

Integrating Genre-Based Strategies into Listening Instruction

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Listening is one of the most challenging skills for language learners due to its fleeting nature and the demand of real-time processing of spoken input. To comprehend different types of listening texts, learners need strategies that help them anticipate discourse and respond effectively. A key strategy is the ability to distinguish between genres and become familiar with the vocabulary, conventions, and organizational features specific to each text. This article discusses how genre-based strategies can be systematically integrated into listening instruction to enhance students' comprehension of conversations, narratives, news reports, and discussions. Instructional activities are structured around a three-phase listening process—pre-listening, during-listening, and post-listening—to scaffold learners' engagement with spoken input. Students are guided to identify genre-specific features, track discourse markers, and make inferences while applying listening strategies. Classroom activities foster collaboration, reflection, and learner autonomy. This instructional approach suggests that explicit genre instruction may help support learner engagement, strategic listening, and enhanced listening comprehension. It provides a practical framework adaptable across languages, proficiency levels, and instructional contexts.

Keywords: Genre-based Strategies, Listening Strategies, Listening Comprehension, Discourse Markers, Inferencing

INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is widely recognized as one of the most difficult skills for second language learners, particularly in intensive programs like the DLIFLC Chinese Basic Course. Traditional listening instruction often focuses on vocabulary acquisition and discrete grammar points, but recent research emphasizes the importance of understanding the overarching structure and communicative purpose of spoken texts (Field, 2008; Goh, 2014). In response, we

implemented a genre-based listening instruction model targeting four key spoken genres: conversations, narratives, news reports, and discussions.

By explicitly teaching the defining features and communicative functions of each genre, our aim was to enhance students' comprehension, promote strategic listening, and foster learner autonomy. This approach allows students to engage with listening texts efficiently as purposeful, structured discourse rather than isolated language fragments.

The Characteristics of Genres

A genre refers to a type of text that serves a specific communicative function within a social context (Martin & Rose, 2008; Paltridge, 2001). Each genre is characterized by recognizable patterns in structure, language use, and pragmatic features. For instance, conversations typically involve informal language and turn-taking, while news reports often follow the “inverted pyramid” format that prioritizes key information upfront (Hyland, 2019; O'Halloran, 2013).

Each genre has its own unique linguistic and structural characteristics that can serve as cues for listeners. By understanding how different genres operate, learners can predict organizational patterns, identify discourse markers, recognize key points, and apply strategies to enhance their overall listening comprehension.

Building on these general characteristics, we define the specific genres used in our instruction as follows (Kizi & Abdujabbarovna, 2025):

- Conversation: Informal, real-time interaction between two or more participants, emphasizing negotiation of meaning rather than formal or scripted content.
- Narrative: Spoken texts that recount events in a coherent and logically sequenced manner. We used *narrative* instead of *storytelling* because our instructional focus was on how the event was organized and logically connected, not on expressive or dramatic performance.
- News report: Journalistic spoken texts that present factual information using a clear, organized structure, with emphasis on key points.
- Discussion: Structured, interactive exchanges among multiple speakers in which ideas are presented, developed, and critically examined, often through argumentation and counter argumentation. This genre is used in place of the *academic lecture* format to reflect its collaborative and participatory nature.

In addition to understanding the typical features of each genre, students can be guided to identify common listening challenges associated with each genre and develop strategies to support comprehension. Identified challenges include unclear pronunciation and idiomatic expressions in conversations; tracking event sequences and interpreting figurative language in narratives; processing rapid speech and complex syntactic structures in news reports; and managing multiple speakers and technical vocabulary in discussions. Instructional strategies may

emphasize predicting content, recognizing discourse markers, summarizing key points, and attending to organizational patterns and emotional tone.

Through genre-based instruction, students are trained to notice these features, identify challenges, and apply appropriate strategies, enabling them to activate prior knowledge and set realistic expectations for incoming spoken input (Field, 2008). Research indicates that genre awareness may enhance comprehension and facilitate more effective processing of spoken texts (Chen & Chen, 2021; Sadeghi et al., 2014). Instead of passively decoding speech, students listen with an informed framework that helps them anticipate the structure and meaning of the text. The following section focuses on how we provided genre-based instruction for our students to enhance their listening comprehension.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLEMENTATION

Our instructional approach follows a three-phase listening cycle—pre-listening, during-listening, and post-listening—combined with explicit genre instruction. Throughout each phase, students are guided to develop metacognitive awareness by planning, monitoring, and evaluating their listening processes through structured instructional support (Goh, 2014). In addition, learners are encouraged to engage in cognitive processing strategies such as inferencing, predicting, and note-taking, as well as collaborative interaction through peer discussion and reflection, to support meaning construction during and after listening tasks.

