



# Teaching (not testing) listening skills: Focus on decoding

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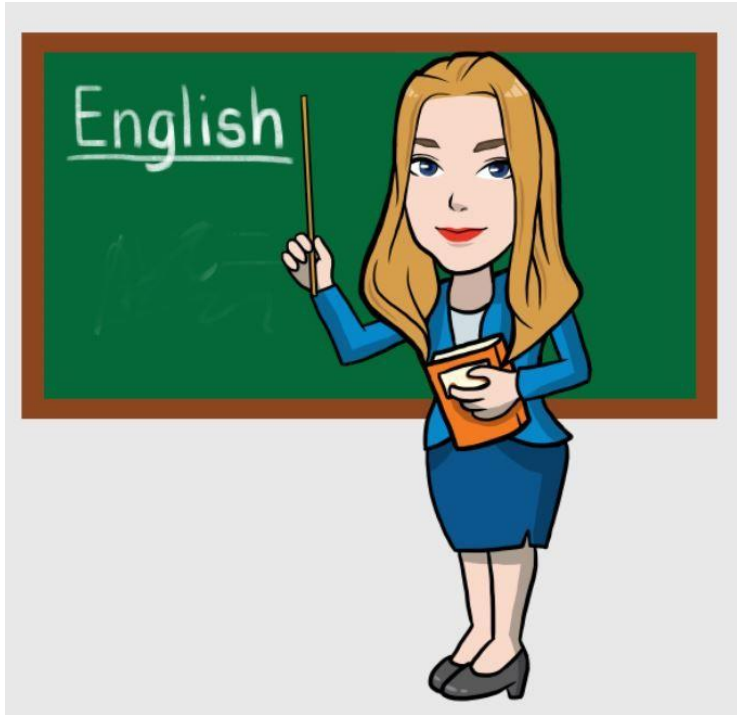
**Bell**  
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# Session outline

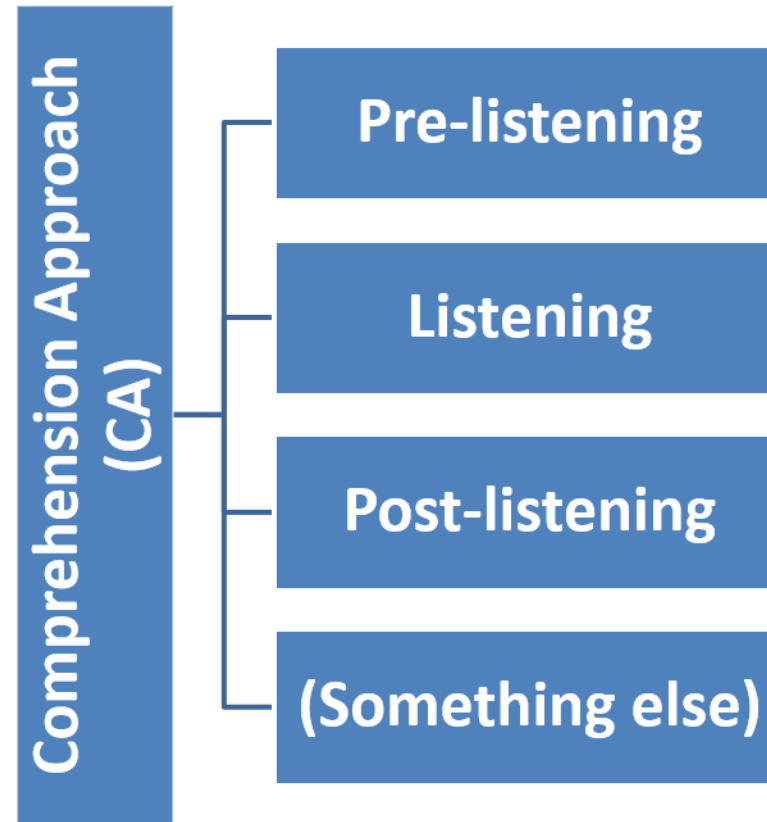
- Why focus on **decoding**?
- Current approaches to teaching listening (and why they may not be effective)
- How to improve current practice
- Suggested activities for teaching decoding
- Question time



