STUDY
listening
A course in listening to lectures and note-taking

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For Mauricéa

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UNIT 1

Problems of urbanisation

This unit aims to develop listening skills by:

1. introducing Macrostrategy 1, Predicting
2. showing how to make use of signpost and list markers when listening
3. providing practice in note-taking
4. explaining aspects of hedging.

MACROSTRATEGY 1 PREDICTING

We make predictions all the time. For example, we predict how long it will take to write an email, or how a friend will react to some news we have to give them, or what will be in the morning's newspaper headlines.

When listening to a foreign language we can use two main types of information to help us to predict what is going to be said next.

Background knowledge
- general knowledge of the world
- knowledge of the foreign culture
- specific subject knowledge

Context
- the situation (who is speaking, where and when)
- the co-text – what has been said so far

Guessing ahead in this way is particularly relevant in lectures. You can use your subject knowledge to help you predict what the lecturer is likely to say. In this unit you will be using what you know, and what you read in a short text, to help predict what might be included in a lecture on urban problems.

PRE-LISTENING

Introduction to the lecture topic: Urbanisation

Consider your answers to the following.
1. Do people in your country generally prefer to live in the countryside or the city?
2. Do you think this is the same in other countries – especially in developing countries?

In this unit we consider:
- the reasons that drive people to move from the country to the city
- the effects of that on the process of urbanisation
- possible policies to reduce rural–urban migration.
Concern over the differences between rural and urban life is not new. More than 30 years ago the economist and ecologist E.F. Schumacher described some of the problems in a paper entitled ‘Two million villages’.

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**Reading**

**TASK 1**

1. Read the text and underline the sentence that you think best summarises Schumacher’s argument.

Why is it so difficult for the rich to help the poor? One of the greatest problems in the modern world is the imbalance between city and countryside in terms of wealth, power, culture, and hope. The city attracts people while the countryside does not. However, just as a sound mind depends on a sound body, so the health of the cities depends on the health of the rural areas. The cities, despite all their wealth, are simply secondary producers; primary production, the precondition of all economic life, takes place in the countryside.

To restore a proper balance between city and rural life is perhaps the greatest task facing modern societies. It is not simply a matter of raising agricultural production so as to avoid world hunger. There is no answer to the evils of mass unemployment and mass migration into cities, unless the whole level of rural life can be raised. This requires the development of an agro-industrial culture, so that each district, each community, can offer a rich variety of occupations to its members.

(adapted from Schumacher 1973: 170–171)

2. Show a partner the sentence you have underlined. Have you chosen the same one?

3. Why do you think Schumacher chose the title ‘Two million villages’?

**Pre-listening discussion: Content**

1. Cities in developing countries grow much faster than those elsewhere. Why do you think that is?
2. What are the positive changes to the environment of a place as it becomes urbanised?
3. The title of the lecture includes the word *problems*. What problems do you predict the speaker will mention?
4. What do you expect the speaker to talk about, apart from the problems themselves?
Pre-listening discussion: Language

Here are six key expressions selected from the lecture:

- infrastructure
- growth rate
- productivity
- congestion
- depopulation
- endemic

Discuss their meanings with another student. If you need to, check them in a dictionary or ask the teacher.

Then say what you predict the lecturer is going to say about each of the expressions, in the context of urban problems.

The lecturer

The speaker is Dr Adrienne Hunter from Toronto, Canada, who has lived and worked for many years in Cuba. As Dr Hunter gives her talk, she uses various techniques to help the listeners follow her argument. We will focus on two of them here, which you can take advantage of as you listen and make notes.

1. She uses signpost markers to outline the structure of her lecture.
2. She uses list markers to separate the points in each section of her talk.

Lecture language: Signpost markers

Signposts on roads show the direction and distance to nearby places. In the same way, signposts in lectures are words and expressions used by the speaker to indicate the direction their talk is going to take.

At the start of the lecture you may hear signpost markers such as these:

- (what) I’d like to …
- (is) I’m going to …
- I want to …
- I plan to …
- I intend to …

Then, at the start of a new section you may hear these:

- so I’d like now to move on to …
- well I’d like to look now at …
- ok
- all right turning now to …
- moving on now to …
- having looked at X, I want to move on to …

Can you think of other expressions to add to them?
Lecture language: List markers

In the box below, the speaking sequence is left to right. What are the missing markers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>the first</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>two</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>last</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thirdly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first</td>
<td>then</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>another</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you will hear in the lecture on urbanisation, speakers often use list markers from different rows of the box. For example, you may hear a lecturer say ‘firstly … second … another … number four …’

FIRST LISTENING

Listening and note-taking

We are now going to play the first 4 minutes of the lecture straight through.

Make notes – but don’t worry if you don’t have time to note down all the information you need to. You will get a second chance later.

As you listen, focus on the Predicting macrostrategy:
- try to predict what Adrienne Hunter is likely to say next
- use what you know and what she has said
- pay attention to the signposts and list markers in each section.

Two minutes or so from the end of the talk, the teacher will stop the tape and ask you to predict the content of the final section.

Oral summary

When you have completed the first listening, work together with one other student. Don’t show each other your notes yet. Take it in turns to use your notes to summarise the points in the sections of the lecture.
SECOND LISTENING

Detailed note-taking
The teacher will now play the lecture a second time. Look at your notes and listen carefully for points where, during the first listening:
• you didn’t catch what Adrienne Hunter said
• you didn’t have time to note all the details
• you misunderstood what she said.

Comparing notes
After your second listening, put your notes next to those of another student and compare the content of your notes.
• Have you included the same information?
• If you missed certain points, has your partner got notes of them?

If there were points (or words or sections) that neither of you could understand, see whether others in the class can help.

