



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

**Seminar Series**  
School of Languages & Linguistics

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## **Approaches to second language listening instruction: Investigating the ‘top-down/bottom-up debate’**

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*Linguistics PhD Completion talk*

Second language listening research is, perhaps, the most neglected area of applied linguistics, and a key question remains unanswered: What is the most effective way to teach listening? In this study, I examine two central differing approaches to instruction, one that emphasizes top-down skills and the other bottom-up – and their effects on listener development. A mixed methods approach was used to gather longitudinal data over seven months with a number of Taiwanese learners of English. In the analysis, I paid particular attention to listening skills development in learners at different proficiency levels, and the interaction between an approach and individual differences of learning style.

Results of the study identify a preliminary set of learner factors that arise out of extended exposure. Further, the study advances listening instruction by articulating a set of multi-level course design guidelines that can be tailored to meet individual learner differences; clearly, there is a need for a greater focus on top-down skills development for listeners at false beginner levels, but little need for explicit skills instruction for listeners at intermediate levels of proficiency. No evidence was found to support consistent interaction between listening instruction approach and learner listening style.

Time:	<b>3:15pm</b>
Date:	<b>Friday 30 January 2009</b>
Location:	<b>Room 509, Arts Centre, University of Melbourne</b>