# Why focus on decoding?

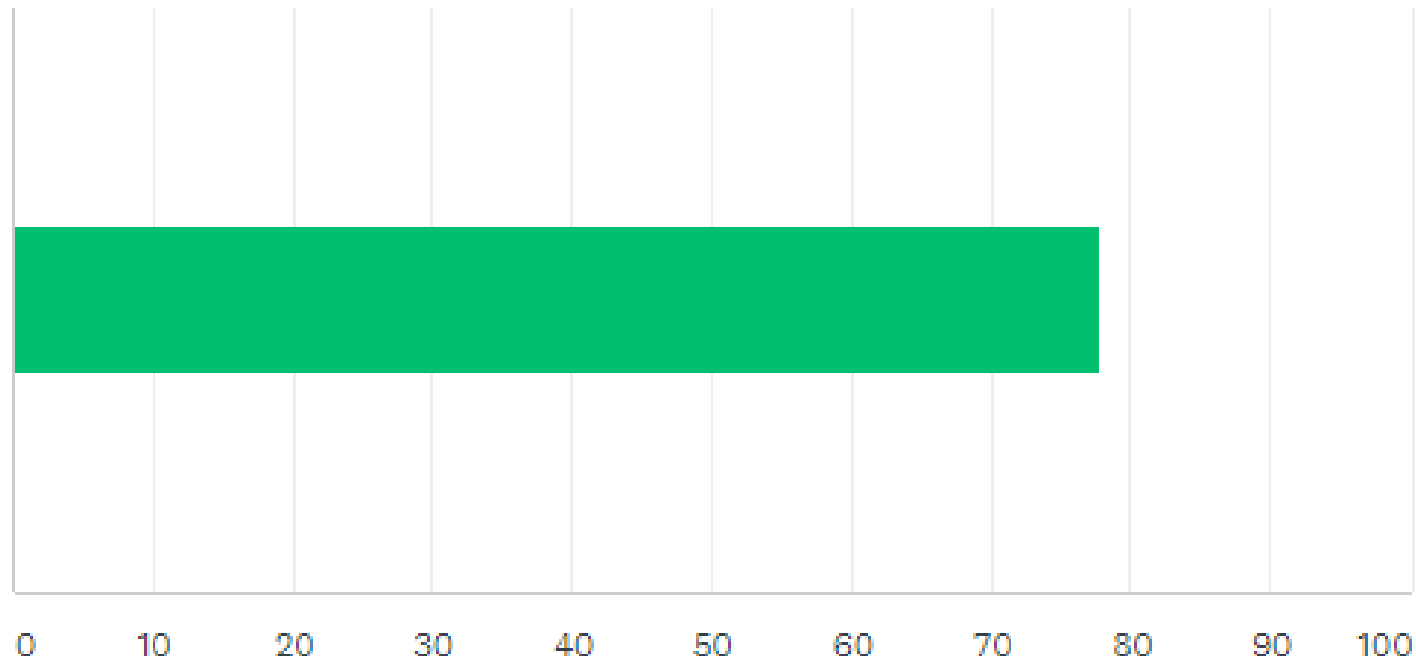


# Current approaches to teaching listening



How often is the following true for you? When I teach listening, I follow the order of pre-listening tasks – students listening and answering questions – feedback on questions – post-listening tasks.

