

Chatterbox #270 – The pros and cons of studying with videos

Episode description

These days, there are so many different sources to use when studying language. That's both good and bad. There are pros and cons when you study with movies, TV, the internet, or any other kind of listening material. In this Chatterbox episode, Andrew and Kassy dive deep into the positives and negatives of these different ways of studying.

Chatterbox is a series for higher-level learners to follow the natural speech of Culips hosts. The hosts share expressions such as without further ado, to sulk, and auditory. Give a listen to hear how the hosts use these expressions and what they sound like.

Fun fact

Despite the development of study materials on the internet and in the media, the textbook industry still makes a lot of money. In 2019, the publishing industry made \$8.38 billion US selling textbooks!

Expressions included in the study guide

- Without further ado
- Auditory
- To sulk
- To avoid a trap
- To be pushing [a number]
- To be represented



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hello there, everyone. My name's Andrew.

Kassy: And I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Hello there, friends. Welcome back to Culips. This is a Chatterbox episode. And if you don't know what that is, Chatterbox is the series featuring completely natural English conversations that you can eavesdrop into. And we hope that by listening to this series, you'll be able to upgrade your English listening skills and become a fluent user of English. But before we do, I would like to let you know that there is a study guide available for this episode for all Culips members. And we'd recommend that you follow along with the study guide while you listen to us today. So to become a Culips member and to get the study guide, you just need to visit our website, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And I'm not alone today. I am joined by my cohost, Kassy. Kassy, hello.

Kassy: Hello.

Andrew: How are you doing today?

Kassy: I'm amazing today. The sun is shining and I'm in a great mood.

Andrew: Perfect. Kassy, what are we talking about today?

Kassy: Today, we are talking about the pros and cons of different kinds of listening material, specifically through movies, TV shows, and YouTube.

Andrew: That's right. So I think our listeners already know this but, of course, thanks to the internet, there are so many different ways to study English these days. There are tons and tons of different kinds of content that can be used to improve English listening skills. And, Kassy, what we're going to do in this episode is just go through each different kind of listening material and evaluate it and talk about some of the pros and cons about studying with these sources. And we'll also share our experience with our audience from our own language-learning experience. So, Kassy, you and I both study Korean. And I think we have some experience studying with these types of materials that we can share with our listeners.

Kassy: Yeah, most definitely.

Andrew: So **without any further ado**, why don't we get started? And the first source that we're going to evaluate is movies, movies. So studying English with movies. And, Kassy, what are some of the pros, some of the benefits about studying English or learning English with movies?

Kassy: Well, I guess the biggest pro would be that movies are really interesting and exciting, right? Maybe you can't see the language being used in real life if you live in a country that doesn't speak English, but, through the screen, you can see actors, like, interacting with each other in a scripted everyday situation using English.

Andrew: Right. So it gives you a kind of immersive environment where all of the people on the screen are speaking English and talking in English. And I would like to add that another benefit is that there is such a wide variety of content, right? You can watch movies from all different sorts of genres, like action, romance, horror, spy movies and thrillers. Whatever genre you're interested in, you can find just a long list of movies.

And actually, this is funny, Kassy, sometimes I think about this, there are so many movies made that you could never watch them all in one lifetime. Isn't that sort of funny to think about? Like, a movie is such an expensive thing to make. And so many people are involved in making them. And we've really only been making movies for, like, what, around 100 years as a society. But there are still so many titles that you could probably watch a movie every day until you die and not run out of content to watch.

Kassy: That is pretty crazy. It's mind-boggling.

Andrew: It's like we discovered how to make movies and then just got really busy and made so many movies that now you can't even watch all of them.

Kassy: That's true. I think movies, the reason they're so fantastic in general and in language learning is it's kind of like bringing books or dreams or comics to life and experiencing them in, like, visual and **auditory** ways, not just through text.

