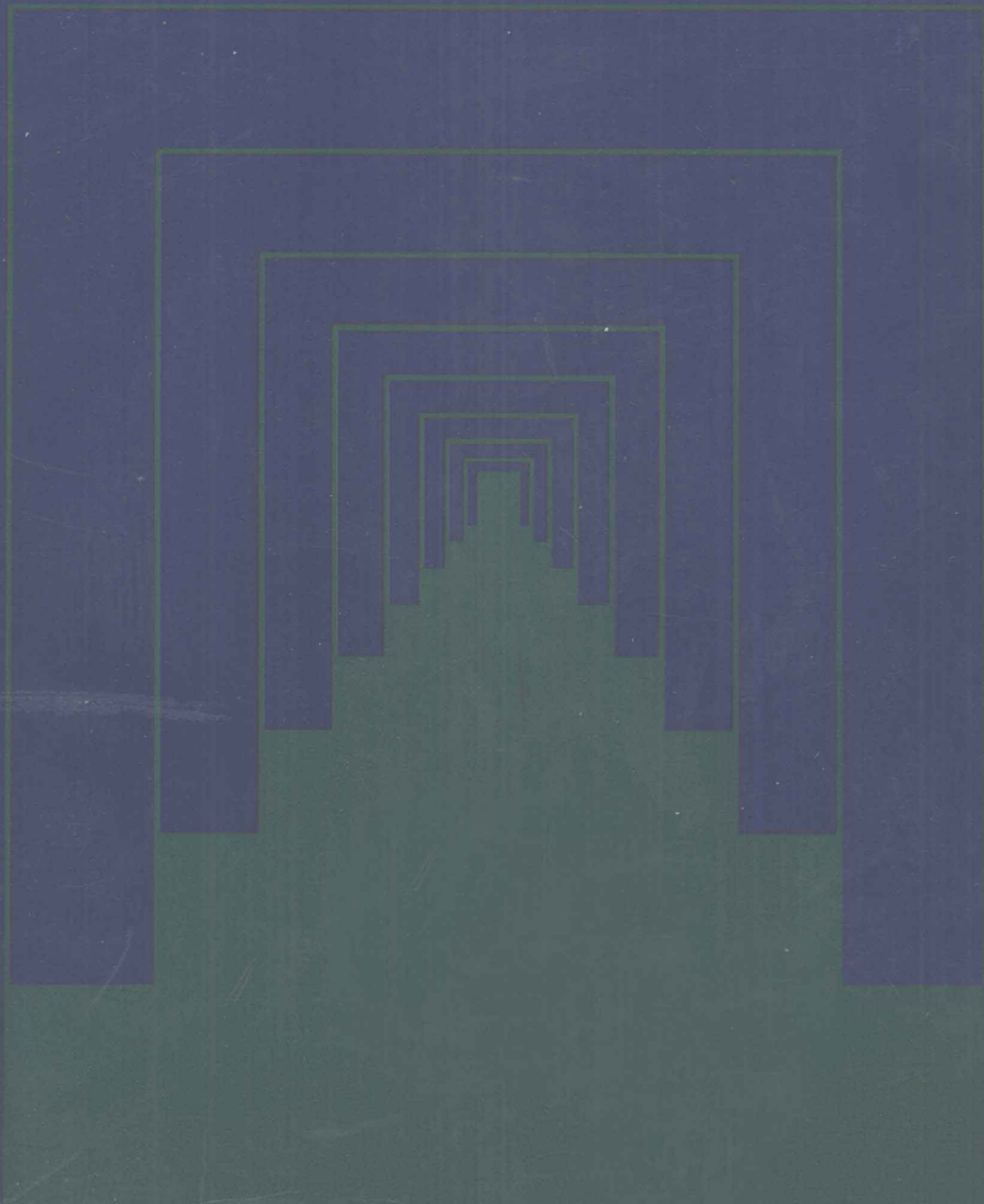


ABELLE MASON

UNDERSTANDING ACADEMIC LECTURES



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Abelle Mason

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**To Bob
whose understanding of me
enabled me to convey
my understanding of American lectures,
and
for Peter and Mark**

Preface

The goal of *Understanding Academic Lectures* is to enable students to reconstruct the plan, the purpose, the supporting data, and illustrations in a given lecture. It also aims to develop the ability to discern orders of importance in the material presented.

To achieve these skills the student must undertake a course of active listening. The basic procedure of this book involves listening to the taped materials first in parts, then in a combination of parts, and finally as a whole. Every listening exercise involves a listening task. Each task focuses on a special element of comprehension which is first presented in the text. To aid in the listening process, a listening guide is provided for each speaker but one. The guides include glossaries, cue phrases, pictured illustrations, and certain topic or outline notations.

Using this method, we explore the many elements that constitute lecture comprehension. These include the study of the role and style of lectures; of techniques for listening and notetaking; and of use of language, vocabulary, and rhetoric. Finally, there is a discussion of the subject matter of the lectures themselves.