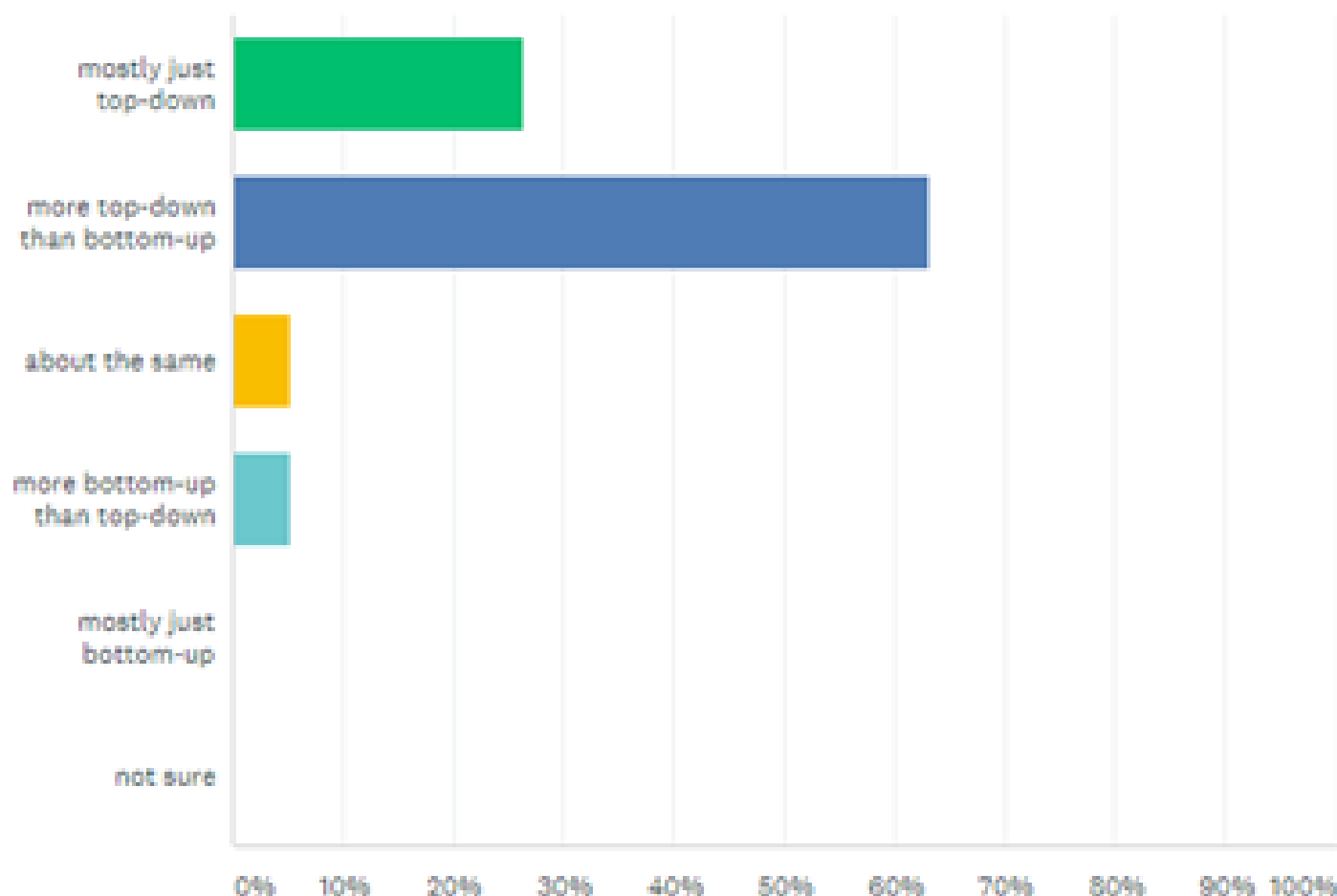
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



In your listening lessons, which do you practise more: top-down or bottom-up processes? (top-down = e.g. predicting, activating background knowledge, inferencing, listening for gist; bottom-up = e.g. decoding, lexical segmentation, syntactic parsing)



Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



# Current approaches to teaching listening



The comprehension approach:

- teacher-centred
- more difficult to differentiate
- focuses on small discrete points
- focuses on the product of listening
- comprehension Qs are uninformative



