



Multimodal Learning Is an Effective Scaffold

**How do multimodal classroom lessons
lead to higher learning levels?**

Podcasts and videos may hold the answer.

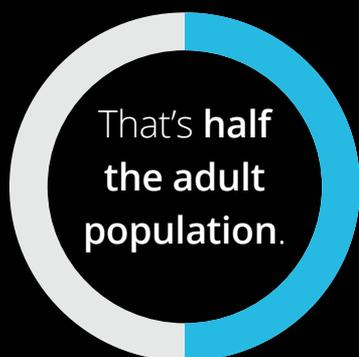
We know the pandemic has created challenges for many students and has deepened disparities for some because of school closures and remote learning since 2020. In many ways, this extended disruption has exacerbated educational inequalities, which is why a focus on equity and access in learning recovery is paramount.



The reading crisis has been 20 years in the making.

[THE US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION REPORTS](#)

nearly 130 million adults **read below a sixth-grade level.**



With the majority of teachers educating an English learner within their classroom, these changing dynamics in education need to be addressed, and high-quality, grade-level materials are necessary.

The reading crisis has been 20 years in the making. [The US Department of Education reports](#) nearly 130 million adults read below a sixth-grade level. That is half the adult population. Listening is a prerequisite for reading comprehension. Listening to audio not only is an engaging medium, since storytelling is a great way to learn, but also builds literacy skills. The "[simple view of reading](#)" by Gough and Tunmer suggests reading is a function of two key components: decoding and language comprehension.

One-third of students are considered proficient in reading, but a closer look at demographics, including low-income students, students of color and students with disabilities, shows the numbers are more harrowing. There is an urgent need for intervention to improve this situation and differentiated instruction in the classroom, particularly regarding listening comprehension, which, while especially effective for multilingual learners, benefits all students.

Tools that help come in many forms, but the most effective are those that ring true and let students see themselves, not only within the classroom or in stilted, impractical language in textbooks but also in the greater world. Unearthing this help has not been the easiest task for educators.

“Finding materials that are both engaging and culturally authentic is challenging,” says Roxana Castro, Dual Immersion Spanish teacher of Benjamin Franklin Magnet School, International Foreign Academy at Glendale Unified, CA. “In the world of language learning, it is important not to use translated materials but rather authentic material that is consumed by native speakers (news, novels, current events, legends, etc.). Visuals are another great way to boost visual and linguistic input to, in turn, create better comprehension.”

Podcasts are a great resource to explore diverse authentic voices. Pairing those voices with visuals and realia creates a comprehensive way to help students activate prior knowledge and connect with other content or facets of life.

EMPOWER STUDENTS WITH MULTIMODAL PATHWAYS

Educators are looking for engaging and relevant lessons. It is key to source equitable, high-quality materials that connect to core content learning. Learning through multiple modalities and choosing which to use offer a variety of pathways for engagement, understanding and expression as an effective [Universal Design for Learning](#). Research shows multilingual learners develop language through activities that intentionally integrate multiple modalities.¹

Multimodal lessons are effective for all students, especially linguistically and culturally diverse students, because they connect all four language domains — reading, writing, speaking and listening — and provide many pathways to access meaningful learning. Images and videos within multimedia lessons can serve as a learning hook to build anticipation and to provide foundational, background knowledge in content and language.

Research also shows reading captions while listening contributes to word recognition and comprehension.² Listening while reading helps students recognize sounds and letters, learn words, become better listeners and understand how stories work.



IMPROVE READING ACCESS FOR ALL LEARNERS

“Good readers can decode words and make sense of what they read,” Castro says.

“Our modern world necessitates reading comprehension to be able to sift through the huge amounts of information made available through media and the internet.”

This reality demonstrates the importance of finding tools to help all students with listening comprehension. Strong reading comprehension also goes hand in hand with thinking skills and with developing critical thinking and critical media literacy.

