

unit **3**

# Listening for Abstract Concepts



Objectives for Unit 3:

- Listen to a 50-minute lecture in two parts.
- Understand abstract concepts and practice displaying that understanding.
- Learn how speakers use emphasis in a lecture.
- Listen for contrastive language and voice cues.
- Listen to a Question & Answer (Q & A) session after the lecture.

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## Understanding Abstract Lecture Content

In Lectures 1 and 2, the content of the lectures was fairly concrete or tangible—that is, you heard about famous scientists and their inventions, some specific ways to become more creative, and some renewable energy sources. You can physically touch or use the inventions, you can practice the habits to be creative, and you can see pictures of the power plants. But not all lectures will focus on tangible things. Some lectures will focus on content that you cannot touch or see; they will focus on **abstract concepts**.

What are some examples of abstract concepts? Lecture 3 is concerned with ways to characterize different cultures. Culture, individualism, and uncertainty are some abstract concepts you will hear about in Lecture 3. Understanding abstract concepts in an academic setting, especially when many are introduced at the same time, will require you to do some additional work. It will not be sufficient to just read the slides; you will have to spend time to try to understand each concept on your own before the lecture, and you may also need to study some of them again after lecture to ensure that you understand. In an academic class, you will be asked to display your understanding of concepts on assignments, papers, and quizzes/tests, and to do that will require you to do more than just listen and take notes.

### **Before-Listening Strategy: Lecture 3, Part 1**

This lecture is given by Professor Huster of Duquesne University. An important preparation task is to review the slides before you listen if the slides are provided in advance.

#### **TASK 1**

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**Spend at least 20–30 minutes studying the slides for the first part of Lecture 3 (through Trends Regarding Power Distance). Answer the questions.**

**Notice that some slides do not have much text on them. This does not mean that the information is not important. It means you have to pay more attention at that point and take some notes.**

1. What is this lecture about? Do not merely list the title. What did you see on the slides? Why might the content be important for you as a student in a new country/context?
  2. Which slide serves as an outline? How do you know?
  3. What do you notice about the general organization of the lecture? Do you notice a pattern based on the slides so far?
  4. What are some new terms from the slides that you should know? Look them up and then write an English synonym near the new terms on the slides.
  5. Which of Hofstede's Dimensions do you understand already? Which are harder to understand? Why? To understand them better, try searching for "Hofstede's Value Dimensions" on the internet instead of looking up the concepts in a dictionary. Some of these terms are given specific definitions by Hofstede.
  6. Create some abbreviations for words you might need for the lecture.
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## Lecture 3, Part 1: Hofstede's Value Dimensions

Listen to Part 1 of this lecture and take notes. Remember to notice repetition, signposting, definitions, and critique.

### **After-Listening Strategies: Lecture 3, Part 1**

Immediately after you finish listening, take some time (about 10 minutes) to check your understanding. Add to your notes while ideas are still fresh in your mind. Then review the after-lecture strategies listed in Figure 1.1 (pages 21–22). If there is anything else you think you should do to understand the first half of the lecture better, do it.

Make sure you really understand the two value dimensions discussed so far by trying to define each one in your own words or by discussing them with a classmate.

Note that the words *collectivist* and *individualist* are adjectives:

- In individualist countries, such as the U.S., people tend to consider their own personal situation before that of the group.
- Countries that tend to be collectivist are China and Saudi Arabia.

Also note that *collectivism* and *individualism* are nouns:

- Countries that value collectivism tend to put group values above individual values.
- Individualism in the U.S. may be seen as selfishness by some.

Evaluate your strategy use for this lecture so far. Do you think you were well-prepared for Part 1 of this lecture? Which before-, during-, or after-lecture strategies helped you the most? Which strategies should you add to help you better understand Part 2 of the lecture?

 **TASK 2**

The lecturer stated the purpose of the lecture (and of Hofstede's Value Dimensions) at the beginning. Listen to Clip 3.1 to hear it again. What are some ways that this statement of purpose be useful to you as you listen and then after the lecture?

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 **TASK 3**

1. On the slide that lists the terms *beliefs*, *values*, and *behaviors*, the lecturer provided some definitions for terms that you are likely already familiar with. Did you write the definitions in your notes even if you knew the meanings of these words? Why or why not? Did you capture the relationship among these terms? What challenges did you face?
  2. Listen to Clip 3.2 to add the definitions of each term to your notes. Use abbreviations. Organize your notes about these definitions so you can understand and find them later.
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## Recognizing Emphasis

PowerPoint slides are linear. They are presented one after another so it sometimes may seem that each one has the same level of importance. However, sometimes in a lecture, the content on one slide is more important than what is on other slides. You may not notice this right away when you read over the slides, but you should notice when speakers draw special attention to something during the lecture; this means the material is important and should be in your notes. This is why it is not enough to just read the slides to know what is important. Recall how repetition was used in Lectures 1 and 2 to emphasize important points.

Some common methods of emphasis used in lectures, either alone or in combination, are:

- repetition (exact restatement, paraphrase)
- special words and phrases: *important, essential, keep in mind*
- vocal cues: more stress or emphasis, slower speed, louder volume, and/or rhythm change (see the Appendix)
- underlining or boldface on a PPT slide
- writing a word on the board

## Special Words and Phrases

Some researchers examined 160 lecture transcripts in the British Corpus of Spoken English (BASE) and identified a number of words and phrases that indicate emphasis (Deroey & Taverniers, 2012). Some of the phrases they found in these lectures are listed in Table 3.1 (page 48).

