

## Eltas Event Review

*Author: Angeline Fischer*

### Sorry, what did you say?

Reviewed by **Angeline Fischer**

### A workshop on Listening Skills with Evelina Miščin

12<sup>th</sup> July 2014, held at Euro Akademie, Stuttgart

On a very warm and sunny day in July, ELTAS members were able to visit the new Euro Akademie location for a lively workshop filled with a variety of classroom exercises. The topic of listening must have struck a chord with our members, as more participants attended than expected and the room was full!

Evelina Miščin began her talk with a quick introduction to research on speech acquisition and listening and she stressed the teachers' central role in effectively using listening as part of the language acquisition process.

Participants were initially asked to reflect upon situations when we do and do not listen.

These were the top results:

We tend to listen when:

- 1) we think the subject is important
- 2) we think that the speaker is important
- 3) we find the subject or speaker interesting

We tend not to listen when:

- 1) there are distractions
- 2) we are tired
- 3) the speaker speaks in a monotone

We were also asked to reflect on how we currently teach listening lessons. Evelina got us discussing our own teaching rationale by having us prioritize and order activities within a listening lesson. From this we noted how differently we all approach listening lessons.

Lots of fun games were brought into the workshop for easy application in the classroom. The game "broken telephone" was introduced as well as solving word puzzles by carefully listening and following instructions.

*"Lots of fun games were brought into the workshop for easy application in the classroom."*

Using half sentences also proved to be an entertaining exercise. Two groups were assigned. One group constructed the first half of a sentence and the other the second half. The results were often funny or unexpected, but all of which encouraged active listening.

One particularly effective listening exercise was assigning (in groups of four) a listener, a speaker and two observers. After a short talk, the observers were asked to recall what they had observed and heard. This gave insight into the role of listening in communication and neatly fits into Evelina's LISTENING acronym:

- Look interested
- Inquire
- Summarize
- Test uncertainty
- Encourage
- Neutralize your attitude

Other methods were also used to get students thinking out of the box. Dictating homophones (words with multiple meanings which sound the same) and asking students to form sentences with manual/manual, would/wood, seam/seem and deer/dear. This was an effective and simple way of helping students search for meaning in context.

Another activity involved identifying key words from an audio passage and subsequently reducing key words until only seven main words remained. With the remaining seven words, the core idea of the listening passage was rephrased and summarised to encourage students to focus not only on individual words but also on the overall meaning of a passage.

When discussing listening resources, Evelina encouraged teachers to use audio tools and language CDs which have real world voices and use a variety of speakers, including those whose primary language is not English. Evelina stressed this as being a key factor in mastering listening skills and encouraged us to expose learners to a variety of accents.

Finally, the complete body was used to practise listening through a running dictation activity. Pairs were formed and one partner was asked to read a passage on the wall while the other would try to accurately listen and write what was dictated. See the photos for the chaos, competitiveness and fun it created!

Overall, participants left with many ideas that can be applied to a variety of teaching situations, bringing the essential skill of listening into the communication equation.



*Angeline Fischer is a Canadian teaching Business English in the Stuttgart area. After completing Economics and MBA degrees, she specialized in the fields of controlling and accounting working at several multinationals. Currently, when not teaching executives English language skills, she lectures at a local university on business, management and leadership skills, as well as intercultural competence. She is also the host of "English Breakfast" an intercultural morning show at Radiofips.*