While students are still mastering reading skills, listening to podcasts can help all levels of students, especially English learners, develop comprehension strategies, along with exposing them to complex concepts and vocabulary. This lets students practice meaningful skills

such as making inferences and identifying the main idea without strong decoding skills.

THE LISTENWISE SOLUTION

Lessons on Listenwise incorporate multimedia resources, including podcasts, captioned videos, pictures and interactive transcripts to read along while listening. Teachers can scaffold and differentiate as needed.

Listenwise gives educators the option to supplement content they are teaching and the opportunity to build background knowledge while boosting listening-comprehension skills. Lessons are aligned with curriculum standards and include podcasts, videos, images and text. Interactive transcripts support comprehension and language development. Students learn academic language in natural, authentic speech without the exercise feeling like a formal lesson.



“ A lot of other curriculums just do not focus on that listening comprehension piece. Knowing that in order to read well students need both that listening comprehension and those decoding skills, this is a product that would support that listening comprehension piece, which doesn't only help in listening but would also help students for reading scores. ”

— Sarah Choe,
K-5 SPED TEACHER, CO

Listenwise's research-based multimodal English language development lessons include side by side podcasts and videos for grades two through 12, optimized assignment opportunities and immersive language support.



“ It’s great that the new [Listenwise] ELD Lesson Library has pictures and multiple languages so that students can translate and see both languages side to side with the vocabulary. That really allows students to begin to build upon the number of words that they know so they can produce language. Students can receive it through listening and reading, and then they can actively produce speaking and writing in a different language. The repetition of words — seeing it before, seeing it during, seeing the words after — that repetition is going to support our emerging bilinguals. ”

— Robin Hinchcliffe,
EL COORDINATOR, CA

AUTHENTIC VOICES ENGAGE ALL STUDENTS

“We have curated podcasts and video lessons for grades two to 12,” says Marielle Palombo, Director of Curriculum at Listenwise. “The lessons which address English language arts, social studies, STEM subjects and current events are designed for flexible use, so teachers can differentiate and scaffold as they need to meet various student needs. They’re all curriculum-aligned multimodal lessons that include podcasts, videos, images and text to promote language and literacy for students at all levels of English language proficiency.”

The WIDA Consortium outlines four essential uses of language — to narrate, to inform, to explain and to argue — which inform Listenwise’s approach to academic language development. In addition, lessons in Listenwise’s ELD Lesson Library include language objectives, which focus on specific uses and point to opportunities to build skills related to particular language forms and functions in alignment with content objectives.

Equitable access to language and literacy development is offered on the Listenwise platform. Diverse voices and perspectives are featured, many of which are often not represented. They provide windows

that promote understanding of diverse perspectives, mirrors that validate students' experiences, and doors that foster empathy and other social and emotional skills. Multicultural stories that feature similar voices to students' own promote understanding and empathy.

"We design lessons to make curriculum relevant both to learners' lives and to the world beyond school," Palombo says.

"The audio stories are just well-told stories that are engaging. That's another way to get students learning. They hear authentic audio in authentic voices, for entertainment purposes, as well as educational. Rather

than just being curriculum that's designed with specific objectives in mind and is sort of didactic, these are just really rich, meaningful stories that we design lessons to support."

Supportive instructional scaffolds make the experience engaging, such as the pop-up Texthelp toolbar that lets learners translate anything, the picture dictionary and interactive transcripts learners can read while listening to connect pathways of comprehension.

For learners to see what words look like and sound like, complete with appropriate expression and intonation, is invaluable.

Students who struggle with absorbing social cues can use these same lessons as practice.

LISTENWISE ALIGNS WITH READING RESEARCH

Research from Cisco indicates that multimodal learning is more effective than unimodal learning.

"I have 11 English learners and many more recently reclassified language-proficient students," says Viviani Piekutowski, a sixth-grade teacher at Bill Libbon Elementary School. "I use the ELD lessons as a whole class for my students to practice their listening skills. They have the reading as support, but my goal is for them to really practice listening and answering questions as this skill will help them tremendously when taking their ELPAC and CAASPP assessments."