Andrew: Totally. And actually, that's a great point, because we talked about movies being an immersive environment, right? And that's so important for language learning. When you can make a visual connection between a word's meaning and then how it's used in a real-life situation, that is so helpful. So if you're just reading a book and learning vocabulary through books, then it's hard to get that context, right? But if you're watching a movie, you can hear the word being said and you can see the action on the screen and you can make that connection.

So, for example, let's say you're watching a movie and in the movie there is a teenage who is fighting with her parents. And after the fight, the teenager is upset and sad and you hear one of the parents say, "Why are you **sulking** around?" When you hear that word, **sulking** around, and you see the expression and the actions of the teenager with that **sulking** face, then you can make that connection and understand that this emotion of **sulking** is something that we do when we're upset and when we're sad. It's kind of a combination of these two emotions, right? If you read that in a book, I think, it might be harder to get that visualization and make that connection between the motion, the action, of **sulking** and the meaning of the word. So I think this is one of the strengths of movies.

Kassy: Totally. Also, you can hear the way the English sounds in perfect intonation. Like when you see that scene, you know, oh, that's how I'm supposed to sound. That's how I'm supposed to react when using this phrase in English.

Andrew: Yes, absolutely. Now, why don't we talk about some of the disadvantages to studying with movies? Because I think there definitely are some, they're not the perfect study material. And for me, personally, when I study foreign languages, I don't like movies for a couple of reasons. The first reason is that they're too long. And I have a short attention span. So, you know, sitting down and watching something for 2 hours can be pretty difficult for me, to tell you the truth.

Kassy: Yeah, I think, also, we've talked about this on the Culips podcast before that repetitive listening of short, English dialogues is really helpful. But listening once or twice to a long dialogue is not nearly as helpful, like in movies.

Andrew: Right. And I know that when, you know, for example, I study with a podcast or a YouTube video or something, I'm really likely to watch it multiple times, or listen to it multiple times. But it's hard to do that with a movie. After I watch a movie once or twice, then I really don't feel like going back and watching it again. So I think, Kassy, you're right, it's hard to binge study and repeat listening to a movie over and over and over again, just because it's so long.

Kassy: Yeah, I think another disadvantage is that it was an advantage that you can watch something in a genre that you like, but it's also a disadvantage in the sense that there's a lot of jargon, a lot of specific vocabulary in that movie that you might not need. For example, if you're watching a medical show or a doctor drama, you might have a lot of medical terms that you're never going to use in your real life.

Andrew: Right. Or if you like spy movies and they're talking about nuclear reactors, and radar defense, and all of these really specific terms that we really never use in our everyday lives. I mean, you could be wasting your time learning vocabulary that's not really too important, right?

I think, just to make one final point here before we move on to the next source of listening material, a problem that I have with movies is the ratio of English speaking to total length of the movie. Because, intrinsically, filmmaking is a visual way to tell stories, right? So this means that there are long scenes in almost every movie where there is no dialogue and you're just seeing what the characters are doing or seeing the scenery, there is nobody describing it to you. And so you might sit down and watch a 2-hour long movie. But when you really think about it, within that 2 hours, maybe you're only hearing English being spoken for 40 minutes or 45 minutes. So if your goal is to watch English movies to learn English with, then you have to ask yourself is this a really good use of my time? Is spending 2 hours watching a movie beneficial if I'm only getting 45 minutes of English exposure during those 2 hours?

Of course, it varies from genre to genre, right? You can find some movies that are almost completely full of English-speaking dialogue. But if you're watching action movies, or Marvel movies, superhero movies, there's going to be huge parts of the movie that are completely void and empty of dialogue.

Kassy: Yeah, not only that, the visuals are going to be distracting you from the language learning you might be trying to be doing.

Andrew: That's true. Now, one way that you could **avoid this trap** is not to watch movies, but instead to watch TV shows. And, Kassy, why don't we talk about TV shows here for a moment? What are some of the other benefits of studying English with TV shows?

