**1. The listening process**

We talked about listening skills, how they work and how to improve them.

We can talk about different kinds of listening.

* The first distinction is between**intensive and extensive** listening. By intensive listening, we mean short activities (1 to 3 minutes), which we often do in class. On these occasions, you can focus on particular sounds, words or pieces of information and repeat the recording a few times. By extensive listening, we mean longer activities (listening to the radio, watching a movie), which you do in your personal time. You don’t focus obsessively on little things, but you do it to get a general and continuous understanding of the piece.
* The second distinction is between listening for **gist**(that is, listening for the general meaning) vs listening for **detail**. When we listen for gist, our brain looks for the keywords and puts them together to get the meaning; when we listen for details (for example, when we listen to an announcement at the train station and we want specific information on the delay of our train), we need to concentrate a lot more on the words.
* The third and last distinction is between **decoding and meaning-building**skills. By decoding skills, we mean the fact that we first hear the sounds, then we combine them into words, then the words combine into sentences. They are like little Lego bricks building a castle. By meaning-building, we mean our ability of listening to something and using our background knowledge to understand the things which are not clear to us. For instance, if I know I will watch a movie on penguins, it is a good idea to think about the habitat and the parts of the body of a penguin before I start watching.

This brings me to listening **strategies**(for example, the ability to understand a word from the context even if that word is not known to us). This is something we need to develop. It might be a bit technical, but if you're interested, I also gave a talk about this topic at the national association of English teachers last year. It is summarised in [this article](http://tesolitaly.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/BruzzanoLearningtoTeachListening.pdf). At the end of the article (part 4), I talk about what we should and shouldn’t do when we teach (and learn) listening.

**2. Watching a movie: methodology**

With this methodology, you can work both on your listening skills and your vocabulary. My suggested procedure is the following:

* **Pre-listening**: find out about the film, read the plot and if there's anything (i.e. setting, historical background, etc.) that you're not familiar with, research it briefly. **Brainstorm**words and situations about the topic of the movie so that you can start making **predictions**. This gives you purpose and prepares your mind to listen
* **While-listening**: watch the movie with English subtitles. If it's too easy, take the subtitles off the screen. When you hear a word you don't understand, and it happens more than once, **write it down quickly** or make a note on your phone. This does not mean you need to pause the movie every few minutes. Write the main words which are unclear to you, if possible in the sentence in which they were said. This gives context to your research
* **Post-listening:** try to recreate the plot of the film in your mind and/or write it down. Look at the **words**you've written down and if there are some that you still cannot infer from their context, look them up in a dictionary. Write down their meaning and **write a couple of sentences each**, using them correctly.
* **Post-post listening**: after a few days, **go back to the words**you noted down, see if you remember their meaning and how to use them. If not, or if you're insecure, write more sentences using them. It helps if these sentences are about something personal or related to your own life.

**3. Sources**

If you'd like to improve your listening, I suggest the following sources:

1. Intensive listening:

* [British Council Business & Work](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/business-and-work): great business English source with exercises to guide you with listening for gist and for detail
* [Breaking News English:](http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/) the news in English, with exercises. This is a great website because you can choose the level you want and the same recording is adapted to different levels (with higher or lower speed and difficulty of vocabulary!)

1. Extensive listening

* [British Council Podcasts](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/elementary-podcasts/series-01-episode-01): something to listen to on the train or while you’re cooking