Teaching L2 Listening Comprehension

Considering listening as an active process that requires both listening **skills** (automatized actions) and **strategies** (conscious process), Goh discusses ways in which classroom tasks can be designed and sequenced to promote learners' cognitive processes and effective use of listening skills and strategies.

A brief history of teaching L2 listening

*most remain popular today

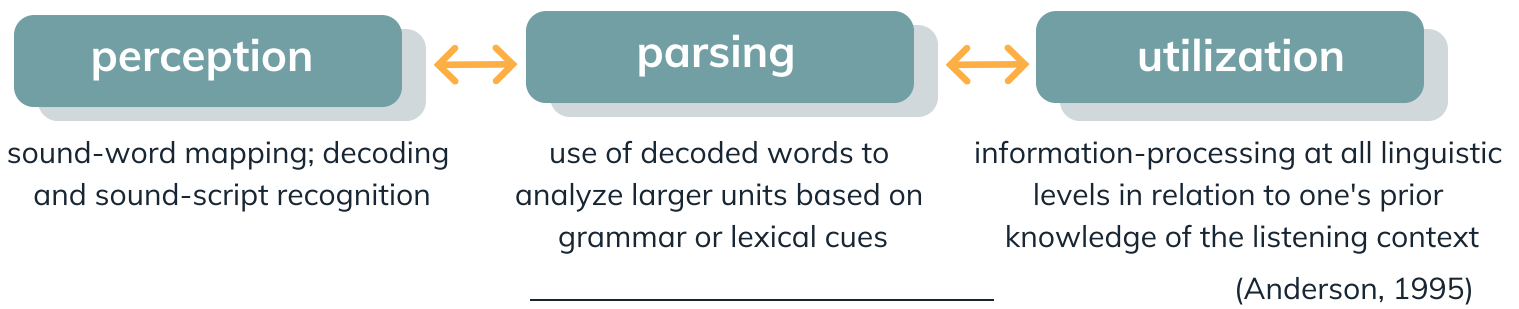|	
ALM (1960-70s)	<< Prescribed dialogues, drills, inauthentic speech
communicative, interactional tasks, authentic speech >>	CLT & TBLT (1970s)
SLA research (1980s)	<< emphasis on the role of input, delayed speaking
emphasis on cognitive strategies (e.g. planning, monitoring) >>	Strategy approach (1990s)
Metacognitive approach (2000s)	<< metacognitive awareness through scaffolding

The role of the teacher

"the teacher has an important role in scaffolding learning so that learners can achieve more than they can achieve on their own" (p. 75)

In order to teach listening effectively, a teacher needs to be aware of the (1) **cognitive processes** and (2) **types of knowledge** involved in listening comprehension.
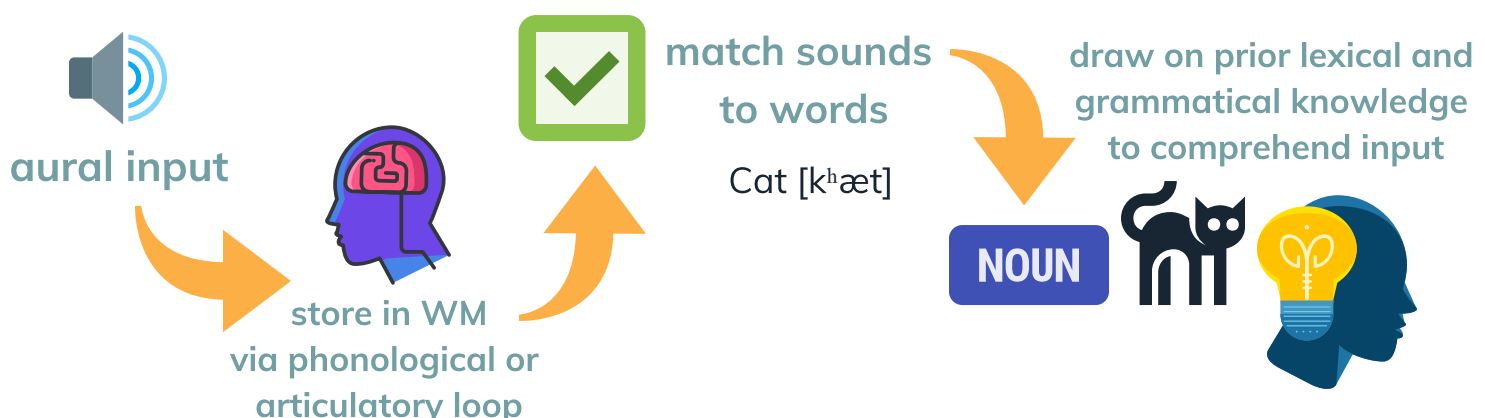
(1) cognitive processes

The model of comprehension

perception	parsing	utilization
sound-word mapping; decoding and sound-script recognition	use of decoded words to analyze larger units based on grammar or lexical cues	information-processing at all linguistic levels in relation to one's prior knowledge of the listening context (Anderson, 1995)