Then compare the form of your notes. Look for differences between the ways you have used:
• abbreviations
• symbols
• layout (linear notes or spider’s web, for example)
• emphasis (such as underlining and capital letters).

Then compare your notes with the sample in the Transcripts and sample notes section (page 135).

AFTER LISTENING

Post-listening: Focus on language
Section 1: Signpost markers
Listen to and read the first section (shown below). Underline the signpost markers.

today I want to discuss problems of urbanisation / in particular I want to talk about those problems which are peculiar to developing economies / and to discuss three possible policies / which could be used to control or uh / to stem / uncontrolled urbanisation in developing countries/

certain urban problems of course are common to both developed / and developing countries / for example / poor housing, unemployment, problems connected with traffic / for example air pollution, congestion and so on / however there there are problems which are very peculiar
to developing economies / and this is due to the fact that developing countries need to create a basic infrastructure / which is necessary for industrialisation / and consequently for economic growth / in fact it’s the provision of this infrastructure which constitutes the urbanisation process itself / and this provision of this infrastructure / may have undesired effects on the economy as a whole / now it’s these undesirable consequences of ... or effects which I’d like to deal with first /

Section 2: List markers

Troubleshooting

I’m going to talk about five main consequences of this uncontrolled urbanisation / in the first instance there’s the problem of the migration of people from the country to the city / people living in the country often see the city as a more desirable place to live / whether they’re living in developing or developed countries / but the problem is much more serious in a developing country / because there are / in fact more people who wish to migrate to the city / now the fact of people migrating to the city causes a certain depopulation of rural areas / and a second consequence / is the result / or the result of this is a decrease in the production of food / and in the supply of food to the country as a whole / this in turn can also lead to a rise in prices / because of the law of supply and demand / as a result of people moving to the city / you get a high urban population growth rate / now this isn’t not this isn’t due not only to the fact of more adults moving to the city / but can also be due to traditions of these people from the country / who perhaps from rural areas have a tradition of large families and so on / so the ci... population of the cities increases with these numerous children of large families / this leads to a fourth
consequence / which is a dramatic pressure on the supply of social services in urban areas / in particular / services related to health and education / in relation / in relation to health services / we can see that there are endemic diseases which could be made worse by overcrowding / people coming from the country to the city / and for example in the stresses on services in education / with more children there’s a need for more schools and more teachers and so on and so on / a fifth area which is affected by uncontrolled urbanisation is that of the labour supply / often uncontrolled urbanisation leads to an excess of labour supply in the cities / and this can lead in turn to an informal kind of labour activity / which might be called low-prod... productivity activities / for example people selling things in the streets / or for example you often find in large urban areas in a developing country / ___________________________ while their owners are doing something else / and then they ___________________________ when the owners return / this is really a sort of undesirable type of labour / so these are in fact the main consequences of uncontrolled urbanisation /

Section 3: Hedging

Hedging refers to the ways in which people express caution or uncertainty about what they are saying. Adrienne Hunter used a number of hedging expressions in the final section of her talk.

1 As you listen, read the transcript (below) and underline the words that show if she is certain or uncertain about whether the policies will be introduced and whether they will be effective.

now I’d like to move on to three possible policies which could be developed / to stem this kind of uncontrolled urbanisation in developing countries / the first one would be to promote a more equal land distribution / in this way farmers would be more motivated to stay on the land / they would be able to work more land and thus be able to feed their families more adequately / often the reason why farmers wish to go to the city is that they cannot grow enough food to both feed their families and earn a living / so a more equal land distribution is one such policy to stem this kind of move to the city / a second policy would be to improve the supply of social services in the rural areas / particularly in the field of health and education / country people often f... move to the city because they feel these services are better in the city / if they could compare the services they they receive
which are improved and the ones in the city they might feel that there was perhaps not much difference / and it would be another reason for not moving / a third possible policy would be to give financial assistance to agriculture / especially to the small landowner / now obviously the problem of uncontrolled urbanisation / and the consequences which are not favourable / is a difficult problem / to resolve / but these three types of policies could help to reduce the problem / which is felt in particular in developing countries/

Hedging takes various forms, and is common in both spoken and written English. Here's an example from a radio weather forecast.

Weather forecaster: I think it's probably going to feel quite a bit cooler tomorrow, perhaps chilly even.

The forecaster hedged by saying ‘I think’, ‘probably’ and ‘perhaps’. If we take those out, we get a much more definite statement.

It's going to feel quite a bit cooler tomorrow, even chilly.

In academic English, hedging can be expressed in various ways, such as by using:

- **modal verbs** to signal degrees of certainty or commitment (might, could, would, can, may, should, must). It was this form of hedging that Adrienne Hunter used most in the final section of her talk
- **adjectives** (unlikely, possible, probable)
- **adverbs** (perhaps, tentatively, often, usually, maybe)
- **nouns** (potential, uncertainty, unlikelihood)
- the right choice of **verb** (I suppose that …, we tend to …, this suggests that …, I would guess that …).

**Post-listening: Focus on content**

**Discussion and reaction**

1 How did you do with your predictions? On page 18 you predicted the points you thought might be mentioned in the lecture. Did Adrienne Hunter include any of them?
2 Did she discuss any problems that are experienced in (parts of) your own country?
3 Can you think of countries where such policies have been tried out?
Critical thinking
Think of other issues relevant to the points made in Adrienne Hunter’s lecture. For example, do you think that the three policies she proposed would be effective? If not, what are the factors that would make them difficult to introduce?

Draw up a list of these further topics. Then work with two or three other students and discuss the issue(s) in which you are most interested.

Optional follow-up: Writing
Write a short essay (250–300 words) giving your views on one of the aspects of urbanisation that you have discussed during this unit. Limit yourself to 40 minutes’ writing.

Share your writing with other students in the class.