



**LANGUAGECERT IESOL EXAM
EXAM HELP BOOKLET
LISTENING**

This booklet is to be used exclusively for LanguageCert exam preparation in Hungary.

How to use this booklet

This booklet has been created to help you prepare for the listening tasks that you will need to do in the listening section of the LanguageCert IESOL exam. The booklet will focus on three exam levels, B1, B2 and C1.

The booklet has 4 sections with each section having been designed to guide you through the process.

Table of Contents

1. The structure of the Listening section of LanguageCert IESOL exams
2. The assessment of the Listening section of LanguageCert IESOL exam
3. Tips for each listening part – how to solve the tasks (B1, B2 and C1)
4. Listening outside the classroom

1. The Structure of the Listening section of LanguageCert IESOL exams

When you are preparing for a language exam, it is important to familiarise yourself with the structure of the exam, so let's have a look at some of the things you can expect when taking a B1, B2 or C1 IESOL exam. This section of the booklet will explain the types of listening you need to perform and the criteria you will be measured against.

Marks and features of each Listening task for each level

	B1	B2	C1
Part 1	Learners identify the most appropriate response to the spoken utterance.	After listening to an incomplete dialogue, learners identify the most appropriate response to continue the conversation.	After listening to an incomplete dialogue, learners identify the most appropriate response to continue the conversation.
Part 2	After listening to a dialogue, learners identify the required response to a written input	After listening to a dialogue, learners identify the required response to a written input	After listening to a dialogue, learners identify the required response to a written input
Part 3	Note or message pad with headings. Learners listen to a monologue and select the required information to complete notes.	Note or message pad with headings. Learners listen to a monologue and select required information to complete notes.	Note or message pad with headings. Learners listen to a monologue and select required information to complete notes.
Part 4	Learners listen to a dialogue and select a, b or c to answer the questions or complete the statements.	Learners listen to a dialogue and select a, b or c to answer the questions or complete the statements.	Learners listen to a dialogue and select a, b or c to answer the questions or complete the statements.

B1 tasks

B1	Focus	Type	Language area tested and other features
Part 1 7 marks	Recognise context, meaning and function in response to a range of utterances.	Learners identify the most appropriate responses to spoken utterances.	The majority of situations are informal. Functions tested include finding out attitudes, giving factual information, social contact etc. The focus is on the function heard, not on the grammatical or lexical item written in the task.
Part 2 6 marks	Identify specific aspects of spoken dialogues	After listening to the dialogues, learners identify the required responses to some written input.	3 dialogues and 2 sets of multiple-choice answers for each dialogue. Questions focus on a certain aspect of the dialogue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context • Gist • Attitude • Topic • Speakers • Purpose • Feelings and opinions • Relationship between speakers • Speakers' roles • Functions.
Part 3 7 marks	Extract key information from a monologue.	Note or message pad with headings. Learners listen to a monologue and select the required information to complete the notes.	Monologue such as radio broadcast, narrative, presentation. Authentic task where it would be feasible to note down information Headings on message pad are given in the order in which the information is heard. Clear signposts to the information are announced before the information. There's no need to rephrase the message in order to write down the notes.
Part 4 6 marks	Follow a discussion.	Learners listen to a dialogue and select a, b or c to answer the questions or complete the statements.	Dialogue between two people (male and female). Each speaker uses the name of the other speaker during the dialogue to help learners identify him or her. Multiple-choice items follow the order of the dialogue. Multiple-choice items have one test focus chosen from the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude • Fact and opinion • Recognising contrast • Agreement/disagreement • Cause and effect • Final decision