# Current approaches to teaching listening

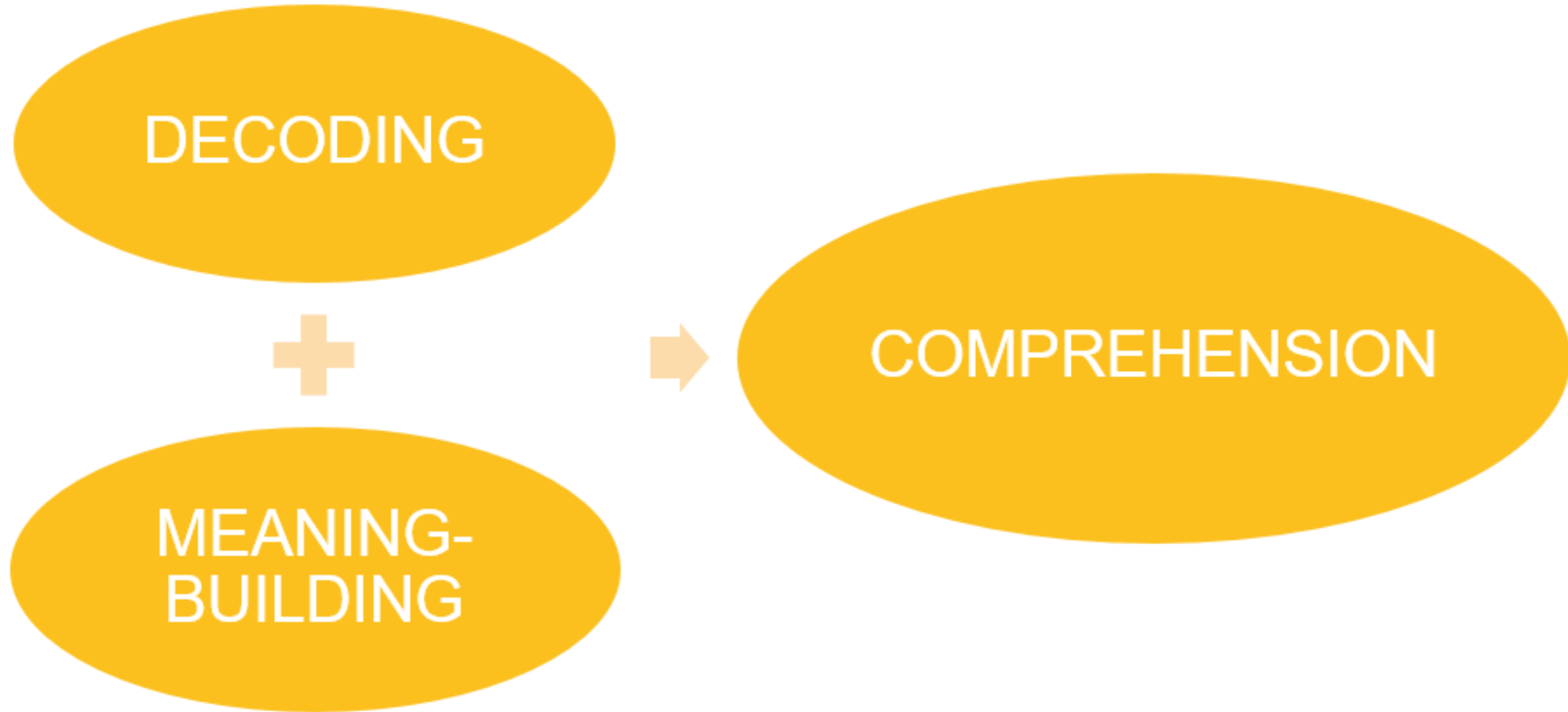


- Success in listening comprehension = success in decoding?
- Reliance on exposure
- Pre/post-listening > listening
- Top-down skills > bottom-up processing





# Rationale for teaching decoding skills



# Improving our practice

Follow up answers to comprehension tasks to find out how they were derived.

*'The problem [...] lies not in the types of task we employ to check understanding, but in the use we make of the answers.'* (Field, p326)

Always allow time for this task: 'Now that you know the answers, listen again, and try to identify the words or sounds that lead to the correct answers.'