**Table 3.1: Common Emphasis Words and Phrases**

Adjectives	<i>important, key, big, significant, chief, major, principle, critical, crucial, main, essential, vital, interesting, compelling, beautiful</i>	+ nouns
		<i>thing, point, issue, problem, question, debate</i>
<b>Adverbs</b>	<i>very, critically, extremely, quite, significantly</i>	
<b>“Attention” words</b>	<i>bring/draw attention to focus attention on pay attention to point out, notice, note, take note of, stress, reinforce make the point that the point is that impress upon you I just want to emphasize</i>	
<b>“Concluding” words</b>	<i>go away with take home take away</i>	
<b>“Main idea” references</b>	<i>the bottom line is the message (idea, point, question) is the thing is that the point is that now the point I’m making is</i>	
<b>“Remembering” words</b>	<i>keep in mind bear in mind remember don’t forget I just want you to remember the thing you have to remember is</i>	
<b>Special grammatical construction: <i>wh</i>- clefts</b>	<i>What I’m trying to show is... . What you want to notice is... .</i>	

Sources: Deroey, 2012; Deroey & Taverniers, 2012; Rowley-Jolivet, 2012.

A special grammatical construction called a ***wh-* cleft** is sometimes used when expressing research findings or when presenting information on a graph. The *wh-* refers to a word that begins with the letters *wh-*. A few examples (underlined) from Lecture 3 are shown here:

- So what Hofstede is talking about would be the **dominant culture** of the country.
- So over the, the years that Hofstede and his group have been studying, what they've found is that **people don't change their values very easily**.
- And what Hofstede has found is that, um, although within cultures, there might be a slight shift in one direction, what they've found by researching all these countries is that usually **that shift is across all countries**.

This *wh-* cleft construction highlights an important finding by placing it in the last part of the sentence as a way of drawing special attention to it. In general in English, old, or known, information is placed at the beginning of a sentence and new information is placed at the end of a sentence because this end-of-sentence position is a focal point. The *wh-* cleft is underlined in the examples to show you the form, but the important part of each sentence is what comes after the cleft, which is shown in bold.

### **Vocal Cues: Volume, Stress, and/or Rhythm Change**

Another way speakers indicate emphasis is through **vocal cues**. They may speak some words more loudly, they may raise the pitch of their voice, they may pause slightly longer than usual, or they may change from the normal rhythm pattern of their speech. One example of a speaker using vocal cues is in Lecture 1 where the professor talks about the importance of Claude Shannon's channel capacity equation. (If you want to listen again, it can be found at 0:07:49 to 0:08:51 in Lecture 1, Part 1.)

He gives special stress to the words *great legacy*, and then he reads a quote from *Forbes* magazine that compares Shannon's equation to Einstein's famous equation. Then he says that Shannon's equation was *even more important*, pausing a bit before each



word. The words *even more important* are said more loudly and emphasized (stressed). He also pauses slightly between those words. He also uses a different rhythm pattern than the rest of his speech. All of these things—the volume, the stress, and the rhythm—work together to create emphasis and tell listeners this is important and how he feels about it (critique).

Another example of a speaker using vocal cues to create emphasis is in Clip 2.2 from Lecture 2. Notice that these words—*small power plant, much more expensive, limited life, a way of storing energy*—are spoken more loudly and with a slightly higher pitch.

### **Underlining or Boldface on Slide or Writing a Word on the Board**

Sometimes, due to multi-tasking, you may miss what the instructor writes on the board. Be sure to notice when the speaker moves to the board and to write words that the speaker writes on the board in your notes.

#### **TASK 4**

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1. Review the first six slides for Lecture 3, Part 1, again (through the slide listing Hofstede's Value Dimensions). Find a slide that has some special emphasis words that are listed in Table 3.1.
  2. Listen to Clip 3.3. What is the lecturer implying by asking her audience to keep these things in mind?
  3. What are some ways to indicate that this slide has especially important information so that you will remember it later?
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### **Before-Listening Strategies: Lecture 3, Part 2**

Prepare for Part 2 of the lecture. Remember that you will need to work to make sure that you understand the next set of abstract concepts. Use several of the before-lecture strategies from Figure 1.1 (pages 21–22) as you read through the remaining slides. Remember also that Hofstede defines some of these terms differently than a dictionary definition. You may want to read more online about Hofstede’s dimensions to deepen your understanding of these abstract concepts.

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### **Lecture 3, Part 2: Hofstede’s Value Dimensions**

Listen to Lecture 3, Part 2. Take notes.

### **After-Lecture Strategies: Lecture 3, Part 2**

Use some after-lecture strategies from Figure 1.1 (pages 21–22) to make sure you understand the abstract lecture material. You may be asked to display your understanding of the dimensions later.

### **Contrastive Language and Voice Cues**

You are already familiar with many words and phrases used to make contrasts between two things (*however, but, in contrast, on the other hand, although, even though, whether, while*), and you heard some of these contrastive words used several times in this lecture. The professor uses these common words and some vocal cues to contrast the cultural value dimensions. Focusing on these clues can help you recognize them more easily in other lectures.

 **TASK 5**

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1. When the lecturer says why she thinks a particular dimension is difficult, what words/language does she use? If you hear a speaker say that a concept is difficult to understand, what should you do?
  2. Listen to Clip 3.4 where the lecturer discusses the characteristics of masculine and feminine societies. List some of the contrastive words you hear. Which words are said more loudly?
  3. What does the lecturer remind the students to do at the end? Why does she do this?
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 **TASK 6**

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Listen to Clip 3.5 as the lecturer emphasizes a few things again. What does she emphasize and how does she do it? (Refer to Table 3.1 on page 48.)

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**TASK 7**

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Review the lecture organization patterns discussed in Unit 2. What macro patterns can you identify in Lecture 3? What micro segments can you identify?

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