TRANSCRIPT · EPISODE 238

I Watched the Same Film Three Times — and Understood More

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

173 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

My second job in England was in a cinema.

I could watch films while I worked, and I loved it.

But one film made me wonder if I really understood English at all.

Welcome to Your English Toolbox and another chapter of Juan’s Second Year.

Juan, which film was it?

Pulp Fiction.

That is not the easiest place to start.

I discovered that very quickly.

Before we go into the film, tell us about the job.

I was an usher at a cinema.

An usher is someone who helps people find their seats at a cinema or theatre.

I cut tickets and showed people where to sit.

When the film started, I stayed in the room.

So you could watch the film as part of your working day?

Yes, but I also had a responsibility.

I needed to pay attention to safety in case of a fire.

So it was not just sitting down and forgetting about everyone else.

Exactly.

I had to be ready to help people if something happened.

What kinds of words did you need at work?

Simple words about tickets, seats and the cinema.

I also needed to understand instructions about safety.

That sounds different from learning a long list of words for an exam.

Yes, because the words had a place in my day.

When you show someone a seat, the situation helps explain the language.

And when a customer asks a question, you have a reason to listen carefully.

And you still say it was your best job ever?

Yes, I do.

I loved working there, surrounded by stories.

And you were hearing English in a completely different way from a classroom.

Very different.

In class, I could often follow the teacher.

In a film, people did not stop because I needed another second.

Tell us about that first viewing.

The cinema was showing Pulp Fiction again, and I was excited to see it.

Then the characters started talking.

They spoke quickly, and some of the words were slang.

Slang means very informal words or expressions used by particular groups of people.

Sometimes I caught a word and tried to work out what it meant.

When I stopped to think, the conversation kept moving.

And you missed the next part.

Exactly.

I could see the characters and follow some of the action.

But I could not understand everything they were saying.

Could you tell when people were angry, even if you missed their words?

Often, yes.

Their voices and faces gave me clues.

A clue is a small piece of information that helps you understand something.

And sometimes the picture can help you guess what a conversation is about.

But guesses are not always right.

That is true.

You can enjoy the scene and check your guess later.

Did that make you feel discouraged?

For a moment, yes.

I was living and working in English, but this film sounded like another world.

Did you expect the English in a film to sound like the English you heard at work?

I think I expected to understand more than I did.

At work, many conversations had a clear purpose.

In the film, the characters could change direction in the middle of a conversation.

And they already knew things about each other that the audience was still discovering.

So there were two things to follow: the story and the language.

Yes, and the film did not wait while I caught up.

That feeling is familiar to a lot of learners.

Understanding one person in a quiet conversation does not mean every film will be easy.

That was useful for me to realise.

I did not need to understand every word to know that a scene was tense or funny.

But you did not leave it there, did you?

No.

The cinema had more showings, so I signed up for several sessions on consecutive days.

Consecutive days means one day after another.

The second time, I already knew more about the story.

I knew who was speaking and what was happening in some scenes.

That gave me more attention for the words.

Was there a moment when you noticed a difference?

I began to recognise words and short expressions that I had missed before.

I could connect them with a situation I already knew.

So the scene was familiar, even if the language was still difficult.

Yes.

I was not starting from zero again.

And on the third viewing?

I could pay attention to smaller details.

I heard more of how people said things, not only what was happening.

Did knowing the story make the film boring?

No, I enjoyed noticing things I had missed.

The same scene gave you a new question each time.

First, what is happening?

Then, what are they saying?

And later, how do they say it?

Yes, that describes the experience well.

I still did not understand every line.

But I could feel the difference.

How could you tell you were making progress?

A moment that had passed too quickly began to make more sense.

I knew more about why the characters were there.

That made it easier to notice words I had not caught before.

Sometimes progress is hearing one expression you missed yesterday.

Or realising that your first guess about a scene was wrong.

Yes.

That is still useful information.

I like that distinction.

The goal was progress, not a perfect score.

Why might watching again help?

Researchers have studied repeated viewing and language learning.

In one study, learners who watched subtitled videos more than once learned more target vocabulary than when they watched once.

Their situation was not exactly like mine in the cinema.

Right.

That study used subtitles in two languages, so we cannot assume the same result for every film or every learner.

But your experience gives us a simple idea to try.

If you already know the situation, you can choose a different detail to listen for.

That is how it felt for me.

Research also suggests that adult brains can change as people learn a second language.

We cannot measure what happened in Juan's brain from this story.

What we can say is that adults can keep learning, and practice can help.

That would have been encouraging to hear after my first viewing.

Let's turn your experience into something our listeners can try.

Do they need to watch a whole film three times?

Not at all.

Choose a short scene you enjoy and can watch again.

For the first viewing, focus on the situation.

Who is there, and what is happening?

You can use subtitles in your own language if they help you follow the scene.

Then watch again and listen for a few useful expressions.

If English subtitles help, turn them on.

And if the English subtitles move too quickly?

Pause the scene, or choose a shorter and slower one.

You can also watch first with subtitles in a language you know.

There is no prize for making the first viewing impossible.

That takes away some of the pressure.

Just remember that subtitles are support, not a test you have to pass.

Pause if you need to, and check what an expression means in that situation.

Then watch once more and see whether you can hear it without reading.

If that is too difficult, keep the subtitles on and try again another day.

You can also say one useful phrase aloud and make your own example.

For example, imagine a character says, “I was looking for my keys.”

The phrase tells us that an action was in progress in the past.

Then you could make it your own and say, “I was looking for my phone.”

You do not need to learn every sentence from the scene.

A few useful phrases are enough to begin.

Let's make the exercise even smaller.

Imagine you have five minutes and one short scene.

First, watch it and tell yourself what happened in one sentence.

Next, choose one phrase you could actually use in your own life.

Listen to it again and notice where the words join together.

Then check the meaning in context, not only one word at a time.

Finally, make a new sentence about your own day.

Could you give us an example?

If I choose “I was looking for my keys,” I could say, “I was looking for my ticket.”

Good.

You are practising the same structure with a different object.

We can change the situation as well.

“I was looking for my phone when the bus arrived.”

The first action was in progress, and then something else happened.

I could say, “I was looking for my ticket when the film started.”

Exactly.

That is much easier to remember when I can connect it to a real situation.

And you can return to the scene later without turning the whole film into homework.

Exactly.

Should everyone choose Pulp Fiction?

No.

I enjoyed it, but the speed and slang can make it challenging.

And some film language is informal or rude, so check the context before using it yourself.

A familiar film, a short interview or a simple scene may be a more comfortable choice.

The important thing is to choose something you want to return to.

Juan, what did that cinema teach you beyond the vocabulary?

It taught me that I could enjoy a story before I understood every word.

And when I returned to it, I could notice something new.

That is a lovely invitation for this week.

Pick a short scene and watch it again with a new purpose.

Notice one phrase, check it, and try using it yourself.

And if the first viewing feels difficult, give yourself another chance.

Thank you for sharing the story, Juan.

Thank you for listening.

See you next time on Your English Toolbox.