B2 tasks

B2	Focus	Type	Language area tested and other features
Part 1 7 marks	Recognise context, meaning and function in a range of short conversations on concrete and abstract topics.	After listening to an incomplete dialogue, learners identify the most appropriate response to continue the conversation.	Dialogues are typical of spoken English. The correct answer can either complete or continue the dialogue Learners are tested on their understanding of the functions in the heard dialogue. Stress/intonation features and idiomatic/colloquial English features are incorporated in the dialogues.
Part 2 6 marks	Identify specific aspects of spoken dialogues	After listening to the dialogues, learners identify the required response to some written input.	3 dialogues and 2 sets of multiple-choice answers for each dialogue. Questions focus on a certain aspect of the dialogue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context • Gist • Attitude • Topic • Speakers • Purpose • Feelings and opinions • Relationship between speakers • Speakers' roles • Functions.
Part 3 7 marks	Extract key information from a monologue.	Note or message pad with headings. Learners listen to a monologue and select the required information to complete the notes.	Monologue such as radio broadcast, narrative, presentation. Authentic task where it would be feasible to note down information. Headings on message pad are given in the order in which the information is heard. Clear signposts to the information will be announced before the information There's no need to rephrase the message in order to write down the notes
Part 4 6 marks	Follow a discussion.	Learners listen to a dialogue and select a, b or c to answer the questions or complete the statements.	Dialogue between two people (male and female) Each speaker uses the name of the other speaker during the dialogue to help learners identify him or her. Speakers indicate point of view by the language used. Multiple-choice items follow the order of the dialogue Multiple-choice items have one test focus chosen from the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exemplification • Fact and opinion • Recognising contrast • Purpose • Cause and effect • Gist

C1 tasks

C1	Focus	Type	Language area tested
Part 1 6 marks	Recognise context, meaning and function in a range of short conversations on concrete and abstract topics.	After listening to an incomplete dialogue, learners identify the most appropriate response to continue the conversation.	Dialogues are typical of spoken English The correct answer can either complete or continue the dialogue Learners are tested on their understanding of the functions in the heard dialogue. Stress/intonation features and idiomatic/colloquial English features are incorporated in the dialogues.
Part 2 6 marks	Identify specific aspects of spoken dialogues	After listening to dialogue, learners identify required response to written input	3 dialogues and 2 sets of multiple-choice answers for each dialogue Questions focus on a certain aspect of the dialogue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context • Gist • Attitude • Topic • Speakers • Purpose • Feelings and opinions • Relationship between speakers • Speakers' roles • Functions.
Part 3 7 marks	Extract key information from a monologue.	Note or message pad with headings, Learners listen to a monologue and select required information to complete notes.	Monologue such as radio broadcast, narrative, presentation Authentic task where it would be feasible to note down information Headings on message pad are given in the order in which the information is heard. Clear signposts to the information will be announced before the information The text will include information that will not be assessed, but could distract.
Part 4 7 marks	Follow a discussion.	Learners listen to a dialogue and select a, b or c to answer the question or complete the statement.	Dialogue between two people (male and female) Each speaker uses the name of the other speaker during the dialogue to help learners identify him or her. Speakers indicate point of view by the language used Multiple-choice items follow order of the dialogue Multiple-choice items have one test focus chosen from the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exemplification • Fact and opinion • Recognising contrast • Purpose • Cause and effect • Gist

2. The Assessment of the Listening section of LanguageCert IESOL exams

The listening tasks are evaluated with the help of paper-specific mark schemes. Each exam paper version has a paper-specific mark scheme with solutions to the multiple choice questions as well as suggested answers to the note taking task. The total marks awarded for the tasks are the sum of the marks awarded for each item. In order to pass, a candidate needs to achieve a Pass (50%).

Level and Marks	B1	B2	C1
Part 1	7	7	6
Part 2	6	6	6
Part 3	7	7	7
Part 4	6	6	7
Total	26	26	26
Pass	13	13	13

Further notes on marking

The main focus of the listening section of the exam is to determine whether your listening skills meet the requirements of the level you are attempting and therefore your use of the other skills (reading, writing and speaking) will be very limited so that we can accurately test your listening skills. You will only have to read short questions and multiple choice answers and even then, you will have time to read them before the audio starts.

The only time when you have to write is in Part 3 when you need to take notes. Since we are not testing your grammar or writing skills, you only need to write **short** notes. In the listening section, we are not generally testing spelling, so we will accept misspelt words as long as the word is clearly recognisable as the correct answer, and not a word that has been spelled out letter by letter in the monologue. However, answers exceeding the maximum word limit stated in the rubric will not be accepted and neither will two answers (even if one of them is the correct one).

The best way to avoid losing marks by making one of the above mistakes is to use the words you hear in the monologue and to only write the minimum without including irrelevant information.

