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Natural English in Speaking and Listening Activities

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MATSDA Conference—Presentation Proposal

"What We Know and What We Do"

The Dublin Institute of Technology Speech Research Cluster will present recommendations for materials development based on the technologies and methodologies they are developing in the area of listening skills and the use of natural English in learning situations.

There will be three speakers.

The first speaker will address features of native speech flow which cause difficulties for EFL students (Brown, Cauldwell) and establish the need for improvements in the teaching of listening skills. She will give examples of elision, assimilation and weak forms, and how these can be made accessible for study using the Dublin Institute of Technology's slow-down technology, which gives students more time to study native speech features, without tonal distortion.

The second speaker will establish the need for improvements in the teaching of listening skills and pronunciation practice for EFL students. She will demonstrate the need to use authentic native-to-native speech in the teaching/learning process so as to promote their social inclusion and contextualise this within the literature, based on the work of Swan, Brown and McCarthy. Suggestions will be made as to the types of exercise materials which would best suit the computer-based technology.

The third speaker will take a corpus linguistic approach and introduce a novel Speech Corpus being developed at DIT. He will show the limits of current corpora and outline the general requirements of a Speech Corpus. This tool - which will satisfy the needs of teachers, learners and researchers- will link digitally recorded, natural, native-native speech acts in such a way that each transcript segment will be linked to its associated sound file. Users will be able to locate desired speech strings, play, compare and contrast them, and slow them down for more detailed study.