Kassy: I think, especially, like, contemporary comedy TV shows, like sitcoms, oftentimes, they're really helpful because they're chock full of dialogue, like, everyday life dialogue that you could hear amongst your friends, in the street. And also, the episodes are usually about 20 or 25 minutes, so it's not too long.

Andrew: Right. That is one of the things that I like most about TV shows is that they're short. Of course, if you're watching dramas or really serious TV shows, sometimes these can be quite long. Like Game of Thrones, for example, I think some of those episodes were **pushing 90 minutes** almost.

Kassy: It's like a movie.

Andrew: That's almost like a mini movie. Yeah. But if you're watching sitcoms, or lighter TV, many of the episodes are only around 25 minutes. So you can either watch it three or four times in a row or you could watch three or four episodes. And, really, if you compare that time to watching a movie, you're going to get a lot more English exposure through the TV.

Kassy, that was a great point about the language that you'll be exposed to, as well. All of the expressions that are in sitcoms are very colloquial. They're everyday English expressions. It's a great way to learn natural English. However, there's a caveat, Kassy. I have a caveat.

Kassy: What is that?

Andrew: And that is, we have to keep in mind that they are scripted, right? So you're hearing really funny jokes and witty turns of phrases that a team of writers have sat down to create. So although you hear some everyday expressions, you're hearing some of the best examples of these expressions that might not really match up to the way that people speak in their everyday lives. Because not everybody has a team of writers in their heads.

Kassy: I wish.

Andrew: I wish I had that, too. And because it's scripted, as well, you lose a lot of the naturalness of English conversation, right? You never hear characters interrupting each other. You never hear characters saying um or ah, or stopping their sentence mid-sentence and restarting their sentence, or making grammar mistakes. And these are all things that English speakers do every day. I'm well aware of it because I also do them every day. So this is one thing just to keep in mind, that although, I think, sitcoms especially are great study materials, they don't mirror the real world exactly.

Kassy: Yes, I think you can say that not just for language, but also for mannerisms and extracurricular activities. Like, TV shows are meant to be, to mirror real life, but make it look even better or more interesting. So take the dialogue with a grain of salt, but also take the pop culture and excitement of English-speaking countries with a grain of salt, as well.

Andrew: Right. I think many people think that America is a certain way because they've seen it **represented** on TV that way. But often, I think we talked about this recently, Kassy, we were talking about the USA and you said, "Well, America is a big country," right?

Kassy: Yup.

Andrew: And when you watch TV shows, they're almost always set in New York City or in Los Angeles. And those are just two parts of the USA. The USA is a huge country and it has many different regional cultures and traditions and ways of speaking and people that are living in those areas that are not **represented** on TV.

Kassy: Totally.

Andrew: So that's another great point that what you see is not always what you get.

Now, why don't we talk about the next genre of listening content available? And that is one of my favourite websites, YouTube. Let's talk about YouTube.

Kassy: I think it's a favourite of everyone almost.

Andrew: A favourite and a great way to burn away an evening by binge-watching YouTube.

Kassy: Going down the YouTube rabbit hole. Yes.

Andrew: Yes, yes. So when I think of YouTube, some of the pros that immediately jump out to me are that you can watch short videos, right? It's super easy to find lots of interesting videos that are shorter than 10 minutes. And you can find videos on literally anything that interests you. So, you know, if you're watching TV, you're at the mercy of the broadcasters and what they decide to show you. But with YouTube, you can search for whatever you want and find really niche content. If you're interested in, well, literally anything, you can find it. I was watching videos about trampolining last night for some reason. So if you're interested in trampolining, you can find people on YouTube talking about that subject. Everything under the sun is on YouTube.

Kassy: Yeah, I think another really amazing part about YouTube is that it's interactive. So not only can you find content tailored almost exactly to what you want, but you can also leave comments, you can maybe even message the creator and make a recommendation for a future video, you can look at other viewer's comments and see how they interpreted the video. It's really fantastic.

Andrew: That's a great point. It is interactive in a very unique way, isn't it?