# Improving our practice

Following the use of a recording for comprehension purposes, always do a **decoding activity** or administer **small-scale remedial exercises**.



# Improving our practice:

## Suggested activities for teaching decoding



- ✓ Transcription
- ✓ Mini dictations
- ✓ Gap-fills
- ✓ Online resources



# Teaching decoding skills:

## Transcription



- T/S selects a short passage
- Ss listen repeatedly and transcribe it
- Ss compare with the original transcript
- Discuss what features may have contributed to listening difficulties
- Ss listen again with transcript
- Ss listen again without any support



### Work Sheet for Discovery Listening (Wilson, 2003)

#### 1. First Listening: how much of the meaning do you think you understood?

- a. Almost nothing
- b. Less than 40%
- c. About 50%
- d. More than 60%
- e. Almost all

#### 2. Second Listening: Make a note of key words

#### 3. Third listening: Add more notes to number 2.

#### 4. In your group, try to write the text completely. It doesn't have to be perfect, but try to make the meaning as similar to the original as possible.

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#### 5. What problems did you have?

- a. I couldn't hear which sound it was.
- b. I couldn't separate the words.
- c. I heard the words but I couldn't remember their meaning quickly.
- d. Some words were new to me.
- e. I heard and understood the words, but the meaning of the sentence was not clear to me.
- f. Other problems:

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#### 6. Which of the words/phrases caused you most difficulty?

#### 7. Final Listening: Can you hear and understand clearly now?

- a. Almost nothing
- b. Less than 40%
- c. About 50%
- d. More than 60%
- e. Almost all

(taken from Wilson, M. 2003. ELT Journal. Volume 57/4. OUP)



# Teaching decoding skills:

## Mini dictations



- A. You will hear six questions. Listen carefully and decide how many words there are in each question.
- B. Now listen again and write the questions down.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

- A. You will hear six questions. Listen carefully and decide how many words there are in each question.
- B. Now listen again and write the questions down.

1. Where did you go after school yesterday?
2. Did you watch TV last night?
3. Did you sleep well?
4. What time did you get up this morning?
5. What did you have for breakfast?
6. Did you walk to school?

# Teaching decoding skills:

## Gap-fills

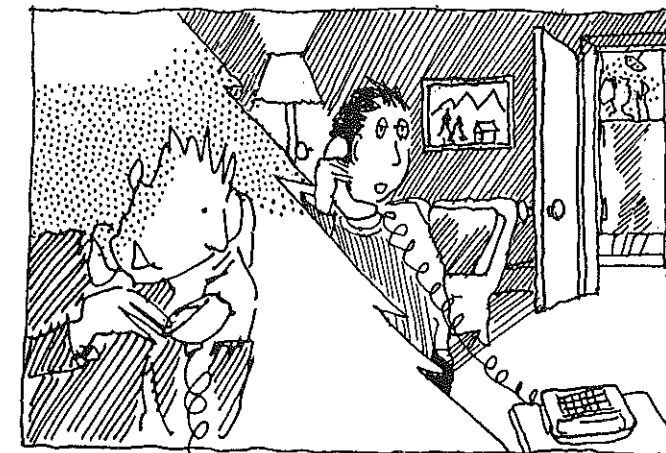
Listen to these excerpts and insert the missing words.

1. you've recently \_\_\_\_\_ to London, I think
2. Sometimes I \_\_\_\_\_ in till half-six in the evening.
3. It depends on, on \_\_\_\_\_ I'm \_\_\_\_\_ be doing.
4. I \_\_\_\_\_ er, oh, well, I \_\_\_\_\_  
get up \_\_\_\_\_ 8 ...
5. There's a \_\_\_\_\_ of days at the moment where I'm starting work  
at 9 or 10 in the morning.
6. Sometimes, if I've \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, um, and I \_\_\_\_\_ to be in till much  
later, then I'll leave it until \_\_\_\_\_ midday or one o'clock.
7. the cut-off time is \_\_\_\_\_ 2.30, so I \_\_\_\_\_ an hour's  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. so we've \_\_\_\_\_ an hour to \_\_\_\_\_ with  
each other
9. We \_\_\_\_\_ quickly.
10. And then I \_\_\_\_\_ till half-past two
11. and then I \_\_\_\_\_ into the studio theatre  
\_\_\_\_\_ the Opera House
12. and then we \_\_\_\_\_ take the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in a um, in a lorry

