

**Strategies and resources for  
improving listening skills in  
Higher French.**

*Lesley Young*

# Learning Intentions

I am going to:

- ***explain the theories behind the listening process***
- ***give an insight into some recent research***
- ***introduce some simple ideas to improve listening ability***
- ***share some resources I have found***

# ***Bottom-up processing***

- sounds
- words
- clauses
- sentences

are decoded in linear fashion to create meaning.

# ***Top-down processing***

- knowledge of the topic
  - knowledge of the world
  - knowledge of how texts are structured
- interact with linguistic knowledge to create an interpretation of the text.

# ***Recommended reading***

- Buck, G. (2001)

*Assessing Listening*

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

- Rost, M. (2002)

*Teaching and Researching Listening*

Harlow: Longman

# ***Bottom-up processing: Phonics***

Difficulty with bottom-up processing:

- spoken French is perceived as unbroken stream
- word boundaries are not clear (liaison)
- lack of awareness of how graphemes correspond to phonemes

***Phonics:  
Minimal pairs***

**[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)**

Search for

« French pronunciation  
phonétique »

# Phonics: Minimal pairs

french pronunciation phonetique - YouTube - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help

french pronunciation phonetique - YouTube +

www.youtube.com/results?search\_query=french+pronunciation+phonetique&oq=french+pronunciation+phonetique&gs\_l=youtu...

AVG Search Safe Weather Facebook Speed

**YouTube** french pronunciation phonetique Browse TV SI

Filter About 194 results

 **Phonic Song**  
A song to help children learn the letter sounds.  
by hooplakidz | 2,159,035 views Ads

Did you mean: [french pronunciation phonetic](#)

 **French Pronunciation - phonetique - voyelles n...** TRANSLATE  
Learn **French**, Сазнајте Француски, Französisch lernen, 学习法语, 學習法語, 자세히 프랑스어, Apprender el francés, למד צרפתית, Apprendre le français ...  
by imagiers | 5 years ago | 30,377 views

 **French Pronunciation - phonetique - oppositio...** TRANSLATE  
Learn **French**, Сазнајте Француски, Französisch lernen, 学习法语, 學習法語, 자세히 프랑스어, Apprender el francés, למד צרפתית, Apprendre le français ...  
by imagiers | 5 years ago | 14,901 views

 **French Pronunciation - phonetique - oppositio...** TRANSLATE  
Learn **French**, Сазнајте Француски, Französisch lernen, 学习法语, 學習法語, 자세히 프랑스어, Apprender el francés, למד צרפתית, Apprendre le français ...  
by imagiers | 5 years ago | 9,885 views

 **French Pronunciation - Phonétique Le son a** TRANSLATE  
Learn **French**, Сазнајте Француски, Französisch lernen, 学习法语, 學習法語, 자세히 프랑스어, Apprender el francés, למד צרפתית, Apprendre le français ...  
by imagiers | 5 years ago | 75,552 views

 **French Pronunciation - phonetique voyelles 5** TRANSLATE  
Learn **French**, Сазнајте Француски, Französisch lernen, 学习法语, 學習法語, 자세히 프랑스어, Apprender el francés, למד צרפתית, Apprendre le français ...  
by imagiers | 5 years ago | 14,487 views

# ***Minimal pairs***

**on - an**

marron - marrant

devons - devant

sont - sans

# *Minimal pairs*

**u - ou**

rue - roue

sourd - sur

# ***Minimal pairs***

**i - u**

**lit - lu**

**pile - pull**

# ***Minimal pairs***

**eu - o/au**

**feux - faux**

**affreux - afro**

# *Minimal pairs*

**s - ch**

assez - hâché

fil - fiche

sans - champ

serre - cher

# ***Minimal pairs***

**ch - j**

des chats - déjà

chez - j'ai

bouger - boucher

# *Minimal pairs*

**k – g**

l'écran - les grands

# ***Phonics***

## Start in S1

*expo pour l'Écosse* (1 and 2) are good.

Each module focuses on a different phoneme or sound:

**oi, i...**

Also introduces tongue twisters:

**Si six scies scient six saucisses...**

# ***Phonics***

[www.tes.co.uk/resources](http://www.tes.co.uk/resources)

Search for “phonics”.