Another thing that I love about YouTube is the player itself, because you can do things like loop the video by just right clicking on the YouTube player. So, often, I'll do that when I'm cooking. I'll put on a short YouTube video and loop it so that I listen to it four or five times while I'm cooking my dinner, for example. You can also adjust the speed. So if something is too slow or too fast, you can speed it up or slow it down. I actually listen to most English content at two times speed, because, well, I speak English pretty well so I can understand it when it goes quite quickly like that. I can save some time.

Kassy: Sounds like a chipmunk then, though, right?

Andrew: It does sound like a chipmunk. But weirdly enough, your brain adjusts fairly quickly. And then when you watch something at normal speed, it sounds slow. It's really strange, the fast starts to sound normal and the normal starts to sound slow.

Kassy: Very cool.

Andrew: However, there are some cons to studying with YouTube, as well, that I think our listeners should know about. The first being that YouTube videos are edited like crazy, especially vlogs. You can tell when a vlog has been edited often, because there are many, many jump cuts. What this does when YouTube creators edit their videos this way, it makes for unnatural sentence intonation, because what they've done is just recorded themselves speaking in front of the camera and then when they're editing, they take out all of those little conversational faults that we talked about before. So hedging, uh, ums, when they misspeak, or they say something awkward, or maybe what they do is record four or five lines four or five times in a row. And then they put all of those recordings together to make one sentence. And the result is some unnatural-sounding English. Perhaps the intonation patterns are incorrect or the syntax is strange. I mean, it's still understandable. But it's different than natural English that just comes out of our mouths. So I think that's one thing that you have to keep in mind is that these videos, especially vlogs and daily lifestyle-type videos, are really heavily edited.

Kassy: Yeah, I think to add on top of that, too. It's getting better as time goes by, but, still, a lot of videos could have really fast English or really colloquial English, but there's no subtitles to go along with it.

Andrew: Yeah, that's a good point. That's a really good point. I mean, a lot of people do make subtitles for their videos. But there are still a lot of creators that don't do this, right? And I think they are just assuming that the people watching their channels are native English speakers, so they don't bother to make the subtitles. YouTube does offer an automatic subtitling service, but it's not quite there. So it's really good about maybe 80 to 90% of the time. But when it fails, it fails big time and it just spits out nonsense. So I think this can be really frustrating when, you know, you want to understand what the speaker is saying and you turn on the automatic subtitle and it just spits out something that's completely wrong. I mean, this is not helpful at all, is it?

Kassy: Nope, and it makes you, like, frustrated for the learning itself. You're, like, well, if this doesn't work, I'm just gonna quit for today, or something like that.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. I think that brings us to the end of today's episode. Thanks, everyone, for listening. Just to recap what we covered here today, we evaluated the pros and cons of different kinds of listening material. Specifically, we focused on movies, TV shows, and YouTube. And I think all of them are great ways to study English. They're really fun and interesting ways to improve your English listening skills and your English vocabulary, but they're not perfect. And there are some cons that you should keep in mind, as well.

If you enjoy studying with Culips, please support us. You can do that by signing up and becoming a Culips member. You could also follow us on social media. We're on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. Or you could tell your friends about Culips.

Kassy: And, also, if you have any questions or comments, then don't be afraid to message us at contact@Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Andrew: That is right. Thanks for listening, everyone. We'll be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

Kassy: See you later.

Detailed Explanations

Without further ado

Phrase

At the beginning of this episode, when Andrew wants to begin talking about the main topic, he says they should get started **without any further ado**. This expression, more commonly **without further ado**, means without further delay. You can say it when you want to switch from the minor topic you are talking about to the main topic everyone is expecting to hear about. It is often used in public settings where there is an audience.

The word *ado* means something trivial or some kind of minor fuss. It is almost always used in this expression, **without further ado**. Many people also know this word from the title of Shakespeare's play *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Here are a couple more examples with **without further ado**:

Boss: Hello, everyone. Welcome to our Monday meeting. The first thing I would like to say is that our weekend sales went really well. I'm proud of you all.