The text, along with the tapes of interviews and lectures, comprise the study materials. The tapes of speakers recorded live are as unencumbered as possible. Tones mark the study divisions, but no extraneous voices give directions. The appendix serves as an answer key with complete outlines of all the lectures and complete topic guides for the most difficult interviews. In addition, the appendix contains an answer key for all the short-answer questions. The tapes, of course, supply an aural reference. Teachers may wish to consult the collection, *Transcripts for Teachers' Reference*.

Basically, two types of academic discourse are studied: interviews and lectures. Speakers from diverse disciplines are represented. The variety of their language backgrounds is typical of that found on most large campuses in North America.

Thus, a comprehensive strategy of listening is laid out with many opportunities for practice. I believe that the approach offered here can enable students to follow a live mind at work in an academic context in English.

Acknowledgments

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Raquel Halty Ferguson, whose excerpted comments come from an interview recorded at MIT in 1980. Used by permission of the lecturer.

Mohamed A. Gheith, whose excerpted comments come from an interview recorded in 1980. Used by permission of the lecturer.

Ifeanyi Menkiti, whose excerpted comments come from an interview recorded at MIT in 1980. Used by permission of the lecturer.

Edwin O. Reischauer, whose excerpted comments come from an interview recorded in 1980. Used by permission of the lecturer.

Harold J. Hanham, whose panel remarks were recorded at the program, *The Audible Curriculum: A Cross-Cultural View of University Lecture Styles*, which was presented at MIT in 1980. Used by permission of the lecturer.

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Irene Tayler, whose excerpted remarks came from an interview recorded at MIT in 1980. Used by permission of the lecturer.

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Louis H. Levi's *The Roots of Jazz* was given at Columbia University in 1967. Used by permission of the lecturer.

Mary P. Rowe's *Roles of Men and Women in Paid and Unpaid Work* was given at MIT in 1980. Used by permission of the lecturer. (Her "Questionnaire on Paid Work and Family Work" is also used by permission.)

Martin Diskin's *The Study of Peasants* was given at MIT in 1980. Used by permission of the lecturer.

James Robertson's *Society at the Turning Point* was given at the Technology and Culture Seminar at MIT in 1980. Used by permission of the lecturer. (His book *The Sane Alternative* is published by River Basin Publishing Co., P.O. Box 30573, St. Paul, Minnesota 55175 [\$4.95]).

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Peter Mason and Mark Mason served as announcers on the tape.

Many influences come to play on a book. It would be impossible to pin-

*The Technology and Culture Seminar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, exists to promote public discussions of important, timely issues such as the arms race, technology and the meaning of work, problems of the finite earth, and reindustrialization. The Technology and Culture steering committee, headed by Dr. Louis Menand III, Special Assistant to the Provost, and Rev. Scott Paradise, Episcopal chaplain, reviews proposals and coordinates the lecture series.

point those in my field. However, several books which contributed to my thinking on the subject of lecture comprehension are:

The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation, by Charles Perelman and L. Albrechts-Tyteca;

An Introduction to Rhetorical Communication, by James McCroskey;

How to Study in College, by Walter Pauk; and

Communicating Technical Information, by Robert Rathbone.

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Abelle Mason

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Introduction to Understanding Academic Lectures

The purpose of this text and the tapes which accompany it is to enable you to listen to lectures effectively. To this end, we will employ a multilevel approach that explores the ideas as well as how they are communicated. You will have the opportunity to listen to prepared lectures as well as to interviews where lecturers respond to questions on the spot. Thus, you will examine two important ways in which lecturers communicate, noting their message, language, and organization.

Part I, “A Cross-Cultural View,” introduces the subject of lectures from the perspectives of six lecturers, each knowledgeable about the United States and at least one other culture area. In the process of listening to five interviews and one panel excerpt, we will compare the ways of lecturing in Latin America, the Middle East, East/West Africa, East Asia, Great Britain, Europe, and the United States.

In Part II, “A Preface to Lectures,” we will listen to two professors—one from the sciences and the other from the humanities. The professors discuss the role of lectures in their courses and describe some of the techniques they use in lecturing. The first discussion is in the form of a panel excerpt; the second is an interview. The author then gives a mini-lecture, which serves both as a model lecture format and as an introduction to Part III.

Part III, “Five Lectures for Study,” consists of full-length lectures which were recorded when they were given. We will analyze their organization and see how it relates to the lecturers’ purpose. We will examine how the lecturers use language to signal the organization of their lectures and achieve their goals. We will see how the style of speaking changes according to the size and composition of the audience. We will also look at the elements which mark the individuality of the speakers.

The subjects of the lectures are body language and nonverbal communication, jazz, the changing roles of men and women, the study of peasants, and a look at the future of society. The lectures were planned for general academic audiences and therefore do not presuppose any special knowledge. They are intended to be interesting and rewarding to study.

System of Notation

Listening Guides

There are two types of Listening Guides: those for Interviews and Panel Excerpts, as found in Parts I and II; and those for the Lectures in Part III. All Listening Guides, regardless of which part they appear in, come at the end of the chapter.

The Guides for Parts I and II go from left to right across the page and consist of three columns: a *Vocabulary and Listening Cues* column, a narrow *Tape Cue* column, and a *Topic Guide* column. (See Figure 1, *Sample Format of Listening Guide* for Parts I and II, pg. 3.)