In our curriculum, students are gradually introduced to four spoken genres sequenced by increasing complexity and proficiency demands: conversations, narratives, news reports, and discussions. Each presents characteristic features and learner challenges: conversations require attention to colloquial markers and implied meaning; narratives rely on temporal sequencing and cultural references; news reports demand extracting facts from dense, rapid delivery; and discussions challenge learners to follow multiple speakers and track argumentation.

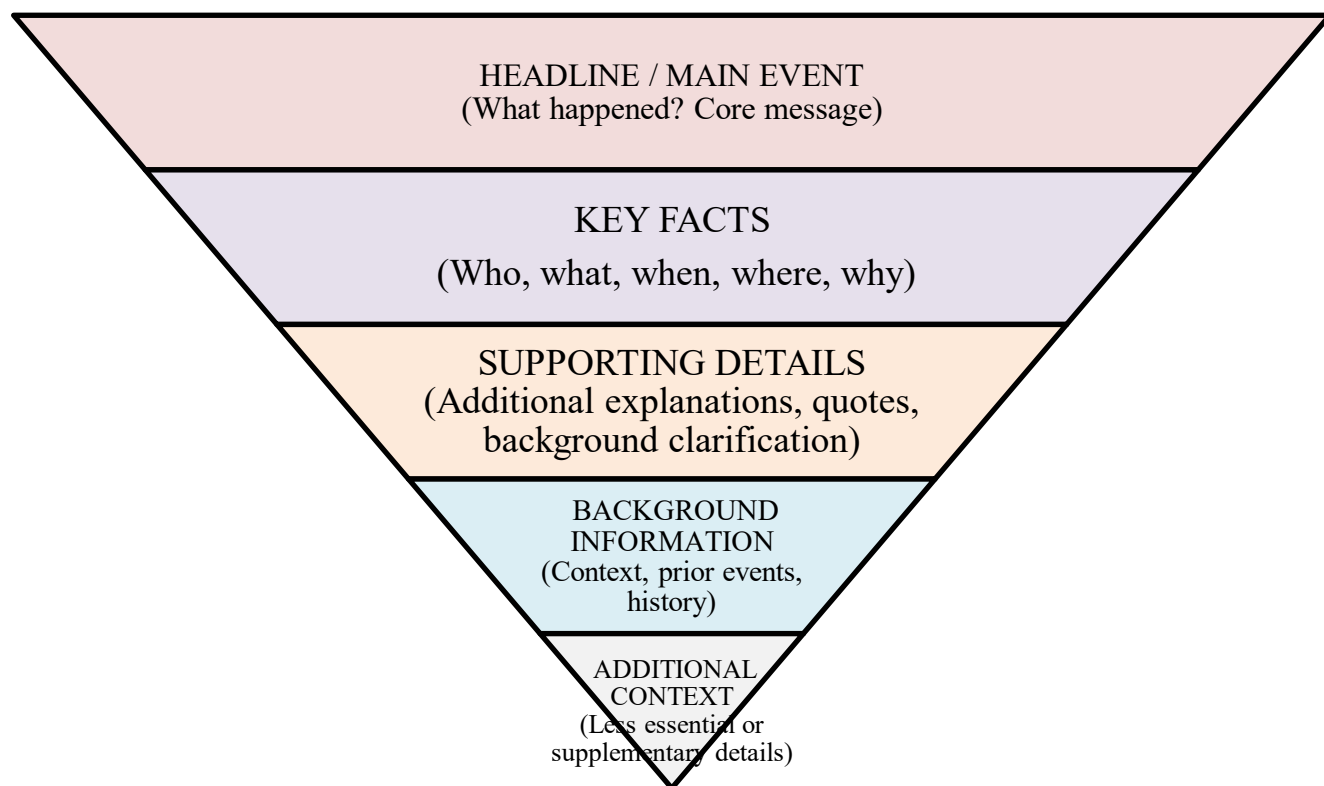
To address these challenges, our listening instruction focused on the following strategies to scaffold students' comprehension:

1. Activating Background Knowledge and Predictions

Before engaging with a listening text, teachers activated background knowledge and encouraged predictions related to genre signals. For a conversation between spouses about starting a business, students predicted relevant vocabulary, possible concerns, speaker perspectives, and likely conversational turns such as expressing hesitation, asking questions, or discussing financial risks. In a narrative titled *"A Day in the Life of Zhang Xiaomin"*, students anticipated temporal markers and vocabulary associated with narratives, such as 早上 (morning), 中午 (noon), 然后 (later), and 晚上 (evening). Similarly, before listening to a news report, teachers introduced this organizational structure visually using a simplified reverse pyramid diagram (see Figure 1) to help students understand how information is prioritized in news reports. This visual scaffold

supported learners in anticipating the sequence of information from the most important facts to supporting and background details, thereby improving comprehension of rapid and information-dense news texts. For discussion-based listening passages, students were prompted to recognize discourse cues signaling multiple perspectives and to consider potential stances on a given topic (e.g., on the other hand, nevertheless, I disagree, etc.). These tasks encourage top-down processing and prepare learners to listen strategically.

