

Grammar Listening Activities in an Online Listening Course

William COLLINS

Center for Language Studies, Nagasaki University

Abstract

With the widespread availability of online course management systems such as Moodle, teachers have a tool to allow greater student autonomy and also provide a more intensive focus on grammatical points than limited class time permits. In addition, the ability of systems such as Moodle to display audio and video content makes it possible for teachers to pair written grammar and audio-listening exercises, which enable students to learn grammar in a multi-media context. This article will explore a range of such self-access multi-media study exercises developed for the author's English Communication courses.

Keywords: Grammar, self-access listening, participle, gerund, countable and uncountable nouns

Introduction

As part of a range of online listening content, the author developed materials specifically focusing on grammar patterns useful for improving students' score on the TOEIC. Selection of the patterns was guided by the author's observation of frequent mistakes made by students in using that pattern. Care was also taken to select patterns that were useful in spoken conversation. The activities usually begin with a general explanation using both English and Japanese. This is followed by a set of video questions connected with a grammar cloze exercises featuring examples of the target pattern. This article describes the content of five of the online grammar-listening activities.

The Grammar-Listening Activities

Activity 1: Past and Present Participle Distinction (Tired/tiring)

The first online grammar-listening exercise deals with present and past participle

forms that express emotions, and aims to help students recognize which form should be used. The exercise begins with an explanation to students that, when choosing between “bored/boring,” “excited/exciting,” “interested/interesting,” and so on, it depends on the subject of the sentence. When the subject of the sentence is a person, then the feeling experienced by that person is expressed using the past participle “-ed” form, as in “John looks really bored.” However, when the subject of the sentence is an event or situation, then the present participle “-ing” form is correct, as in “The movie was really boring.”

Following the introductory explanation, the students continue to audio listening exercises. In each question, there is an example sentence with a blank and two choices. There is also an audio recording with the sentence read aloud using both possible answers. The example sentences for the past and present participle exercise are shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Past and Present Participle Quiz Questions

- | |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I'm really (/). Why does it have to rain on my day off? (bored/boring) 2. I'm getting pretty (/) of riding my bike to work every night. (tired/tiring) 3. He makes this really (/) noise when he eats. (irritated/irritating) 4. She could tell that the little boy was very (/). (frightened/frightening) 5. It was very (/) to practice so hard and then win first prize.
(satisfied/satisfying) 6. The baseball game was really (/). (excited/exciting) 7. I was really (/) when I found out I had passed the entrance exam.
(excited/exciting) 8. The book I'm reading right now is really (/). (interested/interesting) 9. I was really (/) that Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize.
(surprised/surprising) 10. Did you hear the (/) news? Michael Jackson died! (shocked/shocking) 11. Are you (/) in going to the Nagasaki Kunchi Festival?
(interested/interesting) 12. The computer graphics in that movie were just (/). (amazed/amazing) |
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Activity 2: Countable and Uncountable Nouns

The second online grammar-listening exercise deals with countable and

uncountable nouns, and aims to help students recognize when the word “many” plus a plural “s” following the noun should be used and when “much/a lot of” without plural “s” should be used. The exercise begins with an explanation to students that certain nouns are countable (such as “books,” “cars,” “tables”) and require the use of “many” with an “s” on the end, while other nouns (like “information,” “snow,” “help”) are uncountable and are used with “much/a lot of” without an “s”. (It also noted that “a lot of” can be used with countable nouns and a plural “s”). Finally, a set of more ambiguous nouns is presented with example sentences to illustrate how they can be used as both countable and uncountable nouns with a corresponding change in connotation. Examples provided in the activity introduction are shown in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Nouns that can be both Countable and Uncountable

<p>John needs to make a lot of <i>improvement</i> in his studies if he wants to go to a good university. (改善、上達)</p> <p>We've made several <i>improvements</i> to the school. For example, we've installed a new computer room, built a student gym and added video screens to all the classrooms. (改装・改定)</p>
<p>There's too much noise. I can't sleep! (騒音)</p> <p>I heard many strange noises last night. (音)</p> <p>She's had a lot of <i>difficulty</i> adjusting to her new school. (大変でした。)</p> <p>Helen Keller overcame many <i>difficulties</i>, including being blind, being deaf and other people's prejudice. (試練)</p>
<p>There was a lot of <i>disagreement</i> at the meeting about what to do. (意見がとても合わなかった)</p> <p>We've had a few disagreements over the years, but basically we have a good relationship. (喧嘩)</p>

Following the introductory explanation, the students continue to audio listening exercises. Again, with each question, there is an example sentence with a blank and two choices. There is also an audio recording with the sentence read aloud using both possible answers. The example sentences for the countable/uncountable exercise are shown in Figure 3:

Figure 3: Countable and Uncountable Noun Quiz Questions

1. My parents gave me (/) about saving money. (a lot of good advice/
many good advices)
2. Our teacher gives us (/).(too much homework/too many homeworks)
3. This is my first job so I'm going to need (/). (a lot of help/many
helps)
4. We saw (/) on our drive to California. (a lot of beautiful scenery/
many beautiful sceneries)
5. We've had (/) about the economy lately. (a lot of bad news/many bad
news)
6. During my trip, I went skiing, stayed with an Australian family and had
(/). (a lot of nice experience/many nice experiences)
7. Our garden is quite big so there (/) for our children to play. (a lot of
space/many spaces)
8. I don't get paid (/) at my part-time job. (much money/many monies)
9. I haven't really had very (/) as a mechanic yet. (much experience/
many experiences)
10. After we bought the house we made (/). (a lot of improvement/many
improvements)
11. My son has made (/) in his English class. (a lot of improvement/
many improvements)
12. I've had (/) with Math this year. (a lot of difficulty/many difficulties)
13. He overcame (/) in his childhood to become a great athlete.