Listenwise builds literacy skills by reading while listening. Michael Godsey, a California educator, concurs. "My students, particularly those who are learning English as a second language, enjoy a similar motivation to master new words, albeit at a much higher level," Godsey says.

One student, Jose Aguilar, says, "The podcast-transcript combination is so much better than reading because it allows me to read the right pronunciation of the spelling." Classmate Jon Rios reads the transcripts, he says, because "it is so helpful, both hearing and seeing the words, so I can kind of know where I'm at."

Research shows that when teachers adopt multiple languages as a multimodal resource for instruction and assessment, multilingual learners benefit immensely, not only academically but also in shaping their identities. It demonstrates that multimodal learning is more effective than traditional, unimodal learning. Adding visuals to verbal learning results in significant gains in learning, which is the ultimate goal to help learners find success in the classroom and beyond. ■



RESEARCH-BASED MEANINGFUL LEARNING

Research shows that when teachers adopt multiple languages as a multimodal resource for instruction and assessment, multilingual learners benefit immensely, not only academically but also in shaping their identities.

Providing students with native-language support is a critical part of instruction

for English learners. Multilingual learners' languages and cultures should be seen as valuable resources to develop independence and agency in learning.³

In alignment with WIDA Guiding Principles, Listenwise supports multilingual learners using their full linguistic repertoire. Teachers have insight into how well students listen and have resources to improve comprehension.

“ The fact that Listenwise is now [offering multilingual modalities](#) within their platform is essential for California teachers because it is supported by the EL road map that highlights that primary language access is an asset. If students are able to see their primary language within Listenwise, it will really allow them to have a deeper connection to the content that they're learning. ”

— Robin Hinchcliffe,
EL COORDINATOR, CA

“What I like the most about Listenwise is to see the growth the students make as they keep practicing their listening skills throughout the year,” says Viviani Piekutowski, a sixth-grade teacher at Bill Libbon Elementary School.

“It is rare that my students get 100 percent in the beginning; however, with enough listening practice, the students themselves start seeing their scores go up, and they start feeling confident about their listening abilities.”

“ I like that with these [multimodal lessons](#) students will have multiple opportunities to show what they know, regardless of their level. That's so important. I think it can also be validating for students because then teachers really get a window into what they do know, which is the goal. For me, I also just think about the richness of the experience and that I would be able to scaffold everything almost on command without having to re-create everything. ...

There's a power in using Listenwise media as a jumping-off point to create discussion and develop higher-order thinking skills that are not just at the surface level. I'm really excited to be able to find a product that provides academic content to help my students feel more independent, more successful and just develop confidence so that we can reclassify them by the time they leave my class, which is sixth grade. ”

— Roxana Castro

With all the evidence, both empirical and nonempirical, multimodal lessons such as those on the Listenwise platform are shown to be key to ensuring students get a more comprehensive and meaningful learning experience. From emergent to reclassification, multimodal lesson such as those on the Listenwise platform are shown to be key to ensuring students get a more comprehensive and meaningful learning experience.

Contact Listenwise to learn more about how multimodal lessons can support all your students within your school or district at sales@listenwise.com. ■

SOURCES

1. Choi & Yi, 2015; Jewitt, 2008; van Lier, 2006; Zwiens & Crawford, 2011
2. Brij Kothari, 2004
3. Little, Dam, & Legenhausen, 2017; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Nieto & Bode, 2018; Perley, 2011

ABOUT Listenwise

Listenwise brings authentic podcast & video lessons to the classroom and is a fun and engaging way to teach grade-level curriculum and language together. Multimodal lessons are geared towards grades 2 - 12 spanning content areas, including ELA, social studies, STEM, and ELD. Podcasts paired with visuals (photos & video) provide multiple entry points for students to learn in a meaningful and engaging way. Built-in tools for teachers help to easily differentiate, scaffold, and assess learning.

SIGN UP AT listenwise.com