Figure 1
Simplified Reverse Pyramid Structure of a News Report



Note. Figure created by authors

2. Recognizing Discourse Markers

During listening, students were encouraged to move from gist to details while attending to genre-specific features that aid comprehension. A key focus is recognizing discourse markers, which help structure meaning across genres. In conversations, phrases like 对啊 (yeah, right), 可是 (but), and 然后 (then) signal agreement, contrast, or sequencing respectively, enabling learners to follow the flow of interaction. In narratives, temporal markers such as 后来 (later) and 最后 (finally) assist listeners in reconstructing the storyline. In news reports, connectors such as 首先 (first), 其次 (next), and 最后 (finally) highlight the inverted-pyramid structure. In discussions, contrastive markers such as 但是 (but) and 不过 (however), and qualifiers such as 也许 (maybe) and 我觉得 (I think) cue shifts in stance and perspective.

For example, in a discussion on online education, Speaker A comments, “我觉得网课可以提供更多灵活性。” (I think online classes can provide more flexibility.) Speaker B replies, “嗯, 这也许对一些学生有帮助, 不过面对面的交流还是不可替代的。” (Hmm, that might help some students, but face-to-face interaction is still irreplaceable.) Although Speaker B does not explicitly reject Speaker A’s view, the softening word 也许 (maybe) and the contrastive marker 不过 (however) signal polite disagreement. Recognizing these relational cues enables learners to interpret perspectives and interactional dynamics effectively, reinforcing the predictions and expectations they established prior to listening.

3. Making Inferences

Making inferences beyond the literal text is a crucial skill in language learning, and genre awareness can guide students in anticipating meaning and interpreting implied information. For example, in conversations or dialogues, meaning is often implicit and must be inferred from speakers’ tones, discourse markers, and rhetorical devices. In a conversation between a couple about starting a transportation business, the husband asks for the wife’s opinion, but she responds, 開公司那麼容易啊? 想开就开了? (Is it really that easy to start a company? Can you just start one whenever you want?). Rather than directly rejecting the idea, she uses rhetorical questions to express skepticism and concerns, thereby implying the seriousness and challenges of entrepreneurship.

In another example, the female speaker asks, “你听到那个消息了吗? 你觉得怎么样?” (Did you hear the news? What do you think?) The male speaker responds, “现在我终于可以睡个好觉了。” (Now I can finally get a good night’s sleep.) Students were able to infer that the male speaker was previously anxious, stressed, and unsettled, but the news was positive or reassuring enough to remove his worry and put his mind at ease. Students were guided to recognize indirect disagreement and turn-taking patterns typical of conversational genres, allowing them to infer tone, attitude, and implied meaning.

4. Managing Variability in Speech

During listening, students were guided to manage speech variability while listening for key details. In news reports, this may involve tracking numbers, dates, or place names delivered at high speed. In conversations, colloquial fillers and hesitations require learners to distinguish essential from nonessential information. Narratives may contain vivid descriptive details that enrich visualization but risk distracting learners from the main events. Discussions, often the most cognitively demanding genre, challenge learners to follow multiple speakers, overlapping speech, and varied accents while still identifying the main ideas and supporting evidence.

Through guided activities across genres, students learned to combine marker recognition, inference, and detail-oriented listening with bottom-up decoding and top-down contextual

reasoning. This interactive processing helps them remain engaged and strategically focused even when input is fast-paced or implicit.

5. Consolidating Comprehension

In post-listening activities, students engaged in collaboration and reflection to consolidate comprehension through tasks such as summarizing, role-plays, debates, and reflective writing on implied meaning. For instance, in the news report activities, students summarized key facts in their own words and reflected on how reporters used sequencing and citation to build credibility. After listening to a discussion, students participated in small-group debates or reflective writing that mirrored the original text's structure, evaluating multiple viewpoints and identifying language features that support comprehension, including qualifiers (words or phrases like "maybe," "I think," or "it seems") that signal uncertainty or soften statements, and contrast markers that indicate shifts in perspective. For example, after listening to a discussion on online education, students worked in small groups to complete a comparison chart identifying each speaker's position, supporting reasons, and discourse markers signaling agreement or disagreement. Groups then orally summarized the discussion using the organizational structure of the original text.