Practical and fun materials.

Suggestion for starting teaching phonemes  
in S1 is:

# Phonics

Outline Slides x

1

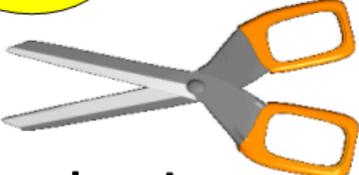
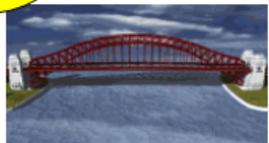
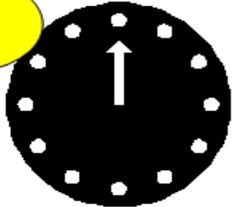
oi	in	eu
le poisson	le vin	le jeu vidéo
au	en	on
les ciseaux	les dents	le pont
i	ou	u
le midi	la poule	la lune

2

é	ez	et	er	ed
le bébé				
et	er	ed	er	ed
le bébé				

3

ai	é	e
le bébé	le bébé	le bébé
il	ul	on
le bébé	le bébé	le bébé
ion	ou	i
le bébé	le bébé	le bébé

<p><b>oi</b></p>  <p>le <u>poisson</u></p>	<p><b>in</b></p>  <p>le <u>vin</u></p>	<p><b>eu</b></p>  <p>le <u>jeu</u>-vidéo</p>
<p><b>au</b></p>  <p>les cise<u>aux</u></p>	<p><b>en</b></p>  <p>les <u>dents</u></p>	<p><b>on</b></p>  <p>le <u>pont</u></p>
<p><b>i</b></p>  <p>le <u>mi</u>di</p>	<p><b>ou</b></p>  <p>la <u>pou</u>le</p>	<p><b>u</b></p>  <p>la <u>lun</u>e</p>

# Phonics

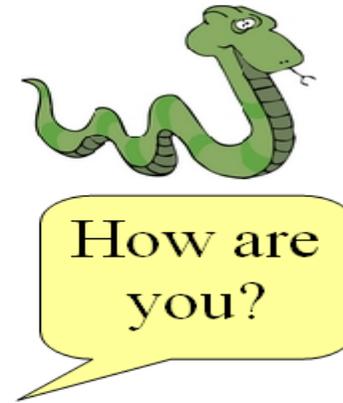
d oi gt

Listen to how I  
say this word.

Which of these  
*graphemes* fits  
into the gap?

- **eu/oeu** (neuf)
- **ou** (joue)
- **au/eau/o** (chaud)
- **oi** (croissant)

# Phonics



# ***Phonics***

<http://phonetique.free.fr/>

# Phonics



Ecoutez les 10 paires de mots suivantes. Dites si elles sont identiques (=) ou différentes (≠) :

	=	≠		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	fumée - fumée
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	sur - sourd
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	boule - bulle
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	faux !	clou - clou
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	sucré - sucre
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	jute - joute
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	faux !	retour - retour
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	boureau - bureau
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	abuser - abuser
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	russe - rousse

Score 8/10

*Cliquez sur les mots  
pour les écouter.*



Refaire l'exercice

# Phonics



Écoutez les 10 mots suivants. Cliquez sur celui que vous entendez :

	nous	nu
	moule	mule
	pousse	puce
	rougi	ruigi
	dessous	dessus
	écrou	écru
	pour	pur
	échoue	échu
	broute	brute
	souk	suc

# ***Phonics:*** ***Sound discrimination***

Read whilst listening.

[https://457-  
northumberland.eschools.co.uk/site](https://457-northumberland.eschools.co.uk/site)

Select Resources. Fairy tales and stories.

Read the story on the screen, look at the pictures and hear the audio.

# Phonics: Sound discrimination



The screenshot shows the website 'NORTHUMBERLAND Grid for Learning'. The navigation menu includes Home, About, News, Events, Resources (highlighted), SLA, Contact, e-safe, email, NorTLE, and iPad project. The left sidebar lists various resource categories: Resources, Our Resources, Literacy, Maths, Science, ICT, EYFS, Technology, and MFL (Modern Foreign Languages). Under MFL, there are links for Nursery Rhymes, Fairytales, Fables, The Giant Turnip, The Little Red Hen Stories, and Comparing Languages.