Mary: Thank you, sir. It was a strong weekend, for sure.

Boss: Also, Georgina in the kitchenware department had her baby on the weekend. We're sending around a card for everyone to sign.

Mary: I've already taken care of that.

Boss: Wow, good stuff. Now, **without further ado**, I believe you want me to talk about your holiday bonuses.

Mark: Happy birthday, younger brother. We hope you enjoy many more.

Pete: Thanks, Mark.

Mark: It's been a wonderful birthday party so far. I hope you have much wealth and happiness in the future.

Pete: Thank you.

Mark: So **without further ado**, let's cut this cake!

Auditory Adjective

In this episode, Kassy says that movies are a good way to experience and learn language because they are visual and **auditory**. Here, she is talking about human senses. **Auditory** is an adjective for the sense of hearing. Aural is another one. It is pronounced the same way as oral, yet aural is for hearing and oral is for speech.

Visual is a much-used adjective for sight. Movies are often referred to as an audiovisual medium. However, the other senses also have adjectives you might like to know: tactile is for the sense of touch, olfactory is for the sense of smell, and gustatory is for the sense of taste.

Here are a couple more examples with **auditory**:

Kate: There's an art exhibition that I'd like to go with you on the weekend.

Venus: Sure. What's it about?

Kate: I'm not sure. I heard it's all about sounds. This artist likes to explore his audience's **auditory** responses.

Venus: Wow! Count me in. Sounds like a blast.

Olivia: Do you want to come to this eat-in-the-dark restaurant with me?

Julie: Is that one of those restaurants where you eat completely in the dark and your waiters are blind?

Olivia: That's right. It's amazing. The experience is extremely gustatory, **auditory**, and tactile.

Julie: Gustatory I understand, but auditory and tactile?

Olivia: Oh. Because you can't see anything, you rely on your hearing much more. And I usually eat with my hands, so I get a real feeling for the food I'm eating.

To sulk Verb

In discussing the benefits of studying with movies, one strong point is that movies are a visual medium. Andrew shares the example of a parent asking a teenager why they are **sulking**. **To sulk** is to be moody and to refuse to smile or communicate. This is usually the result of being upset at something that someone said or because of some unpleasant situation.

To sulk is most often associated with teenagers and children. If you say that an adult is **sulking**, it is similar to saying that the person is acting like a baby or other immature person.

Here are a couple more examples with **to sulk**:

Nathan: I heard you had a talk with your son about what he did the other day.

Fred: Yes. It wasn't pleasant.

Nathan: How did he react?

Fred: Not well. He **sulked** for a couple of days. Poor kid.

Nathan: I know. He's not a bad kid, of course. He just needed to learn his lesson.

Adelaide: Can you believe how Charles was acting at the party yesterday?

Janet: I didn't see. What happened?

Adelaide: His girlfriend corrected him on one thing in front of everyone and then he spent the rest of the night **sulking** in the corner.

Janet: What a big baby!

Adelaide: It's not the first time he's done that, either.

Janet: Sheesh!

To avoid a trap

Phrase

In this episode, our hosts mention that movies are too long for repeated viewing. Andrew suggests watching TV shows **to avoid this trap**. In this sense, trap is a problem or difficulty that you encounter. **To avoid a trap** is to avoid a problem that you know in advance is going to happen.

This expression comes from falling into a physical trap. You can set a trap to catch an animal in the wild. However, **to avoid a trap** is now more often used for non-physical situations, such as someone trying to trick you or avoiding a bad habit.

Here are a couple more examples with **to avoid a trap**:

Vickie: Be careful how you buy your plane tickets. I don't trust the website you're on.

Kayla: Really? How come?

Vickie: It often forces you to sign up for various things that you really don't need.

Kayla: Oh, I see. I hate it when websites do that. I'd much rather **avoid that sneaky trap**. Thanks.