Real Lives, Real Listening Intermediate, Sheila Thorn, Collins, 2013

### 3 Word linking in fast speech

- 1 **T5.3** Listen and complete the dialogue below  
without looking at the box below.



Adam Hello, (a) \_\_\_\_\_ Adam.

(b) \_\_\_\_\_ Jess, please?

Paul I'm afraid (c) \_\_\_\_\_  
moment. (d) \_\_\_\_\_ call you  
back as soon as she (e) \_\_\_\_\_?

Adam Mmm OK ... if she (f) \_\_\_\_\_  
few minutes but I'm going (g) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ hour. I'll be

(h) \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock.  
Shall I (i) \_\_\_\_\_ then?

Paul I think she's (j) \_\_\_\_\_ on ...  
Oh, (k) \_\_\_\_\_, I think she's  
(l) \_\_\_\_\_ shower now. Jess!  
(m) \_\_\_\_\_ phone!

Jess Thanks, (n) \_\_\_\_\_.  
Adam! Hello! (o) \_\_\_\_\_?

# Teaching decoding skills:

## TubeQuizard.com



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Grammar for listeners

Pronunciation for listeners

Vocabulary in context

Grammar in context

Spelling

category

x

Business

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Entertainment

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Information Technology

News

People & society

Talks & interviews

Music

variety

x



# Teaching decoding skills:

## TubeQuizard.com

### Pronunciation for listeners

**Instructions.** Research shows that people often say frequently used expressions very fast, and so they can be difficult to catch. Listen and fill the gaps with frequently used two-word expressions.

Channel: LORE

LORE - Warcraft Lore in a Minute!

[go to all quizzes based on this video](#)

[edit the quiz](#)

Sargeras, a Titan entrusted with protecting the universe, spent countless millennia battling demons  [check](#) Twisting Nether. As eons passed, Sargeras became corrupted  [check](#) very demons he destroyed. Having refused the Titans' vision of an ordered universe, Sargeras left their ranks and resolved to undo all their work. He released the demons he imprisoned and recruited Kil'Jaeden the Deceiver to raise an army, and Archimonde the Defiler to lead his invasion. And with that, he set upon a Burning Crusade throughout the universe. Sargeras grew attracted  [check](#) Well of Eternity, the heart of Azeroth's magical and natural power, thus setting in motion the plans for his next invasion. Queen Azshara  [check](#) elven people fell victim to Sargeras' undeniable power and agreed to summon him and his army  [check](#) world through the Well of Eternity.





# Teaching decoding skills:

## Redacto.co.uk



redacto

A1-A2: Which sports do you like?



I'm really into cycling and I [\*\*\*\*] it's a, it's a great way to improve your, your fitness and I think the best, best thing about cycling is the [\*\*\*\*\*] of accomplishment [\*\*\*\*] [\*\*\*] [\*\*\*\*\*] the top of a climb. And I [\*\*\*\*] [\*\*\*] to [\*\*\*\*\*] the, the great views [\*\*] [\*\*\*\*\*] [\*\*\*] [\*\*] the countryside. And a sport which I'm not, I'm not too, not too keen on is, is football, partly because I feel it's, it's turned into more of a, a business than a sport.



00:03:03

sarka.piggott 144

Type everything you hear

GO

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# Summary: Tips for teachers

- ✓ Don't miss opportunities to teach when there is something to teach
- ✓ Don't hesitate to adapt the course book
- ✓ Remember to focus on bottom-up processes
- ✓ Give students more control wherever possible

# Bibliography

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# Get in touch



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