The main content area is titled 'Tout a propos des Animaux' and 'Tout à Propos des Animaux'. It contains the following text:

Do you know what a libellule is?  
How about a morse...?

What's the difference between a cochon and a cochon d'Inde?

Have fun exploring this pictorial database with sound support - and lots of ideas and resources for teachers.

To sign up now: click [here](#)

Below the text is a video player showing a colorful illustration of a forest scene with a play button in the center. To the right of the video player is a vertical yellow menu titled 'Tout a propos des Animaux' with a butterfly icon and the text 'Faune du R.U.'. The menu lists the following categories: Animaux domestiques, Désert, Ferme, Forêts du monde, Forêts tropicales, Marécages, Océans, Palaire, and Savane.

# ***Other strategies***

- Reading aloud
- Reciting text from memory
- Group dictation

## ***S5: Specific strategies and materials***

- Glow learn course for MP3 files and links to websites.
- Listen again at home, with and without the transcript.

# ***Advice for follow-up listening***

- **Problem** – you can't identify sounds that you hear, even if they are in words that you would know if they were written down.
- **Strategy:**
- Repeat the exercises which we have just done:
  - read the transcript
  - anticipate what the words will sound like
  - listen to the MP3 file on Glow while reading the transcript
  - listen again, without the transcript, trying to visualise the words
- Whenever you listen and have trouble identifying a sound, try to visualise it.

Source: Graham, S. and Macaro, E. (2008) Strategy Instruction in Listening for Lower-Intermediate Learners of French *Language Learning* 58:4

# ***High Frequency Words***

- Listening ability very closely dependent on knowledge of vocabulary and grammar.
- 95% of words will have to be known in order to understand more than the gist.
- Issue High Frequency Wordlist to pupils.
- Teach vocabulary learning strategies.

# *High Frequency Words*

- Create vocabulary cards each week. Write a word in French and an example of a phrase using the word on one side and the English on the other side. You can practise receptive retrieval (seeing the word and recognising it) and productive retrieval (being able to come up with the French word).
- Keep changing the order of your cards. Put the more difficult items at the top. Remove words from your pack when you know them, and replace them with others.
- Revisit the words you have removed from your pack in a week / fortnight / month / term. Do you still know them?
- Space out your learning. Decide how many words/phrases you will learn in a day. Carry the cards with you and try to learn these words on several occasions over the course of the day. At the end of the day and of the week, test yourself again.
- Use small packs of cards at first, building up to larger packs.

# ***High Frequency Words***

- Say the word / phrase aloud. Research has demonstrated that this significantly improves your ability to learn vocabulary.
- Using a phone or iPod, record yourself saying the words and listen to them.
- Use natural word associations, e.g. bien-mal / sportif-actif. Learn related words (e.g. infinitive, past participle and noun).
- Devote enough time to learning high frequency words as these are, by definition, essential for progress.
- Make a conscious effort to use the words you have been learning in your own speaking and writing.
- Try the keyword technique where possible – e.g. to learn the word “potage” (“soup”) think of a steaming pot of soup.

Sources: Learning Vocabulary in Another Language by I.S.P. Nation  
Effective Language Learning by S. Graham

# ***Teaching Listening Strategies***

- Lots of practice needed.
- If making new listening passages, consider:
  - HFW
  - lexical overlap
  - speed of delivery
  - explicit ideas
  - more redundancy
  - points stated before examples are given
  - syntax
  - length

# ***Teaching Listening Strategies: Rationale***

“Teacher modelling and scaffolded listening practice in metacognitive processes are clearly valuable for helping learners learn how to listen. The techniques demystify the skills involved in successful listening by making implicit processes of skilful listeners explicit to novice listeners. Learners who want to practise “harder” are shown tangible ways of managing their mental processes for listening.”