CEFR

Remember that these language exams have been aligned to the CEFR, so that can provide you with valuable information about the exam you are planning to take. Before anything else happens, test yourself with the help of the can-do statements. Can you perform the following listening activities successfully? For instance, if you require a B2 exam, can you understand most TV programmes and do you enjoy watching English films? If not, then this level may be too hard for you.

Level	Can do statement
A1	I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.
A2	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (eg very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.
B1	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.
B2	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.
C1	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.
C2	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.

3. Tips for the listening parts – how to solve the tasks

In this section, we will give you some ideas and guidance on how you can score the highest marks for each of the four tasks we mentioned in the previous chapter.

1. Multiple choice - reactions

TIP #1

The focus of this task is to test how well you can communicate in social situations, ie if you know the linguistic features of spoken English. This task requires knowledge and skills similar to the ones you will have to be able to use actively in the spoken exam (Part 2 – role-play situations), so in preparation for this listening task, you will also learn the necessary language and skills for Part 2 in the spoken exam.

What is it that we are testing here?

context, meaning and function

1. You need to learn to understand **context**.

- Where are the people (one in B1, two in B2 and C1) talking? (over the phone)
- Who are they? (customer service representative and client)
- Purpose of call? (asking about delivery time)

2. You will need to understand the **meaning** of words and phrases.

A: Super Seats, good morning. Can I help you?

B: It's Mrs Jones again. Look, I'm still waiting for my sofa.

A: They're on their way. It will be there soon.

- a) I'm not keen on having another.
 - b) But I have to go to work now.
 - c) I'll make time for you.
- a) another what? She doesn't want another sofa
b) correct solution
c) for who? For the person on the phone?

3. At other times, you will have to understand the **function** of words and phrases

A: Could you put me through to Jane Brown, please?

B: Sorry, she's not in today.

A: I don't suppose Mr Smith's free then, is he?

- a) Sorry, isn't she available today?
 - b) Who do you want to talk to instead?
 - c) Could you hold, please, when I check?
- a) Mr Smith ≠ she
b) the caller has just said that
c) correct solution (heard function: asking about availability – correct reply is offering to find out)

TIP #2

You can prepare for this task by studying social expressions and learning to behave in social situations. Films can help you greatly in this endeavour as they replicate a native speaker environment authentically. This is especially true of TV series which often feature everyday people in everyday situations and by following their lives, we get to experience different social situations through the characters' eyes. This way we can learn expressions that would otherwise be difficult to pick up in a non-native environment. Let's see some examples.

Utterance	Reaction
No way!	Oh, come on!
And then she said 'Get lost!'	She didn't?
Good night!	Sleep tight!
And then the guys say.... Ha ha! It was so funny.	I don't get it.

TIP #3

You can practise how to react in certain social situations by using our Spoken exam practice papers and practising the situations in Part 2. If it seems too difficult at first, give yourself time to think about the correct reactions and write them down as if you were writing a script for a film. Look at the example below.

A

We're friends. I start.
You know I promised to help paint your flat this weekend? Well, something else has come up.

C: Oh, dear. I'm not too happy about that. What's happened?

I: *I have been invited to my grandpa's birthday party.*

C: Well, I was really counting on you.

I: *I know, and I'm sorry. How about doing it next weekend?*

C: Okay, next weekend then. But please don't cancel on me next time.

I: *Don't worry, I won't.***TIP #4**

Do not attempt to use the dictionary here. Even though it is allowed throughout the whole listening exam, it will not be of any use to you as most phrases here are idiomatic or social language, which are difficult to locate in a dictionary.

Use your intuition instead and try to establish whether a phrase has positive or negative connotations. Eg *excited* and *nervous* are similar (they both happen before an important event), but the former is a positive feeling and the latter is a negative one.

TIP #5

Sometimes the answers will require knowledge of social language and what situations they are used in. Let's have a look at an example.

A: Now, George, have you met Annie?

B: No, I'm afraid I haven't.

A: Well, Annie, this is my old friend, George.

- a) We've not met for ages.
- b) It's always a pleasure.
- c) I've heard all about you.

