

## Who is this for?

This leaflet is for anyone who wants to improve their English through watching movies.

## The aim of this leaflet

The aim of this leaflet is to help you develop your listening ability while watching English movies. It introduces you to materials that are available in the Language Commons and suggests learning tips.

## Useful materials/equipment in the Language Commons

### Movies

You will find our collection of movies in the *Orientation Area*. The list of movie titles we stock is here along with any available transcripts:

[http://cle.ust.hk/online\\_resources/english/video\\_ent/](http://cle.ust.hk/online_resources/english/video_ent/)

### Textbooks

There are three very useful textbooks to support your movie viewing:

- *Five Star Films* (on the *Movie Transcripts* shelf) contains language and viewing activities specifically designed

for five classic films including *Casablanca*, *Dances with Wolves* and *When Harry Met Sally*. It's useful if you want to understand the films better and learn new words and expressions from them. A transcript is provided for 6 key scenes in each film.

- *102 Very Teachable Films* (on the *Movie Transcripts* shelf) describes the plot of each film, including *Dead Poets Society*, *Field of Dreams*, *The Graduate*, *The Last Emperor*, *Witness*. At the back, films are listed according to type (e.g. Romance, Comedy). This can be useful when choosing a film to watch.

### Caption machines

These allow you to read captions (subtitles in English) while you watch. Each VCR in the *Multimedia Area* has a caption machine. These allow you to watch films with a partner. To watch films with a group, book one of the Seminar Rooms.

## Useful resources on the Internet

### Movie databases

*The Internet Movie Database:*

<http://www.imdb.com>

A huge database, providing information (and pictures) about movies, actors, directors, Oscar awards, top movies, worst movies etc. The 'Plot & Quotes' feature is useful — provides a plot summary, key vocabulary items and memorable pieces of dialogue from each film.

### Movie transcripts

*The Internet Movie Database:*  
<http://www.imsdb.com> — currently the site with the most transcripts available.

*Drew's Script-O-Rama* at: <http://www.script-o-rama.com/snazzy/dircut.html> — a fantastic site for TV and film scripts. To enter the site, go through the open door on the first screen.

*Colin's Movie Monologue Page* at <http://www.whysanity.net/monos> — a great site for transcripts of famous scenes from your favorite movies.

## Learning tips

Here are some tips that you may find useful:

## Before Listening ...

- **Decide what aspect of your listening you want to improve.** If it is **Vocabulary**, it's useful to decide whether you want to focus on conversational phrases, slang, vocabulary related to a particular topic etc. See **Learning Vocabulary by Reading or Listening (V7)**. If you want to improve your ability to understand quickly spoken English speech then you probably want to focus on features of English **Pronunciation**. Again, it's useful to find out if your main difficulty is hearing contractions, linking, weak forms etc. See the Pronunciation Advice Sheets, in particular **Deciding what Area(s) of Pronunciation to Work on (P2)**, **Selecting Materials for Pronunciation (P3)** and **Glossary (P6)**.
- **Set yourself a goal.** Unless you have the next 6 months free, it's best not to aim too high (e.g. "I want to understand English movies perfectly")! Think of one or two aspects of your listening you want to improve on and set a goal related to that (e.g. "I want to be able to hear contractions like *I'll* and *She's*."") That way, you are more likely to be successful!
- **Choose a film that you will enjoy!** To find out about the actors in the film, what the film's about, what awards it's won etc., look at the cover of the film or find the film on the *Internet Movie Database* (see under 'Movie databases' above).
- **Try to find films which match your goals and level.** Is the film likely to contain the Vocabulary or Pronunciation features you want to practise? (You can check by looking at the transcript if there is one.) What type of English does it contain: American/British/Australian etc? (See **Listening to British and American English (L5)**.) Does the film contain a lot of talking (e.g. Romantic Comedy vs. Action Adventure)? Is the language in the film reasonably easy to understand (e.g. *Pirates of the Caribbean*) or do the actors use slang or speak with a strong accent? (Listen to the first few minutes of the film to check.)
- **Look for films which have a transcript (script of the dialogue) available.** See which of our films have transcripts here: [http://cle.ust.hk/online\\_resources/english/video\\_ent/](http://cle.ust.hk/online_resources/english/video_ent/). There are also links to websites with explanations of key vocabulary for many of the films.
- If you **find out about the historical or cultural background** of a film before you watch, this will help you understand the film much better. You will find useful information in *Wikipedia* at <http://www.wikipedia.org> and in the *Oxford Guide to British and American Culture* and the *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* on the *Dictionaries* shelf.
- **Read a novel or screenplay of the film** if there is one available. This will prepare you for the theme, plot and key vocabulary of the film. You can check these out at the Language Commons Reception and borrow them for two weeks.

### While listening ...

- **Jot down words** that you want to learn. See the Advice Sheet **Learning Vocabulary by Reading or Listening (V7)**. If you hear words that are not listed in your dictionary, try *NTC's Dictionary*

of *American Slang & Colloquial Expressions* — very useful for listening to American films. *Collins COBUILD Dictionary of Idioms* indicates how frequent idioms are, which can help you decide whether they are worth learning or not. Both are available on the *Dictionaries* shelf. See **Deciding Which Words are Worth Learning (V2)**.