The Listening Guides for Part III are set **broadside**, that is, sideways on the page, and they contain four columns. In this format, the narrow *Tape Cue* column is on the left, followed by the *Vocabulary and Listening Cues* column, the *Cue Phrases* column, and finally the *Listening Outline*. (See Figure 2, *Sample Format of Listening Guide* for Part III, pg. 4.)

Vocabulary

The *Vocabulary and Listening Cues*, which appear in both types of Listening Guides, include three sorts of items:

1. A word or phrase followed by a dash and then the meaning.
 - An example would be “**fortunate**—lucky.”
 - If the word “here ” appears, then only the meaning for that context is given. For example, “**to carry on**—here, to persevere or continue.” The meaning in the sense of “**to carry on**—to behave in a noisy, happy manner” would not be given, nor would any other meaning be given.
 - Since all the vocabulary is taken from the context the speaker uses, an additional sentence putting the word or phrase in context is not given.
2. A sentence or phrase directly quoted from the lecturer.
 - Some items become understood when seen in writing. In such a case, no additional explanation is provided.
3. The words of a song or a special saying or quotation that a speaker may quote.
 - If a word or phrase as quoted in 2 or 3 requires explanation, it will be set in **boldface**, and its meaning will be given in the format described in 1.

In the text, a difficult word or phrase will be printed in **boldface** when it is introduced. An explanation will be given immediately before or after it appears. The words “or,” “that is,” or “that is to say” may be used to connect the explanation to the item in boldface. [NOTE: The frequent restatement of ideas is designed to increase your vocabulary for academic purposes. Sometimes, therefore, you may find that the writing contains more repetitions than is generally considered desirable in good prose.]

Tape Cues

The *Tape Cues* indicate the points at which the tapes have been divided for study. The first division point is noted by one tone on the tape; the second division point has two tones; the third point has three tones; and so on. The Tape Cue column notes the number of tones and also the time lapse from the beginning of the tape. The tones are indicated by **bullets** which are darkened circles of type (like this: •), and the number of bullets indicate the number of tones.

Topic Guides

The *Topic Guides* give the sequence of topics discussed in the interviews and panel excerpts. Specific information may be filled in as you listen to the interviews and panel excerpts in Parts I and II.

Listening Outline

The *Listening Outlines* replace Topic Guides in Part III. They consist of incomplete outlines of the lectures which may be filled in while listening to them or afterwards from your notes.

Cue Phrases

Cue Phrase columns also accompany the Lecture Guides. They contain the actual phrases used by the lecturers when they wish to signal the direction of their thinking.

Sample Exercise Figure 1

Study the Vocabulary and Listening Cues in Figure 1. Then answer the following questions by completing 1 and 2 of the Topic Guide.

- For interviews, what is more appropriate than a Listening Outline?
- What do answers to exercise questions for interviews or panel excerpts often complete?

FIGURE 1
SAMPLE FORMAT
OF LISTENING GUIDE
FOR PARTS I AND II

Vocabulary and Listening Cues	Tape Cue	Topic Guide
appropriate—suitable or fitting		1. Appropriateness of Topic Guide a. Interviews have no overall organization and therefore a Listening Outline is less suitable than. . .
“When a difficult word or term is introduced in the text, it will be printed in boldface type.”		
boldface type—letters printed with darker or thicker type than usual		
“The item will be defined following a dash ‘—’.”	•	
A series of three points after a word or phrase—these three points (“ . . . ”)—indicate that the item needs to be completed	3:24	2. Completion of Topic Guide Answers to the exercise questions often complete. . .
	••	
	6:33	

Sample Exercise Figure 2

Study the Vocabulary and Listening Cues in Figure 2. Then answer the following questions, filling in II(B) (2) and (3). [NOTE: When actually listening to the tapes, you may wish to take notes on a separate sheet before filling in the Guides.]

- What do the number of bullets in the Tape Cue indicate?
- What time lapse is indicated by the time which appears under the bullets?

FIGURE 2
 SAMPLE FORMAT
 OF LISTENING GUIDE
 FOR PART III

Tape Cue	Vocabulary and Listening Cues	Cue Phrases	Listening Outline
		"In order to explain. . ."	I. Two Kinds of Listening Guides A. Guides for Interviews and Panel Excerpts 1. Listening Guides extend across the width of the page. 2. They consist of three columns, including a Topic Guide column.
		"On the other hand, Guides for. . ."	B. Guides for Lectures 1. Listening Guides extend across the page broadside . 2. They consist of four columns including a Listening Outline. 3. They also have a Cue Phrase column.
	". . . across the page broadside "—the book is turned 90° so that the length of the page serves as the width	"Let us note the common elements of. . ."	II. Common Elements of the Guides A. Vocabulary and Listening Cue Columns B. Tape Cue Columns 1. The tones on the tape are symbolized in the Guides by bullets . 2. The number of bullets indicates the number of. . . 3. The time noted under the bullets refers to the time lapse from. . .

•
 3:24

••
 6:33

I

A

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