- a) in fact, we have NEVER met (this phrase is used when two people who know each other meet)
- b) we have never met (this phrase is used when two people who know each other meet)
- d) correct solution

Now let's see some tips from the examiners themselves

- *Don't panic if you didn't understand a lot of it. You will be able to listen to it again.*
- *You do not need to fully understand the phrases; you need to understand the main message, the context and the function.*
- *Do not leave any questions blank even if you have no idea about the answers*
- *Don't waste time checking vocabulary. You will not have time to use the monolingual dictionary here.*

2. Note taking

TIP #1

The headings on the notepad appear in the order of the text. Remember this and use it to your advantage. If you have heard item number 3 and made a note of it, move your eyes over to number 4 and prepare your ears for the possible answer to number 4. While doing so, bear in mind the fact that there might be irrelevant information in the monologue as well, so number 4 might not immediately follow number 3, but may come a couple of seconds later. Let's have a look at this example of a C1-level Part 3. Look at the way the items are distributed throughout the text. They are not placed immediately one after the other, but instead they are distributed evenly with some irrelevant information in between them to give you enough time to note down your answers.

The first moving pictures were mostly short **comedies or adventure** stories. And then, in 1903, a man called Edwin S. Porter, known as 'the father of the story film', produced an eight minute effort called 'The Great Train Robbery'. It became incredibly successful and turned what had been just a gimmick into a **popular art form**.

Now this growing popularity of movies attracted more entrepreneurs into the film industry, many of whom began building their own versions of the kinetoscope, despite the fact that Edison held the patent. When **Edison began suing everyone** around New York and the East Coast, filmmakers panicked at the prospect of ending up behind bars. So they skipped town and headed west in true cowboy style.

Where did they end up? You guessed it. A little place called Hollywood in southern California, about as far away from Edison as they could get. For many, the opportunity to **make films all year long** in sunny California was just too good to pass up and pretty soon it was **the** place to be if you were a filmmaker. Now at this time California really did resemble the real wild west. The wide open spaces, punctuated by the odd dilapidated building made it, with the addition of a cowboy, a heroine and a couple of horses, the **perfect place for filming Westerns** on a low budget. Hundreds of Westerns were made during this time and the prospect of cinematic glory attracted aspiring filmmakers like gold prospectors to the Klondike.

TIP #2

Remember that Part 3 will feature a longer monologue lasting for about 3-4 minutes and you will be required to note down 7 pieces of information. This means that you will need to focus your attention for a relatively long period of time. If you tend to have problems with your attention span, practise concentrating on one topic for a longer time by listening to online tutorial videos or instructional podcasts, which will give you specific instructions on how to perform a certain task (eg how to make a meringue, how to uninstall your OS). While listening, take notes of the steps that you need to do. Listen again to check that you have taken a note of all the necessary information.

TIP #3

Practise predicting information before it appears in the text. Think about what happens when you are watching a dialogue in a film or a TV series. More often than not, you can predict what is going to happen or who is going to say what, even before it happens. How can you do that? You are using information already at your disposal to predict the future. When you have seen one of the characters do something wrong in the previous scene, and now you see them confessing it, you expect an argument. When you have seen the main character buying an engagement ring and now he is having a nice dinner in a restaurant with his girlfriend, you expect a proposal.

Similarly if you have a scene with two people talking and a third one joins them and starts with the line 'Hey. Can I borrow you for a sec?', you expect a reply along the lines of 'Sure' or 'No, I'm busy as you can see'.

Use the same strategy in the exam to predict the missing information, but this time use grammar and general knowledge as a tool. Let's have a look at the example below. Without knowing what the text will actually say about the details below, you can guess the KIND of information that might be missing. All you have to do is use the words in the task. Item number one ends in a preposition ('at') and a noun signifying a place or an exact time can follow 'at'. In this case, it will probably be a place as the question is about research. For item 2, location for an injection has to be a body part as we know injections need to be administered to the body.

The research

1. Carried out at: PLACE
2. Proposed location for injections: BODY PART
3. Normal location for injections: DIFFERENT BODY PART
4. Length of trial: TIME PERIOD/DATE/YEAR

TIP #4

Sometimes you will clearly HEAR the answer to a certain item, but you will have problems UNDERSTANDING it as the word will be unknown to you. What you can do in such a case is write down the word first phonetically (using the International Phonetic Alphabet or your own native alphabet), and then use the dictionary and your knowledge of spelling to figure out how it is supposed to be spelled.