These activities reinforce genre awareness, promote critical thinking, and support transfer of strategies to authentic listening situations, helping learners apply the comprehension and inferencing skills they developed during pre- and during-listening phases.

Additional strategies included structural mapping and targeted information extraction. For example, students created simple organizational outlines while listening to narratives or news reports to visualize sequencing and relationships among ideas. In other activities, students practiced selective listening to extract specific information such as speaker stance, supporting evidence, or key factual details, depending on the genre and communicative purpose of the text.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

Upon completion of genre-based strategy instruction, students were asked to provide anonymous feedback on the instruction. They were positive about this approach, as evidenced by comments such as: *"I find it easier to understand what I'm listening to because I know what to expect from each genre"; "Knowing the structure makes it easier to follow along and take notes"; and "I feel more confident when listening to different genres of authentic materials outside the classroom."*

Some students also expressed the desire for more practice with challenging genres such as discussions, while a few of them were concerned that it was difficult to transfer classroom strategies to real-life listening. Additionally, several requested a slower instructional pace for deeper exploration of each genre. Students' feedback prompted us to reflect on the implementation of the genre-based listening strategies and make instructional adjustments to

better meet students' learning needs. In response to this feedback, we plan to adjust future instruction in several ways. To support the transfer of classroom strategies to real-world listening, authentic materials such as interviews, news segments, and online discussions will be incorporated, accompanied by pre- and post-listening scaffolds. Instructional pacing will be modified to allow more time for students to analyze structures, identify key discourse features, and reflect on comprehension strategies. Finally, we will implement ongoing reflection and feedback cycles, enabling students to share their experiences with new activities and allowing us to refine instruction iteratively. These adjustments are intended to strengthen genre-based listening strategy instruction, build student confidence, and ensure learners can effectively apply strategies in authentic listening contexts.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Integrating genre-based strategies in listening instruction offers multiple benefits. Genre awareness helps scaffold students' ability to anticipate and process information in real time. In addition, genre awareness supports the development of metacognitive awareness by helping learners monitor their listening processes and apply strategies more independently. It also fosters communicative competence, as listening is treated not just as decoding but as understanding language in context (Field, 2008; Goh, 2014). Finally, it cultivates critical thinking in listening to discussions and news reports as genre knowledge enables learners to effectively evaluate arguments and synthesize information (O'Halloran, 2013).

This approach is especially relevant to the learning context like DLIFLC, where students face high-stakes listening assessments and real-world application demands. One practical advantage of genre-based listening instruction is that it can be integrated into existing lessons without requiring extensive curriculum redesign. Teachers can introduce genre features and discourse cues briefly during pre-listening activities and reinforce them during regular instruction or supplemental listening sessions. Once students become familiar with common organizational patterns and discourse markers associated with different genres, teachers can refer to these features flexibly across lessons and proficiency levels. This adaptability makes genre-based instruction a practical framework for strengthening listening comprehension within existing instructional time constraints. A sample lesson sequence illustrating the implementation of genre-based listening instruction is included in the Appendix to support instructional application and sequencing for faculty members.

CONCLUSION

Genre-based listening instruction equips learners with essential tools to interpret meaning, anticipate structure, and engage more effectively with spoken texts. At DLIFLC, this approach appears to support student engagement, comprehension, and strategic listening, although formal evaluation of performance was not conducted for this instructional approach. By embedding genre awareness into each phase of the listening process—pre-, during-, and post-listening—and supporting it with metacognitive, cognitive, and social-affective strategies,

students can develop more strategic and autonomous listening habits. Overall, genre-based strategies offer a practical framework with potential to enhance listening instruction across languages, proficiency levels, and instructional contexts.

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APPENDIX

Sample Genre-Based Listening Lesson Sequence

Lesson Phase	Sample Activity	Instructional Focus
Pre-listening	Students preview the genre and predict vocabulary, organizational structure, speaker perspectives, and possible content using titles, visuals, or key phrases.	Activate background knowledge and prepare students to anticipate genre-specific features.
During-listening	Students identify discourse markers, temporal sequencing, speaker stance, and organizational patterns while listening to the text.	Develop strategic listening through recognition of genre cues and discourse features.
	Students complete note-taking charts or structural maps to organize key information and relationships among ideas.	Support comprehension through structural mapping and targeted information extraction.
Post-listening	Students summarize the text, participate in discussions or role-plays, and reflect on implied meaning, speaker perspective, or organizational structure.	Consolidate comprehension and promote transfer of listening strategies.
Reflection/ Feedback	Students discuss which strategies were most helpful and identify areas that require additional practice.	Encourage metacognitive awareness and strategy refinement.

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