Activity 3: Conditional Verb Tense

The third online grammar-listening exercise deals with the conditional verb tense, and aims to help students recognize the connection between conditional sentences and negative sentences. Unlike previous activities, the conditional tense activity begins with a music video. The song “Wouldn’t It Be Nice” by The Beach Boys features numerous examples of the conditional tense (‘see Appendix 1) and allow students to begin with noticing the tense before moving on to practice activities. In the online activity, there are three examples of negative sentences and students are instructed to convert these to conditional tense. These are followed by three examples of conditional sentences and students are required to convert them to negative sentences. In each case the students are required to enter the full converted sentence and are

allowed to check their answer. If their sentence is incorrect, they may then play a video located directly above the text of the question in which the teacher recites the correct sentence. Students must catch the exact wording in the video and enter the sentence verbatim. The questions in the conditional tense practice questions are shown in Figure 4 together with the correct answers in italics below each sentence.

Figure 4: Negative to Conditional and Conditional to Negative Practice Sentences

1. Not enough emphasis is placed on math and science in U.S. schools, so test scores don't improve.
(If enough emphasis was placed on math and science in U.S. schools, test scores would improve.)
2. I wanted to win first prize in the skating contest, but I didn't practice enough.
(If I had practiced hard enough, I would have won first prize)
3. I wanted to ask her out on a date, but I wasn't brave enough.
(If I had been brave enough, I would have asked her out on a date)
4. If we hadn't bought that car, we wouldn't have run out of money so quickly.
(We bought that car, so we ran out of money so quickly)
5. If there were any truth in what they are saying about my son, I would punish him.
(There is no truth in what they are saying about my son, so I won't punish him.)
6. If I hadn't been so busy I could have called you earlier.
(I was so busy, so I couldn't call you sooner)

Activity 4: Must have done/should have done

The fourth online grammar-listening exercise deals is broken into two parts. The first part deals with the two senses of “must,” the first of which expresses a requirement or obligation to do something (as in “You must study if you want to pass the exam.”) and the second of which suggests the likelihood of some situation or event (as in “You must be very excited.”). The goal of the exercise is to help students learn to distinguish between the two senses. In the exercise, there are ten audio recordings containing “must” sentences and students must answer “1” if the “must” in the example sentence expresses obligation and “2” if it expresses likelihood. The sentences in the exercise are shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Two Senses of “Must” Practice Sentences

1. Before you make a right turn you *must* look both ways to make sure no cars are coming. (*obligation/requirement*)
2. When you apply for a passport you *must* have a driver's license and one other picture i.d. (*obligation/requirement*)
3. When you have a job-interview you *must* be well-prepared. (*obligation/requirement*)
4. I was so sorry to hear about her divorce. She *must* be so depressed. (*speculation/likelihood*)
5. I can't find my keys anywhere! My wife *must* have them. (*speculation/likelihood*)
6. There *mustn't* be any careless mistakes, otherwise you will lose points. (*obligation/requirement*)
7. You didn't bring a coat? You *must* be so cold! (*speculation/likelihood*)
8. You *must* be careful not to mention the divorce. It will only upset her. (*obligation/requirement*)
9. Wow, look at this crowd! There *must* be close to 1,000 people here! (*speculation/likelihood*)
10. The neighbors' car has been gone for a week. The *must* be out of town. (*speculation/likelihood*)

The second activity focuses on raising students' awareness of the difference between “must have done,” which has the sense in Japanese of 「きっと——でしょう」 or 「おそらく——に違いない」, and “should have done,” which has the sense in Japanese 「--すればよかったのに！」 or 「---するべきだった。」. In this activity, there are ten sentences with the text of the sentence and a blank where the students are required to choose the correct form “should have done—“ or “must have done—“ followed by an audio recording reciting the sentence with both choices. The text of the verb in question does not appear, so students must correctly hear the verb to answer the question. The ten practice sentences are shown in figure 6.

