

Abax - Review

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Top-Up Listening - *Actually teaches listening!!*



Finding a book that actually teaches students how to listen is not an easy task. Many listening texts simply test students' comprehension or provide too much recording script and turn a listening activity into a reading activity.

Although Top-Up Listening, a three book skills based series, provides a lot of scripts and students can end up reading what they hear, the exercises are designed to show students the differences between the written and spoken forms of the language.

Each unit in Top-Up Listening 1 includes a 'Listening Clinic', which highlights frequently occurring phonological points, described by the authors as 'lost sounds', 'joined sounds', 'helping sounds', 'changing sounds', 'mixed sounds' and 'weak forms'. These features are successfully described in simplified terms without using technical jargon, and the authors guide students through activities that will assist them in hearing and seeing the difference between spoken and written English. The audio CD that accompanies the book represents mainly American English, but other forms of English are also there.

When I used Top-Up Listening 1 with my high-beginning level students, they enjoyed doing not only the listening activities but also the communication activities that accompany each unit. My students told me that they especially liked the 'Listening Clinic' feature because they were able to see the difference between spoken and written English clearly. Unfortunately, I found that in some cases the instructions for an activity given in the book did not quite match the audio presentation on the CD. But this was not difficult for me to straighten out with my students so that they could benefit from the exercise.

The series includes a wide range of situations which young adults may encounter in the real world. My students and I found the topics interesting, and I would certainly recommend the series for elementary to low-intermediate speaking and listening classes.

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