Let's take an example. If you are doing the C1-level listening task below, and you heard /su:/, but you are unfamiliar with this word, write down what you heard (/su:ɪŋ/, /sju:ɪŋ/, szúin etc.), and then try to figure out how you think this is spelled.

4. Edison's reaction to illegal kinetoscopes:

Now this growing popularity of movies attracted more entrepreneurs into the film industry, many of whom began building their own versions of the kinetoscope, despite the fact that Edison held the patent. When Edison began **suing** everyone around New York and the East Coast, filmmakers panicked at the prospect of ending up behind bars. So they skipped town and headed west in true cowboy style.

TIP #5

This is the only part of the listening section of the exam where you will have to write the solutions yourself as opposed to choosing from options given, so you need to make sure what you write is acceptable.

Remember the following:

1. Grammar and spelling errors will not generally be penalised as long as the answer given is clearly recognisable as the correct answer and as long as the 'misspelled' solution is not another existing word in English, or the word has been spelled out letter by letter for you during the monologue.
2. Answers exceeding the maximum number of words stated in the rubric will not be accepted
3. Two answers will not be accepted (even if one of them is the correct answer)
4. If the answer does not answer the question, it will not be accepted

Let's take some examples to demonstrate the above rules.

1. if the answer is 'heat', 'hit' is not acceptable, if the answer is 'lovely girl', 'loveli girl' will be accepted, if the answer is 'sunset', then 'sundown', 'twilight' or 'dusk' will be accepted. NB – you are not expected to come up with synonyms, so don't waste time trying to do so – just write down what you hear.
2. Make sure you do not exceed the maximum words stated in the rubric (3 words at B1, 5 words at b2 and C1). If you need to, omit articles (a, an, the) to make the answer fit the rubric.
3. **When tour starts:** _____ At the zoo at 5 am. This will not be accepted as it includes irrelevant and incorrect information. Make sure you only answer the question and that you do not include any irrelevant information.

Now let's see some tips from the examiners themselves

- *Don't overuse the dictionary here*
- *Read all the questions carefully before the recording starts*
- *Predict the missing information before the recording starts*
- *Focus your attention on the task ahead of you as you will need to stay focused for about 3-4 minutes (8-10 including the second listening)*

3. Multiple choice

TIP #1

Learn adjectives. In Part 2, you will sometimes be asked to choose between options describing feelings, opinions and attitudes. It will be easier to do so if you know a lot of adjectives.

It is important that you are familiar with the questions before the recording starts otherwise it will be difficult to solve the task. How can you make sure you are ready for this particular question? Learn as many adjectives describing feelings and attitudes as possible. Have a look at the following examples. If you don't know one or two of the adjectives below, you might find it difficult to identify them in the speaker's tone.

B2

C1

The man is

Mary feels

a) frightened.

a) furious.

b) annoyed.

b) surprised.

c) surprised.

c) frustrated.

TIP #2

Use the dictionary to check any adjectives you do not know. In the previous tip, we talked about the importance of learning adjectives. However, naturally you won't be able to learn all adjectives, so if you don't know any of the adjectives in Part 2, don't forget to use your dictionary to check them.

If you feel that there is not enough time to check all of them (because there is more than one unknown word), at least use your intuition to decide if the adjective is positive or negative.

E.g. 'Frustrated' sounds very similar in many languages, so depending on what your mother tongue is, you might be able to use it as guidance.

TIP #3

Remember the aspects that this task will ask you to identify. It will be one of the following:

Relationship between speakers	eg colleagues, parents, strangers, buyer/seller, doctor/patient, teacher/pupil, neighbours
Feelings	eg surprised, frustrated, upset, annoyed, frightened, excited
Opinion	eg supportive, disapproving, indifferent
Context	eg in a restaurant, at a station, at home, at work
Topic	various
Attitude	eg determined, biased, indifferent, objective, negative

TIP #4

When you are preparing for Part 2, use this table to learn how to spot different aspects of a dialogue. Irrespective of the course book you are using and the listening tasks it has; add some of the questions below. Who were the people you listened to? What is the relationship between them? Use the transcript to help you understand what linguistic features can help you decide these things. Underline the words that can help you (eg one calls the other 'Dad').