Figure 6: “Must have done” and “Should have done” Practice Sentences

1. She said the package hasn't arrived yet. That's weird. I sent it a week ago. It (/) by now. (*should have arrived*)
2. You (/) and told her you were going to be late. I'm sure she's worried. (*should have called*)
3. He was a bit late for the meeting. He () caught in traffic. (*must have been*)
4. You (/) me. I would have given you a ride. (*should have called*)
5. He had a lot to drink at the party. He never (/) allowed to drive. (*should have been*)
6. She (/) really upset when she heard about the accident. (*must have been*)
7. I (/) there two hours before the bus finally arrived. (*must have waited*)
8. You (/) me you needed money. I would have lent it to you. (*should have told*)
9. I see lights on in the neighbors' house. They (/) back from their trip. (*must have gotten*)
10. She kept giving me strange looks. You (/) her my secret. (*must have told*)

Activity 5: Verb + (to do ~/doing ~)

The final online grammar listening practice exercise deals with instances when two verbs are contiguous and aims to help students learn to distinguish which preceding verbs should be followed by a succeeding verb in the “-ing” gerund form, and which should be followed by “to” and the second verb in infinitive form. The exercise opens with a detailed explanation of how to make the distinction. First a set of verbs which are followed by “to” and the infinitive form of a second verb is given, and these verbs include “agree,” “aim,” “ask,” “decline,” “demand,” “fail,” “hesitate,” “hope,” “hurry,” “manage,” “offer,” “plan,” “prepare,” “refuse,” “want,” and “wish” (for example “agree to sell,” “declined to answer” and so on). Then a second set of verbs which are followed by verb in the “-ing” gerund form is given, and these verbs

include “admit,” “avoid,” “consider,” “delay,” “deny,” “detest,” “dread,” “envisage,” “feel like,” “finish,” “miss,” “recall,” “resent,” “risk,” “suggest,” “imagine” (for example “admitted lying,” “feel like watching a movie” and so on). Finally, there is a set of verbs which can be followed by both the infinitive form and the “-ing” gerund form, with a change in meaning. These verbs and example sentences of each are shown in figure 7.

Figure 7: Verbs which can be followed by both infinitive and gerund form

	VERB + <i>to do</i> ~	VERB + <i>do-ing</i>
Come	だんだん---ようになる。 They <u>came to accept</u> her as part of the family.	どのように動いてきた。 She <u>came racing</u> down the stairs.
go on	まず---をしてから--をやりました。 After telling us about the writer's life, he <u>went on to discuss</u> the poem.	(やめてと言ったのに)---やり続けた。 Although the doctor told him to stop, he <u>went on drinking</u> .
mean	---するつもりだった。 I <u>meant to tell</u> you tell you about it but it slipped my mind.	--をするのだったら、--しないとイケない。/-をするということです。 If you want to get there before sundown, that <u>means leaving</u> in the morning.
regret	言いづらいことですが。。。[断り等の悪い便りを伝える決まり文句] We <u>regret to inform</u> you that your proposal was rejected.	以前やったことを後悔に思っている時 I <u>regret having</u> a baby so young.
remember	[これからすることを]忘れないように Remember <u>to call</u> before you leave.	[前にやったことを]思い出す I <u>remember having</u> my keys at the restaurant but not after that.
stop	[--をするために]とまった They <u>stopped to have</u> lunch.	[--をするのを]やめた They <u>stopped talking</u> when the bell rang.
try	[--をしようとしたが(できなかった)] I tried to put it in the cabinet but it wouldn't fit.	[--がよくなるかどうかを]試した I tried drinking some hot tea before bed.

In the activity for this grammar point, there are fifteen sentences with the text of the sentence and a blank where the students are required to choose the correct form “verb 1 + to [verb 2]” or “verb 1 + [verb 2]-ing” followed by an audio recording reciting the

sentence with both choices. The text of the verb in question does not appear, so students must correctly hear the verb to answer the question. The fifteen practice sentences are shown in figure 8.

Figure 8: Verb 1 + to [Verb 2] or Verb 1 + [Verb 2]-ing Practice Sentences

1. Did you remember (/) your answers before you handed in your test? (to check/checking)
2. The client was very late and they resented (/) to wait for him. (to have/having)
3. She narrowly avoided (/) the man on the bicycle. (to hit/hitting)
4. Here's the money I owe you. Sorry, I meant (/) you sooner. (to pay/paying)
5. We tried to persuade her to stop, but she just goes on (/). (to smoke/smoking)
6. He was very young when they moved and could no longer remember (/) in the house. (to live/living)
7. As I walked through the gate, the dog came (/) toward me. (to run/running)
8. The chairman thanked everybody for coming and then went on (/) the subject of the meeting. (to introduce/introducing)
9. They discussed (/) a second family car. (to buy/buying)
10. We regret (/) you that your application has been rejected. (to inform/informing)
11. I regret (/) school after Junior-high. (to quit/quitting)
12. She refused (/) him the name of the person. (to tell/telling)
13. You could see the doctor today but, as you haven't got an appointment, it would mean (/) a while. (to wait/waiting)
14. Although it was hard at first, she came (/) working for the airline. (to enjoy/enjoying)
15. Maybe you should think about (/) your parents for some money. (to ask/asking)

Conclusion

The five grammar listening activities described in this paper are part of a range of other listening activities including lifestyle and culture news video activities, conversation activities and music video activities. Over the four years that these activities have been developed and incorporated into the author's English Communication course requirements, these activities have been among the most popular with the students. Future research will seek to measure the degree of improvement students are able to achieve when repeating the activities a second time, and also seek to ascertain the effect of students completing these activities on their TOEIC or GTLP scores.

References

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