Source: Goh, C. (2008) Metacognitive instruction for second language listening development: Theory, practice and research implications *RELC Journal* 39

# ***Metacognition and Learning***

- **Metacognition:** thinking about one's thinking or learning, or the ability to be conscious of one's mental processes.
- 3 categories:
- **Person knowledge** – judgement about one's learning abilities and knowledge about internal and external factors that affect the success or failure of one's learning.
- **Task knowledge:** knowledge about the purpose, demands and nature of learning tasks.
- **Strategy knowledge:** useful for achieving learning goals and appears to have the greatest impact on learning.

Source: Vandergrift, L., Goh, C., Mareschal, C., Tafaghodtari, M. (2006) The Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire: Development and Validation *Language Learning* 56, issue 3

# ***Metacognition and Learning***

- Metacognition is positively linked to motivation and self-efficacy.
- “...learners with a high degree of metacognitive knowledge and the facility to apply that knowledge are better at processing and storing new information, finding the best ways to practise, and reinforcing what they have learned.”

Source: Vandergrift, L. and Tafaghodtari, M. (2010)  
Teaching L2 Learners How to Listen Does Make a  
Difference: An Empirical Study *Language Learning*

# ***Metacognition and Learning***

- Prediction/Planning
- Directed attention
- Verification
- Monitoring
- Evaluating
- Problem-solving

# ***Problems pupils report facing***

- Not listening hard enough.
- Easily distracted
- Stop listening when hear unfamiliar language
- Poor sound discrimination (minimal pairs)
- Miss key words (e.g. *peu* + adjective)
- Focus on words which are not content words
- Poor short-term memory
- Lack of vocabulary
- Translate word for word into English whilst listening

# ***Metacognitive Listening Questionnaire: Selected questions***

## Directed attention

- I focus harder when I have trouble understanding.
- I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.

# ***Metacognitive Listening Questionnaire: Selected questions***

## Person knowledge

- I feel that listening comprehension in French is a challenge for me.
- I don't feel nervous when I listen to French.

# ***Metacognitive Listening Questionnaire: Selected questions***

## Planning/Evaluation

- Before I start to listen, I have plan in my head for how I am going to listen.
- After listening, I think about what I might do differently next time.

# ***Metacognitive Listening***

## ***Questionnaire: Selected questions***

### Problem-solving

- I use the words I understand to guess the meaning of the words I don't understand.
- When I guess a word, I think back to everything else that I have heard, to see if my guess makes sense.
- As I listen, I quickly adjust my interpretation if I realise that it is not correct.

# ***Metacognitive Listening Questionnaire: Selected questions***

## Mental translation

- I translate key words as I listen.
- I translate word by word, as I listen.

**Unhelpful!**

Source: Vandergrift, L. and Tafaghodtari, M. (2010)  
Teaching L2 Learners How to Listen Does Make a  
Difference: An Empirical Study *Language Learning*

# ***Stages of strategy instruction:***

## ***Directed Attention***

The importance of being an active listener:  
Group discussion.

- **When you know you are going to be listening, do you do anything to get ready?**
- **What do you do when the teacher is talking?**
- **Do you do anything to help yourself remember what is being said?**
- **Do you do anything when the talk is over?**
- **What do you do if you don't understand something?**
- **What do you do if your attention wanders?**

# ***Stages of strategy instruction:***

## ***Directed Attention***

The questions below will help you think about how you listen in **French**.

- **Did you do anything before you listened or to get ready to listen? What?**
- **What did you do whilst the speaker was talking?**
- **Did you do anything after you finished listening?**
- **What did you do if you didn't understand something?**
- **Did your attention wander? If so, what did you do?**

# ***Stages of strategy instruction: Problem-solving (Inferencing)***

A Reading man who found lotticks and izzids in his supposedly furbustuous Caribbean hotel was awarded £459 in damages yesterday by a local magistrate. Paul Batters paid £1,300 to Atlantic Pacific Tours in March 2010, for a 'furbusty' holiday on the island of Martinique.

The firm's ancaps promised a furbusty hotel, free happaps from the airport, free use of the hotel's gabonmang and beaches. However, on his arrival, Mr Batters found there was no one to meet him at the airport, the hotel room was infested with lotticks and izzids, and the gabonmang was completely flooded, from the ninth hole onwards.

Mr Batters successfully sued Atlantic Pacific Tours, who claimed that they had been organizing holidays on the island for 20 years and had never before received any uptips.