	Identify the following aspects	How do you know?
1	Who is speaking?	
2	What are their roles?	
3	What's the relationship between the speakers?	
4	Where are they?	
5	Why are they there? (Reason)	
6	Why are they talking? (Purpose)	
7	How are they feeling?	
8	What is their attitude?	
9	What's the main topic of the conversation?	
10	What opinions are expressed?	
11	What facts are given?	
12	What do you like / dislike about the speakers? Why?	

TIP #5

If you have more than one adjectives within one option, try to eliminate at least one of them. Remember that one of them might be true while the other may be false, in which case the whole answer is deemed false.

For instance, if you don't know what 'abrupt' means, but you do not think the shop assistant was rude, option c) should be rejected irrespective of the meaning of abrupt.

What is the shop assistant's attitude?

- a) Friendly and chatty.
- b) Polite but determined.
- c) Rude and abrupt.

Now let's see some tips from the examiners themselves

- Remember to focus on the two questions related to the conversation you are listening to as you will have time to read the others before the other conversations start
- Don't use the dictionary too much, just for some vital words (eg adjectives)
- When you are deciding on an option, check who the question is about. Remember that it will be a dialogue so one of the people might feel frustrated, while the other will be furious.

4. General advice on all tasks

This chapter will provide you with some general advice on how to improve your listening skills in order to enhance your performance in all LanguageCert listening exam tasks.

TIP #1

Remember the five steps of listening.

1. Identify the topic
2. Predict information
3. Select important information and reject irrelevant information
4. Skim/scan/infer opinion
5. Take notes/solve task/act accordingly

When you read the task itself (before the recording starts), identify the topic and imagine the type of words that are generally associated with the topic. Then read the task and predict the missing information. When the recording starts, reject or select information based on what the tasks requires you to do. If the question is about the duration of a course, you should reject information about its location.

The difference between scanning and skimming is where the necessary information can be found. With scanning, the answer to the exam question will be located in one part of the audio whereas skimming may require you to listen to several parts of the audio to get a general understanding or feel of what the text is about. When you **skim**, remember these three steps.

1. Listen to the text
2. Mentally summarise the information heard
3. Remember keywords only, not every detail

When you **scan**, try to listen for the key words in the question, so that you can spot the answer more easily. When you are practicing, listening with the help of the printed task will also make your work more focused and it will be easier to avoid choosing an answer merely because you 'feel like' it is the correct answer.

TIP #2

Devote time to understanding connected speech. Learners often have problems with understanding fast speech because they are unfamiliar with it. Practise listening to fast speech by watching films and TV shows with English subtitles or by listening to podcasts and YouTube videos. Remember that fast speech will be different from isolated sounds in many aspects.

1. Grammar words such as auxiliaries and pronouns will not be stressed and as a consequence you may not even hear them at all (eg we hear: 'you alright?')
2. The final consonant sound of a word may be connected to the vowel sound of the following word, which may sound confusing (eg we hear: 'Would you like a napple?' 'He works in a noffice').
3. Final (and other) consonant sounds may be omitted altogether (eg we hear: I like climbing.)
4. Silent letters may make it difficult for you to understand the word even if you do know it. (I don't have a sword).
5. Double sounds will be avoided by omission (eg Does she? I can't turn it off)
6. Auxiliaries will be shortened (eg I'm gonna do it. You should have been there.)

You do not have to dedicate hours to this. Instead of feature films, you can watch TV shows too which vary greatly in length, genre, topic and difficulty.

TIP #3

Understanding can also be improved by studying the pronunciation of individual sounds. One aspect of the pronunciation of individual sounds is the concept of minimal pairs. **Minimal pairs** are words that vary by only a single sound (e.g. sit /sɪt/ and seat /si:t/). Using minimal pairs is useful for enhancing your understanding and it will also help you not to make 'impeding errors' which may cause misunderstanding when you are speaking. Practise the pronunciation of the minimal pairs below and use a dictionary to help you with any pronunciation you are unsure of.

BID	BEAD	SLICK	SLEEK
DIP	DEEP	FIND	FIEND
FIST	FEAST	SKID	SKIED
PILL	PEEL	SKIM	SCHEME
SIN	THIN	MISS	MYTH

You can find further examples of minimal pairs on the Internet.

