EPISODE 012

Listening in the Background

Full transcript · mini-story · vocabulary review

Hi, everybody! I'm Georgiana, your English teacher and founder of SpeakEnglishPodcast.com. My mission is to help you speak English fluently.

In this episode:

- I'll talk about **passive listening**—or, in other words, **listening in the background**.
- Later, we'll practice conversation skills with the powerful Question & Answer technique.

Okay, let's get started!

In the language industry, there's an approach called passive **listening**. This means playing some English in the **background** while performing other tasks. In theory, you're learning because the brain is always learning, no matter how.

Interesting, huh? You just need to play some English while you're cleaning, jogging, surfing the Internet, and so on.

Although this approach may be appealing, here's the bad news: it doesn't work as a complete system for developing fluency in English.

The main drawback is that when we need to learn new content, our brain needs to **pay attention** and be active.

In an ideal world, we would be completely focused whenever we listen. We'd pay attention to every tiny detail: vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, and more.

However, as you may already know, ideal conditions are sometimes difficult to achieve. If you need perfect conditions every time you listen—for example, feeling rested and motivated and being in a quiet place—you may never start **listening**.

What you need is a **compromise**. It's okay to **lose concentration** from time to time.

Here's my suggestion: with new content, try to maintain your concentration as much as possible.

However, when you're repeating the same content, you don't need to focus one hundred percent of your attention anymore. In this case, you're remembering and consolidating what you have already learned.

Another aspect to keep in mind is that, in this case, quantity is more important than quality. Listening for two hours with about seventy percent of your attention can still be more effective than listening for only twenty minutes with complete concentration.

The accumulation of hours and hours of listening is what truly helps you become fluent.

Just think about children. They're not always focused when they listen, but they still learn.

My takeaway for today

Try to listen as much as you can. Being focused is essential when you're learning new content. But when you're already familiar with the material, what matters most is the amount of time you spend listening.

Okay, let's move on to the speaking-practice section.

Mini-Story

Speaking Practice

In this story, we'll use the verb "to commute," which means to travel regularly between home and work or school. You'll also practice the past continuous with was and were.

Sarah was learning English on her own.

Was Sarah learning Spanish on her own?
No. She wasn't learning Spanish on her own. She was learning English on her own.

Was Sarah learning English at a language school?
No, no. She wasn't learning at a language school. She was learning on her own.

Who was learning English?
Sarah. Sarah was learning English.

What language was she learning?
English. Sarah was learning English.

Sarah was very busy, and she had almost no free time.

Was Sarah very busy?
Yes. She was very busy. She had almost no free time.

Did Sarah have a lot of free time?
No, no. She didn't have much free time. She was very busy.

What didn't she have?
Free time. She didn't have much free time.

How was Sarah at that moment?
She was busy. She was very busy at that moment.

Did she have plenty of free time?
No, she didn't. She had almost no free time.

While Sarah was commuting, she met Michael. He was also an English student.

Was Sarah sitting on a bench when she met someone?
No, no. She was commuting. In other words, she was traveling on public transport.

What was she doing when she met Michael?
She was commuting. When she met Michael, she was commuting.

Whom did Sarah meet?
Michael. She met Michael, an English student.

Did Sarah meet John, a Spanish student?
No, no. She didn't meet John. She met Michael, an English student.

Were Sarah and Michael students?
Yes, they were students. They were English students.

What were they?
Students. They were students.

When they were together, they listened to English content.

Were they listening to English content when they weren't together?
No, no. They listened when they were together, not when they were apart.

Were they listening to English content?
Yes, they were listening to English content.

Who was listening to English content?
Michael and Sarah. They listened to English content when they were together.

What were they doing when they were together?
They were listening to English content.

They were happy because their English improved significantly.

Were they happy because their favorite soccer team won?
No, no. They were happy because their English improved **significantly**.

Was Sarah happy?
Yes, she was happy.

Was Michael happy?
Yes. He was happy too. They were both happy.

Why were they happy?
Because their English improved significantly. That's why they were happy.

Very good! That's the end of this mini-story.
Some questions may seem very easy, but remember: the goal is to automate your English. Try to answer without hesitation, without translating from your mother tongue.

Listen to the episode several times. Repetition will help strengthen your English.

Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.

Review

Vocabulary from This Episode

Review the most useful words and expressions before listening again.

01 Passive listening
Playing English in the background while doing another activity.

02 In the background
Happening or playing without being the main focus of your attention.

03 Drawback
A disadvantage or negative aspect of something.

04 Focused
Giving your full attention to something.

05 Compromise
A practical middle solution between two different extremes.

06 Consolidate
To strengthen and make what you have already learned more secure.

07 Accumulation
The gradual increase or collection of something over time.

08 Takeaway
The main idea or lesson you should remember.

Continue your speaking practice

Build fluency with **guided audio lessons** and mini-stories.
Explore my Premium Courses >

Georgiana
Founder of Speak English Now Podcast
SpeakEnglishPodcast.com