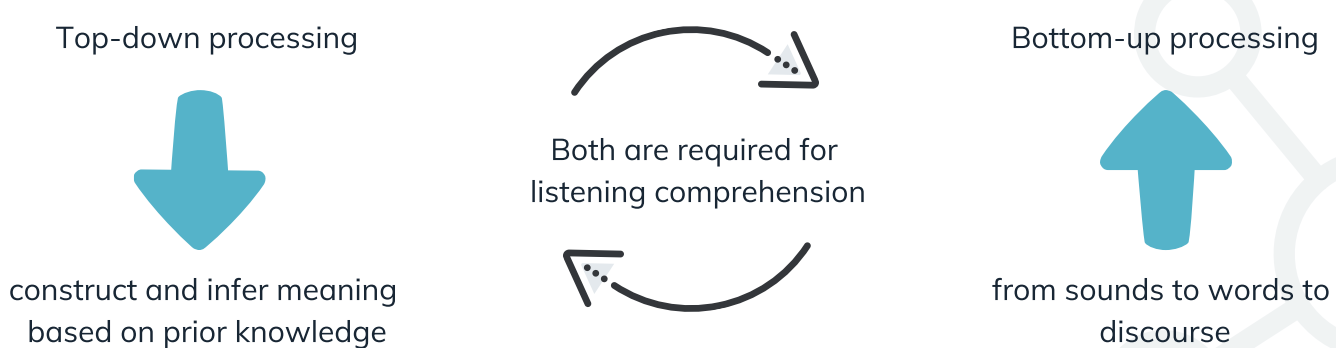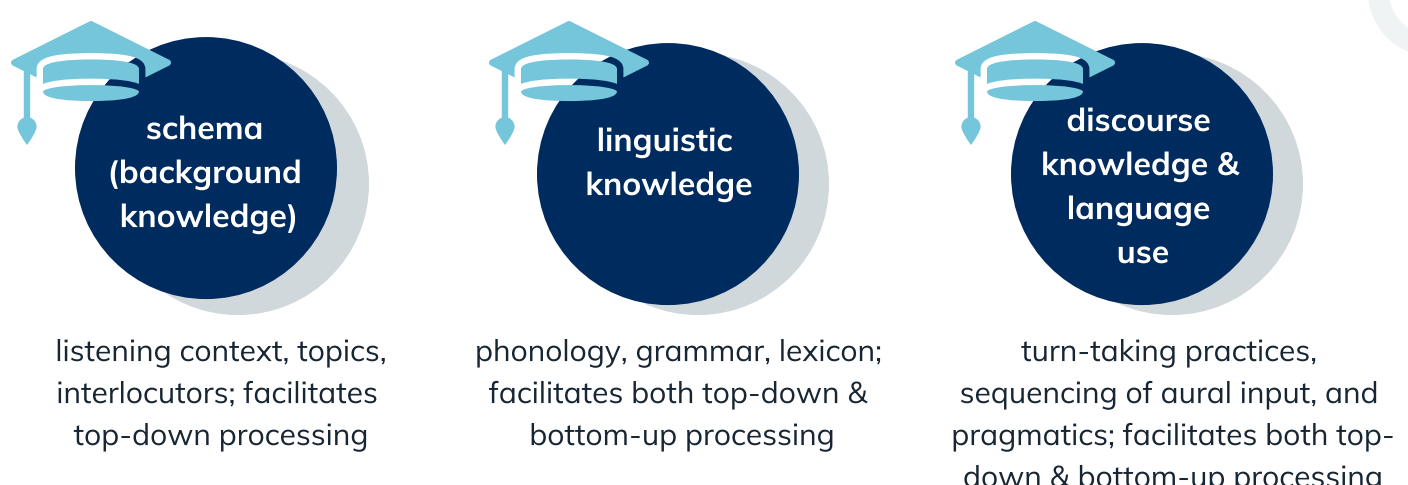### The connectionist model

Simultaneous processing of input is done through activation of associated neural networks (Bechtel & Abrahamsen, 1991)

aural input → store in WM via phonological or articulatory loop → match sounds to words Cat [kʰæt] → draw on prior lexical and grammatical knowledge to comprehend input — NOUN

Top-down and bottom-up processing

Top-down processing → construct and infer meaning based on prior knowledge

Both are required for listening comprehension

Bottom-up processing ↑ from sounds to words to discourse

(2) types of knowledge

schema (background knowledge)
listening context, topics, interlocutors; facilitates top-down processing

linguistic knowledge
phonology, grammar, lexicon; facilitates both top-down & bottom-up processing

discourse knowledge & language use
turn-taking practices, sequencing of aural input, and pragmatics; facilitates both top-down & bottom-up processing

Pedagogical Implications

SKILLS & STRATEGIES

Vandergrift and Goh (2012) proposed six core skills and a taxonomy of strategy use to be incorporated into the classroom.

1. listen for details: specific information, keywords, names, places
2. listen selectively: relevant parts only
3. listen for global understanding: general idea, theme, topic, purpose
4. listen for main ideas: key points
5. listen and infer: fill in any missing information using schema and clues
6. listen and predict: anticipate what will be heard before or during listening using clues and schema

1. planning: anticipate possible difficulties
2. focusing attention: heeding input and avoiding distraction
3. monitoring: confirming or correcting on-line comprehension
4. evaluation: checking outcomes of listening
5. inferencing: making inferences about missing information via schema activation
6. elaboration: extend an interpretation via schema activation
7. prediction: anticipate what will be heard
8. contextualization: connecting input to the listening context (e.g., formal/informal settings)
9. reorganizing: reorganize what is heard to facilitate better retrieval
10. using linguistic & learning resources: use of L1 knowledge and additional resources to facilitate listening and learning
11. cooperation: seek assistance from others in comprehension and learning
12. managing emotions: prevent negative emotions that might affect comprehension and learning

PROCESS-ORIENTED PEDAGOGY

Besides skills & strategies, two complementary methods can be used for lesson planning and teaching listening:

Task-based metacognitive instruction

- Include both one-way and two-way communicative listening tasks
- One-way tasks: help learners practice using a variety of listening skills
- Two-way tasks: conversations & transactional exchanges where responses depend on speaker-listener roles and power dynamics

Metacognitive pedagogical sequence

- Incorporate metacognitive processes into listening lessons
- Sequence: (1) planning, (2) monitoring, (3) solving comprehension problems, (4) evaluating the approach and outcomes
- This helps learners gradually gain control of their listening processes