TIP #4

Homophones are words which are pronounced exactly the same way, but which might be spelled differently. By studying homophones, you might be able to get rid of systematic and 'fossilised' pronunciation errors too. A very commonly mispronounced word is the past tense of win, won which should be pronounced /wʌn/, but is very often pronounced /wɒn/. If you memorise a homophone pair for won (one), and you practise them regularly, it will be easier for you to pronounce won correctly. You might also try and use them together in the same sentence, e.g. 'I have **won one** and a half million pounds!

Also, remember that if the correct answer is 'bread', 'bred' will not be an acceptable answer as it is a word with a different meaning.

allowed / aloud bare / bear billed / build boar / bore board / bored bread / bred cereal / serial fir / fur flew / flu flour / flower	heard / herd higher / hire I'll / isle knead / need knot / not pause / paws peer / pier rapper / wrapper saw / sore sew / sow
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TIP #5

Familiarise yourself with different accents. Not only will this be useful in a language exam, it will also prove to be invaluable when you go abroad. All you have to do is listen to some subtitled video or audio where the script is available and focus your attention on understanding individual sentences. Listen to the text as many times as necessary in order to understand everything. Use the written script (or the subtitles) to identify the areas in which the accent differs from the English you are learning in your lessons. You can find such audios in some course books (*New English File* features a couple of British regional accents, Irish, Scottish, Welsh) and you can also find a wide range on YouTube. Finally, you can Google some interviews with Colin Farrell or Dara O'Briain (Irish), James McAwoy, Ewan McGregor or Sean Connery (Scottish), Antony Hopkins or Alexandra Roach (Welsh) etc.

4. Listening outside the classroom

The purpose of this booklet is to help you prepare for LanguageCert exams. However, exams are not the ultimate purpose. You do not prepare for a driving test; you do your best to learn to drive and the driving test acts as feedback that you are ready to drive in traffic. Similarly, your purpose is to develop your language skills, and the role of exams is to test how well you are doing that.

Therefore, apart from preparing for the exam tasks, you should also dedicate time to listening regularly so that you can develop your listening skills to the desired level. If your goal is C1 level, you will need to be able to listen to long, complex texts understanding attitudes, relationships, viewpoints, and finer shades of meaning (see table below).

B2	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.
C1	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.

The best way to achieve that is by listening to an extensive range of videos and audios. Let's have a look at a few examples of what you can listen to and why you should do so.

What?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News • Subtitled films • YouTube • Music with lyrics • Audio books • Podcasts • Radio and Online radio • Language learning podcasts and audios • Course book audio • Lectures on your topic of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To keep up to date • To have fun • To learn words in context • To see words in action • To observe real, authentic grammar • To observe how fast speech works • To pick up natural intonation patterns • To learn to cope with different accents • To learn social language • To revise grammar and vocabulary

Remember that there are different kinds of listening tasks.

- First of all, you can just listen **for fun**. You can start watching a TV series that will take you to a brand new world and broaden your horizons. You can watch a BBC documentary about your favourite topic of interest. You can follow the news and get first-hand information from the biggest news channel in the world. You can learn about things straight from the horse's mouth without having to wait for translations or interpretations.
- You can listen to solve an exam task sheet which will require you to perform either **skimming** (listening for general understanding) or **scanning** (listening for specific words).
- You can also listen to a YouTube video by a celebrity chef in order to learn a new recipe (listening **to solve a task**).

- You can listen **intensively**, for instance, if you are watching a tutorial on how to reinstall your Operating System on your computer you need to understand every single word.
- You can also perform **extensive** listening which will involve listening to long texts which you can understand reasonably easily. You might be thinking, 'What is the point of listening to something which is too easy for me?' If you understand almost all of the text you listen to, you can build your word recognition speed, you'll notice more uses of grammar points, more collocations and generally your brain will be working effectively. So basically, if you listen to a text which is reasonably easy for you, you will learn from the text (words, phrases, grammar, intonation etc.). What kind of text is suitable for this? A text where you understand practically everything for the first time, eg the course book audio for the units you have already done in class, a podcast or YouTube video you have listened to many times.