- **Focus on a part of the movie only** — this is especially useful if you are trying to hear pronunciation features, or want to replay the movie many times in order to remember the vocabulary that you've identified. In these cases, you probably won't have time to watch the whole film several times, so it makes sense to focus on a small part and watch it repeatedly. You can choose a part that's very interesting, or that contains many pronunciation features or new words/phrases. Or you could choose one of the brief dialogues in the transcripts of key scenes in *Five Star Films* (on the *Movie Transcripts* shelf).
- **Stop the film and replay** if there are bits you can't hear or understand. This is useful if you want to focus on how words are pronounced in connected speech.

- Try to **transcribe (write down) a short section of a movie** (e.g. 1 minute long or less) word for word. You can then compare your version with the real script. This is a useful technique for testing your listening ability or finding out what pronunciation features you have difficulty with.
- **Watch the film with a friend**, so that you can **talk** about themes that have come up in the film or help each other as soon as any one has difficulty in understanding what the actors are saying or loses track of the plot.

#### After Listening ...

- **Watch another film on the same theme or of the same type.** This will give you more chance to: focus on the language (because you understand the background); meet the same words/phrases again (which will help you remember them); and hear different ways of expressing the same meaning and of communicating in similar situations.
- **Watch a part of the movie many times.** Can you understand it better now?

- **Write** about any aspect of the film — plot, characters, ending, themes — that interests you.
- **Try to learn and remember the vocabulary** that you have noted down. See the Advice Sheet **Remembering Vocabulary (V4)**.
- **Talk about the film** with a partner or a group of friends.
- **Do some follow-up reading.** For example, you can read the novel on which the film is based, or read about the period of history in which the film is set. Screenplays of many films can be found in the Language Commons.
- **Get extra practice in listening to conversational English.** See the Advice Sheet **Listening to Social Conversations (L6)** for information and suggestions. Useful websites where you can listen to conversational English and read the transcripts at the same time are:

*The Language Commons Listening Page*  
([http://cle.ust.hk/online\\_resources/englis](http://cle.ust.hk/online_resources/englis))

[h/lisacpage/](#)) A growing collection of conversations, discussions, jokes and stories in English. Speakers of many different accents are represented, and the dialogues are unscripted — this is the real thing! Each dialogue is accompanied by a transcript and many of the recordings are in video as well as audio.

*Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab*  
(<http://www.esl-lab.com/index.htm>)

A large collection of conversations from different situations and at different levels. All have tapescripts, audio and 'before', 'during' and 'after' listening questions. The conversations are read from a script (i.e. not totally genuine) but are designed for Japanese learners of English and suitable for learners of different levels.

*The Listening Lounge*  
(<http://www.EnglishListening.com>)

Collection of conversations on various topics and at different levels. All have transcripts, audio and questions. The conversations are 'real', not read from a script. You'll have to pay to access most of the site, but there is still a free 'Guest' area.

*Radio Diaries*  
(<http://www.radiodiaries.org>)

Excellent site for the advanced listener. The 'Radio diaries' are thoughts and interviews collected by ordinary people and edited into 30 minutes of amazing insights into their lives. If you want to see what life is like for people living in difficult circumstances in the USA, especially for teenagers (e.g. 'teenage mother' / 'living with an incurable disease'), then this is the site for you! Audio and transcripts are available.

### Evaluating your progress

Most people find it very useful to evaluate their learning progress. Assessing your progress can not only give you a feeling of success, but also identify areas that you need to work on in the future. Here are some ways of evaluating the progress you have made in your listening to movies:

- **Think about your progress** — how do you feel about your performance?
- **Compare** your listening comprehension / vocabulary knowledge / knowledge of pronunciation features **at the beginning of a period of learning and at the end**, e.g. several months later — have you improved? (You could

watch the same movie or scene in order to compare your listening.)

- **Summarise** a movie or part of a movie and **compare** it with a published summary — did you get the key points?
- **Transcribe** part of a movie and **compare** it with the movie transcript or captions. How accurate is your transcript? What do your mistakes tell you about the aspects you need to work on most?

### And now...

If you would like any help or advice, or just a chat about your progress, please get in touch - **we are here to support your independent learning!** To contact us:

- Make an appointment to see an adviser. For details of advisers and their availability, please go to <https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/language-adviser-timetable/>.
- E-mail your questions to **iLANG** ([lcilang@ust.hk](mailto:lcilang@ust.hk)).
- Ask at the reception counter of the Language Commons — if the

receptionist cannot help you directly, s/he will pass your query on to one of the advisers.

### **What else can you do?**

- Browse the many physical (<https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/language-commons/#resources>) and online materials (<https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/resources-listening/>) for Listening.
- Join a Listening activity or short course (<http://ilang.cle.ust.hk/listening/>).

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