Source: Graham, S. and Macaro, E. (2008) Strategy Instruction in Listening for Lower-Intermediate Learners of French *Language Learning* 58:4

# ***Stages of strategy instruction: Problem-solving (Inferencing)***

You may have used the following clues:

- Lotticks and izzids: **experience (direct or indirect) and world knowledge** of things one might find in foreign hotels; **comparing early and later parts** of the passage – ‘infested’ later in the passage confirms that ‘lotticks’ and ‘izzids’ are not very pleasant!
- Furbustuous: **experience (direct or indirect) and world knowledge** of what hotels in the Caribbean are meant to be like; **surrounding words/local context/contrast clues** (‘supposedly’); the **rest of the passage** tells us the hotel was unpleasant, so ‘furbustuous’ must fit in with this – it was unpleasant, but was supposed to be.....(what would fit?); knowledge of **grammar/ sentence structure**- ‘furbustuous’ comes before the noun ‘holiday’, so must be an adjective; its ending ‘-uous’ is found with adjectives in English (e.g. ‘industrious’)

## ***Guided Listening Practice***

- 3 columns, headed “Anticipations”, “Première écoute” and “Deuxième écoute”.
- Based on knowledge of the topic and type of text, brainstorm the kinds of information they might hear, and any related French vocabulary; enter this in the “Anticipations” column. (French or English)
- Listen to the text for the first time, tick the predicted information and words if heard. Note any additional information understood in the “Première écoute” column.

## ***Guided Listening Practice***

- Next, work in pairs to compare predictions and information understood so far. Discuss points of confusion and disagreement, consider other logical possibilities, and identify the part(s) of the text that require particular attention during the second listen. (directed attention)
- Listen a second time and attempt to resolve points of difficulty. Enter newly comprehended information in the “Deuxième écoute” column.
- Answer the comprehension questions in English.

# ***Guided Listening Practice***

“The guided listening practice used in the present study fostered the automatization of a cycle of cognitive and metacognitive processes, thereby **fostering the acquisition of processing routines resembling those of an experienced listener**. This is similar to the practice associated with skill acquisition theory, developing procedural knowledge through repeated practice until the behaviour becomes automatic – that is, relatively fluent, spontaneous and effortless processing.”

Source: Vandergrift, L. and Tafaghodtari, M. (2010) Teaching L2 Learners How to Listen Does Make a Difference: An Empirical Study *Language Learning*

# ***Listening Logs***

**What did not go well? Why?**

**What went well?**

- I understand more of what is said now.
- I'm a good listener.
- I pay attention well.
- I can get the general meaning without understanding every word.
- I enjoy understanding new language.
- I'm confident and secure about my progress.
- I'm taking risks and doing well.
- It's OK if I make mistakes.
- Everyone makes mistakes, I can learn from mine.
- I didn't panic when I heard a word I didn't know.
- I don't have to understand everything at once.

# ***Listening Logs: Performance checklist for listening***

- Before
- I am ready to pay attention and concentrate and keep up with the speed.
- I have tried to recall all that I know about the topic.
- I have tried to predict the type of information I may hear.
- I have tried to predict the words I may hear.
- I know what I must pay attention to.
- I have encouraged myself.
- I won't give up if I don't understand something.
- I won't focus too much on single words out of context.

# ***Listening Logs: Performance checklist for listening***

- After
- I concentrated fully.
- I tried to check my predictions.
- I evaluated the logic of what I understood.
- I changed my predictions in line with what I know I heard correctly.
- I focussed on the information needed to complete the task.
- I used intonation to help me identify the real key words.
- I used my knowledge of how the language works to help me understand new words.
- I used the context to help me understand new words.
- I tried to repeat / visualise difficult words or sounds.

# *Summary*

- Pupils have an idea of what they can do to improve. Empowered. Less anxiety/worry.
- Bottom-up and top-down processing.
- Sound discrimination – do your best to always model correct pronunciation.
- Pupils need to use metacognitive strategies.
- Question preview is allowed; prediction is key.
- Use questionnaires and listening logs to gain insights into what they are thinking and feeling about listening.
- Work on boosting confidence and lessening anxiety.