Usman: Did you finish the project you were working on?

Benny: Not at all.

Usman: What? You told me that you were going to finish it last night.

Benny: I know. But while I was doing some research on YouTube, I started clicking on all these videos that had nothing to do with my research.

Usman: Man, you really need **to avoid that YouTube rabbit hole trap**.

Benny: I know.

To be pushing [a number]

Verb

When Andrew talks about how long Game of Thrones episodes are, he says some of them **are pushing 90 minutes**. That means the episodes are nearly 90 minutes long. Think of 90 minutes as a wall. If you are pushing up against that wall but not pushing through, that means you are almost at the 90-minute mark.

In this sense, **to be pushing [a number]** requires a unit of measure. If you say that someone **is pushing 40**, that means they are almost 40 years old. If someone is nearly 10 minutes late, you can say they **are pushing being 10 minutes late**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be pushing [a number]**:

George: I heard your folks will be visiting from Europe next week. That's cool.

Franz: I know. I'm surprised they decided to come.

George: Why do you say that?

Franz: Well, they're both **pushing 70**. It's a big trip for them.

George: It's pretty amazing that they still travel the world at their age.

Franz: I hope I can do the same when I'm their age.

Paula: He's late again.

Jihee: I can see that. How long has it been?

Paula: He's **pushing 30 minutes** now.

Jihee: Geez. I'm going to give him a piece of my mind when he gets here.

To be represented

Verb

When talking about TV shows, our hosts mention how many American shows are set in New York and Los Angeles. However, most Americans do not live in those cities and have very different lives from those depicted on TV. They might feel like they are not well **represented**. In this sense, **to be represented** is to have someone like you shown in the media. People often talk about the lack of **representation** of ethnic minorities in movies and TV. For example, sitcoms like Seinfeld and Friends were highly criticized for having so few people of colour in their shows.

Politically, **to be represented** is to have someone elected who will speak on your behalf in the government. It can also mean to have the issues that are important to you discussed in the public forum.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be represented**:

Jisoo: Have you seen the movie Crazy Rich Asians?

Frances: No, not yet.

Jisoo: It's pretty cool. It's probably the first major Hollywood movie that has a full Asian cast.

Frances: Sweet. I'm sure that means a lot to you.

Jisoo: Growing up, I always felt that I wasn't properly **represented**, so it's nice to see some diversity.

John: Are you reading about politics again?

Gerry: Yeah.

John: Politics are dumb.

Gerry: Don't say that. Politics are important. Do you even know who **represents** us in the House of Commons?

John: No.

Gerry: It's some guy who is fighting against minority rights. That's important for you and for me. We all need to get involved.

Quiz

1. Which of the following is NOT associated with the senses?

- a) visual
- b) facile
- c) auditory
- d) tactile

2. What does to be pushing 50 mean?

- a) you got 50 points in a game
- b) you pushed 50 kilograms
- c) you're almost 50 years of age
- d) you pushed your little brother 50 times

3. What does it means when people say they are not represented in the media?

- a) they think that people like them are not often seen in movies or on TV
- b) they don't go to the movies
- c) they think that TV is boring
- d) they think that there should be more excitement in movies and television

4. True or false? Saying without further ado means to move on to the main topic.

- a) true
- b) false

5. If you are sulking, what are you doing?

- a) you are soaking in water
- b) you are whistling a happy song
- c) you are trying to be the Hulk's cousin
- d) you are moody and refusing to communicate

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. What is your preferred method of studying? Do you follow movies, TV, the internet, or some other type of media?
2. Do you agree with the pros and cons Andrew and Kassy mentioned about study methods? What do you agree with? What do you disagree with?
3. Do you think that you are represented in the Western world's major media? How so?
4. Do you think minorities in your home country are well represented in major media? How so?
5. Growing up, were you the type of person who would sulk? How did you deal with moments when you were upset?

Quiz Answers

1.b 2.c 3.a 4.a 5.d

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