journal on Integrated Education

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# Listening as a special skill of teaching English language - transcribing

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## ABSTRACT

Listening is an important part of learning a language because the majority of your students want to communicate verbally. Helping your student to speak English is great, but will not help him or her in a conversation unless he or she can understand others. Throughout your class, you will be easing your students into the language by speaking slowly and giving them the chance to decode what you are saying. Once they go out into the world, they will have to comprehend what people are saying no matter how quickly they speak.

**Keywords:** listening, importance, characteristics, transcribing, factors.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Asking your students to transcribe speech is a great way to get them understanding what people are saying. It is also a way for you to monitor how much the students actually understand speech as opposed to how much the students tell you they understand. It is one thing to get a general idea of what someone is saying; it is another thing entirely to transcribe the speech word-for-word.

## 2. PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION

Phonetic transcription is a technique whereby an individual breaks speech down into sounds and phonemes, and transcribes the speech in phonetic symbols, using the symbols we discussed in the previous module. We will not repeat the symbols again, so feel free to go back and review them. Instead, we are going to focus on what phonetic transcription looks like and how it will benefit your students.

## 3. SYSTEMATIC VS. IMPRESSIONISTIC TRANSCRIPTION

If you, as an expert in phonetic symbols, were to listen to speech in another language, you would generally be able to chart it based on English phonetic symbols. Obviously, this is not the best way to handle this since phonetic symbols are going to be different in every language, but you are going to use the knowledge you have. Now, a phonetics expert would instead use a more universal group of phonetic symbols to transcribe the speech. This is called **impressionistic transcription** because, although this is still not perfect, the transcriber is charting sounds as best as he or she can without knowing the language. Later, experts can take this impressionistic transcription and revise and modify it to more accurately represent the speech. It would be more difficult if the speech was charted using more specific English phonetic symbols.

Once experts are able to analyze the speech and get a sense for the sounds of the particular language they are listening to, they are able to revise the transcription into a much more accurate transcription. This is called a **systematic transcription**, or a transcription that more accurately reflects the phonetic structure of the language it is breaking down.

As you may have already figured out, a systematic transcription is more helpful for your students, although it could be helpful to have your students use their native language to analyze the sounds in an English recording. However, you are typically going to ask them to create phonetic transcriptions that more accurately reflect the phonetic structure of the English language to ensure they are learning.

### Simple vs. comparative transcription

Phonetic symbols, though explicitly stated, can be left up to interpretation. Experts will sometimes do what is called a **simple transcription**, which makes the phonetic translation as easy to read as possible without worrying too much about everything being perfect. This kind of shorthand is appreciated by experts, since they often have to go through massive amounts of text. While this may not be the best type to start your students off with because they may not be ready for such shorthand, it can be helpful once your students start to get good at transcribing. You should only allow them to take shortcuts once they are doing it to save time, not to make the text easier to transcribe.

**Comparative** transcription is relevant when the sounds for different languages match up, and you are able to use a more vague phoneme to refer to the different versions of the phoneme in different languages. This type of transcription is not very helpful to your students.

### Phonemic vs. allophonic transcription

Everything so far in this section has referred to **phonemic transcription**, which refers to any transcription where you break sounds into phonemes. The other option you have with transcription is to do an **allophonic transcription**, which means breaking the speech down into allophones. If you remember from previous modules, allophones are a phonic, rather than phonemic way of breaking down words.

### Word-for-word transcription

When you would like to give your students practice with words rather than sounds, you should work with them on word transcriptions, which are exactly what they sound like. Students listen to a person speaking (or a recording), and transcribe the speech as it is spoken. Let's go through the steps you have your students take in order to transcribe speech.

1. Select or provide a text that already has a transcription. There is no way to assess your students unless you have an answer key. You can either hold onto the correct transcription yourself to assess your students, or give it to them so they can check their work and self-correct. When they are working toward mastery, it is probably better to give them the transcription, and when you are ready to assess their mastery, it is better to assess them yourself.
2. Have the students listen to the speech once. If you are delivering the speech, read it through once, instructing the students not to write anything yet, but only to listen. If the students have a recording, instruct them to listen to it on their own once through before they do anything.
3. Have your students transcribe the speech line-by-line. It would be helpful if they have a recording of the speech so they are able to go back and re-listen when they need to. However, you may want to simply speak the text when your students have progressed to the point where they are strong enough to handle it. Here are some tips that might help your students:
  - If you have the opportunity, use a digital recording so it is easier for students to go back and forth and keep track of their progress.
  - Have the students write their transcriptions by hand to have a closer connection to the words they are writing. Also, handwriting the transcriptions means they will not have access to grammar and spelling software that will help them along the way, but will ultimately hurt their learning.
  - Allow the students to use a dictionary whenever they need. Not only will this give the students a reference piece to help, but it will also give the students practice looking up words.
  - Do not limit the amount of times your students can rewind or listen to parts of the recording. Even native English speakers would have trouble transcribing a piece word-for-word without listening more than once.
  - Encourage your students to transcribe the piece word-for-word, then look through their transcription to fix errors in grammar and usage, even when those errors were made by the original speaker. This will give the students practice transcribing the piece, but will also give them the opportunity to practice their revision skills and access their knowledge of grammar.

### Word-for-word transcription

1. Have your students carefully check their answers (as we said before, they may be at the point where you can assess them instead) against the correct transcription. Have your students look at

where they struggled and where they excelled, and figure out their strengths and weaknesses so they can use the activity as a learning experience.

2. Transcriptions are not something you can do every day since they are pretty exhaustive, but you should try to do them every so often until your students have demonstrated proficiency. Make sure, also, that you are using it as a learning experience, and have your students continually reflect on their performance to make sure it is worthwhile.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, transcribing text can be extremely helpful to your students for the following reasons such as it helps students on mastering the sounds of English. Students need to get used to understanding English only from sound, and this is a direct way to give them practice with that. It gives students practice writing the language, and if you ask them to fix any errors in their own transcription and the original text, it gives students the opportunity to display their knowledge in grammar and practice revising knowledge. Because this activity is meticulous, it forces students to delve into the text and pay attention to every detail, rather than just summarize what is being said. This directly prepares students for conversational English, although it takes out the part where they respond. This is the first step toward being able to hold a cogent conversation in English. This is a great way to give students the opportunity to work independently. They are able to take the time to struggle with the language without fear of peer ridicule. Additionally, completing this activity will give the students a sense of accomplishment they would not get from a more teacher-directed activity.

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