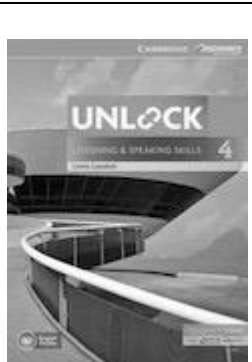


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Unlock Listening and Speaking Skills 4

Author:	Lewis Lansford (2014)	
Publisher:	Cambridge: Cambridge University Press	
Pages	ISBN	Price
223 pages	978-1-107-63461-9 (paper)	\$48.17 USD



Unlock Listening and Speaking Skills 4, the last book in the series, is designed for intermediate to advanced learners who are between 5.0 to 6.5 on the IELTS band. This is a well-designed listening and speaking textbook as it incorporates state of the art pedagogical activities throughout each unit. The textbook helps students practice grammar and pronunciation skills in a larger context of problem solving and group work activities, which will prepare students for English-medium universities and professional job settings. The author used Bloom’s taxonomy model as a guide to develop tasks, questions and activities meant to cover a wide range of levels of knowledge. Although the textbook does not claim to be task-based, the activities build upon each other to prepare students for a larger end-task, where students must think critically and apply their knowledge to complete a task using the target language. Tasks are scaffolded and include pre, during and post activities that cover a wide range of skills, and the author also provides explanations on important aspects of language, which learners need to know to complete the tasks (Flowerdew, 2005). These scaffolded activities help students build a foundation of skills before they are asked to complete more challenging tasks. The textbook is also corpus-based according to the author, which ensures authenticity of the language used in the texts and activities.

The textbook is comprised of ten thematic units useful for university level class preparation including: globalization, education, medicine, risk, manufacturing, environment, architecture, energy, art and design, and ageing. Each unit is approximately fifteen pages of texts and activities. The book provides grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary sections that help learners develop complex listening and speaking skills. Learners are given prompts to go beyond simple comprehension by discussing with partners, analyzing charts and graphs, preparing presentations and thinking critically

about various topics. These skills benefit learners who desire to succeed in university level educational classes.

The first unit, titled "Globalization," begins with an activity to familiarize learners with the vocabulary specific to the topic of farming by asking them to read a short text, and match vocabulary words with the correct definitions. This allows learners to activate background knowledge on the topic. Then, learners watch a video twice for two distinct purposes. Throughout the first listening learners make predictions, answer true and false questions as they listen, and after they listen they make inferences about the author's opinions. By completing these pre, during and post activities, students check their general understanding of the listening, and are challenged to use information from the listening to think critically about the author's perspective. Flowerdew and Miller (2005) explain that the pre, during, post format is crucial because cognition is activated as scaffolding of information occurs, and this boosts the learner's confidence since they are applying prior knowledge.

Before the second listening, the textbook provides learners with two pronunciation activities to practice listening carefully, and to practice identifying errors in consonant clusters. These short activities remind students of the integrated nature of pronunciation in speaking and listening efficiently. In the language development section, examples of active vs. passive voice are presented, and the book provides activities for students to both identify and produce the new grammar points. Again, including these integrated mini-lessons shows students the importance and connectedness of grammar with producing comprehensible output.

The unit includes a second listening activity, in which students listen for a different purpose than the first listening. This listening emphasizes looking at cause and effect aspects of the audio. Then, students complete a critical thinking section, which is an extension of the second listening. This section teaches learners strategies for reading a pie chart and learners analyze data to answer comprehension and discussion questions. Lastly, students are asked to prepare for a speaking task. The book provides a model of a presentation, which learners can read and listen to. They are given examples of appropriate language to describe information on pie charts, which follows Flowerdew's (2005) suggestion to provide students with language for the task, so they are able to complete the task successfully. Students follow steps to learn how to draw conclusions, and how to present information in a logical order. In this unit, learners are asked to give a presentation on the prompt: "How we can ensure that workers in developing countries are paid fairly for the food we import." Learners must use the pie charts in their response, and they must provide evidence for their claim. At the end of the unit learners are asked to reflect, and take notes about how well they feel they learned the objectives.

Printed at the end of the unit is a vocabulary list, which is divided up into unit vocabulary and academic vocabulary. This ensures that learners are studying not only topic specific vocabulary, but also words from the academic word list. The separated lists are helpful for teachers who might have to make decisions about which words to teach explicitly for each unit in order to support the learning objectives and the curriculum. Learners are asked to use the vocabulary in context by completing vocabulary activities, and will encounter the words multiple times while working through each unit. Lastly, topics are made personal

by asking learners to share their own experiences, cultures, and opinions concerning the topic. This helps students activate their background knowledge and make connections between prior knowledge and new information.

As a listening and speaking textbook, *Unlock Listening and Speaking Skills 4* has many strengths. Not only does it explicitly teach students strategies for learning and help them think critically and metacognitively, but it also encourages students to interact socially and use the language communicatively through pair and group work to accomplish communicative tasks like presentations. Each unit as a whole and each major section within the units are very well organized with clearly defined pre, during and post listening activities to help scaffold and deepen the students' learning. The pre listening tasks are typically speaking activities that help learners activate their background knowledge concerning the topic of the unit. The book then has a variety of relevant activities for learners to do as they are listening, such as listening for gist, main ideas, key information, or details. These activities are followed up with post activities that help learners explore the listening in deeper ways and broaden their understanding of the topic. Activities include listening for opinions, making inferences, or discussion questions, all of which help learners reflect upon what they have learned in a variety of ways.

This book covers the communicative and social aspects of learning theories such as CLT. It includes frequent opportunities for learners to work collaboratively. Group and pair work as well as class discussions are typical formats for listening and speaking activities throughout the book. It also bolsters learners' ability to be strategic. Throughout each chapter there are sections on useful learning strategies such as making inferences, predicting, and prioritizing. These strategies enable learners to better cope with listening and speaking tasks, and also frequently include a rationale for why each strategy is useful. Through completing the activities in the textbook, learners develop skills such as, decision making, giving presentations, and assessing risk. Also, this book includes critical thinking activities throughout each chapter, and each unit culminates in a speaking task in which learners need to think critically in order to discuss, debate, and present dynamic and sometimes controversial topics related to each unit's theme.

Another great strength is the relevance of the topics in the book. They are especially appropriate for learners who have a goal of studying in English- medium universities. The variety of topics range from education to medicine, energy, or architecture which are likely to cover some of the fields students will study in the university. Other topics such as risk and ageing also fit under typical majors such as business and medicine. The tasks that accompany the topics are also well chosen to prepare learners for their future careers, education, and everyday life skills.

In sum, this book could easily fit into an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) curriculum. There are four books in the series that could cover multiple levels and easily be adapted to fit existing curriculum. *Unlock Listening and Speaking Skills 4* includes beneficial features such as explicitly teaching learning strategies and academic words lists that are often not found in other listening and speaking books. It also includes examples and language from corpus research and its design and learning objectives help prepare students for advanced academic study.

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