

Elementary Podcasts Series 4 Episode 13

Adam

Adam: Hello and welcome to Episode 13 of Series 4 of LearnEnglish Elementary Podcasts. I'm Adam and Jo will be here again soon to talk about some of the language that you're going to hear in today's podcast.

Last time we heard Carolina having problems with English – especially the ways that English spelling and pronunciation can be confusing.

And we asked you to tell us what you find difficult in English. Do you agree with Carolina that English spelling and pronunciation 'is impossible'? Or do you agree with Jo's students that prepositions – the little words like 'on', 'in', or 'for' – are the most difficult?

A lot of you agreed with Jo's students. Krig from Ukraine finds prepositions the most difficult and Dasad from Indonesia agrees, because there are no clear patterns for using them. You're right, Dasad. Prepositions about physical place are quite easy to learn – 'my book's *on* the table', 'my keys are *in* my bag' – but in more abstract situations, it's more difficult. Like 'I'm interested *in* science' or 'I'm afraid *of* spiders'. There aren't really any grammatical rules – it's more like a part of learning vocabulary. As Fawwaz Oubari from Syria says, 'I used to have difficulty in using the right prepositions ... but after using and repeating them so many times, I have no difficulty using them anymore'.

Fawwaz is right – it really is just a question of practice.

Abdulazim.s from Syria and Reza Saadati from Iran both say that phrasal verbs are very difficult and confusing. If you don't know what that means, I can say 'Look at that photograph!' But I can also say 'Can you look after the children tonight while we go out for dinner?' or 'I can't find my keys – can you help me to look for them?' 'Look after' means 'to take care of' and 'look for' means 'try to find'. The preposition changes the meaning of the verb. There are so many of these in English, and my students have to put in a lot of work to learn them.

Some people, like Farkhanda Bashir from Pakistan, said that English pronunciation is difficult for you. Ethousand, from Azerbaijan, talks about the pronunciation of 'TH'. It can be 'th' as in 'think' or 'th' as in 'they'. As Ethousand says, many English sounds don't exist in some languages and that's why they can be difficult.

And we had some interesting comments about words and the way they are spelt and pronounced. Elis RR from Brazil says 'I am a biologist and for me "tail" (that's T-A-I-L – a part of an animal) is a common word and when I read the title "A tale of two cities" (that's T-A-L-E – meaning a story) I thought that there was something wrong!'

And the user with the tastiest name, Chickenteriyaki, wrote an interesting comment about the Chinese language. For example, there's a character in Chinese that can mean either 'walk' or 'be able to do something' – both with the same pronunciation. Of course, as Chickenteriyaki says, 'It's all about the situation where you

use it'. But, although English is sometimes hard, you can learn it, at any age. Luiz Carlos, from Brazil, is 69 years old and he says he has never improved his English like now. Fantastic, Luiz!

I should remind you about the LearnEnglish Podcast app. You can download it from the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store, or follow the link on the LearnEnglish website. It has lots of features that will help you to learn.

Now it's time to hear from Tess and Ravi again, talking about something that our listeners think is typically British. This time they're talking about one of my favourite things about Britain, something that I'm sure a lot of you know – something that you can listen to, and watch, but it involves a lot more than just music.

Tess and Ravi

Ravi: Hello! My name's Ravi, and this is Tess.

Tess: Hello everybody.

Ravi: And we're here to talk about some of the things that you think of when you hear the word 'Britain' – drinking tea, pubs, red buses – all sorts of things that you know ...

Tess: ... or think you know about Britain. And if you ever listen to British radio or watch British TV programmes then you probably know the name of today's subject. The BBC.

Ravi: Everyone knows the BBC, BBC English is what people want to learn.

Tess: Yes. They used to talk like this. Actually – nobody talks like that these days.

But BBC English is usually very clear and easy to understand. Lots of learners listen to it.

Ravi: BBC stands for the British Broadcasting Corporation, but what is the BBC famous for? What do people think about when they think about the BBC?

Tess: Well, I think the BBC ... I think people think the BBC is ... fair and independent – a good place to get news. You can listen to the BBC World Service on the radio all over the world and I think people trust it.

Ravi: Why?

Tess: Good question. Well, the BBC is independent – it doesn't have any advertising – at least there's no advertising on the BBC in Britain.

Ravi: So who pays for it?

Tess: We do! Everyone who has a television in Britain has to pay for a TV licence – we pay about a hundred and fifty pounds a year – and that money goes to the BBC. And the government gives money to pay for the BBC World Service.

Ravi: Well, that's not very independent if the government pays for it.

Tess: But the government doesn't decide what the BBC says or does – it really is independent – and I think it's great for news.

Ravi: I don't really watch the news.

Tess: You should.

Ravi: I know. I watch a lot of comedy programmes on the BBC though. And documentaries – the nature documentaries are fantastic.

Tess: Yeah, they are. I loved the one about planet Earth – amazing. People watch them all over the world, you know.

Ravi: And the website's good too.

Tess: Yeah – it's huge – it's not just the news. The BBC website is one of the biggest sites in the world. Loads of people – not only in Britain but all over the world – get their news from it.

Ravi: Oh, and the football pages are great. I don't really look at the news pages very often.

Tess: Do you ever watch the news, Ravi?

Ravi: Erm ... I do, sometimes – and I read the free newspaper on the train.

Tess: Well, I think the BBC is one of the things we can be proud of – a really good independent TV and radio station that people all over the world trust for its news.

Ravi: I might have a look at the BBC website now – find out what the match is on Saturday.

Jo and Adam

Adam: And now let's say hello to Jo again.

Jo: Hello everybody.

Adam: Are you a fan of the BBC, Jo?

Jo: I love the Beeb.

Adam: I know the BBC isn't perfect, but I'm a big fan too. I love the documentaries and I listen to BBC radio podcasts on my way to and from work – so probably five hours every week. Some of it is really high quality.

Jo: My two daughters love the programmes for children on CBeebies.

Adam: Why don't you write and tell us what you think about the BBC and other British TV and radio? Can you watch BBC programmes where you live? Or get BBC radio?

Jo: What are your favourite programmes?

Adam: And do you use the BBC website? Write to us at

www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish. Now it's time to look at some of the language we heard in the podcast.

Jo: And today we're going to look at the word 'news'. Listen to Tess and Ravi.

Tess: *The BBC website is one of the biggest sites in the world. Loads of people – not only in Britain but all over the world – get their news from it.*

Ravi: *Oh, and the football pages are great. I don't really look at the news pages very often.*

Tess: *Do you ever watch the news, Ravi?*

Jo: 'News' is an unusual English word. It ends in an 's', so people think it's plural. But that isn't true. 'News' is a singular word and takes a singular verb.

Adam: We can use 'the news' as the name of a television or radio programme – 'The news is on at nine o'clock. Let's watch it.'

Jo: Notice the singular verb – 'the news is on'.

Adam: Or we can use 'news' to mean information about something – 'Did you hear the news about Simon? It's very bad.'

Jo: But again, 'news' is singular – 'It's very bad'.

Adam: And we never say 'I had a good new today'.

Jo: We say 'I had some good news today'. Try to remember – it always ends in 's' but it's always singular.

Adam: Another word connected with television is 'series'. It ends in 's' but it's singular too.

Jo: ' "Life on Earth" was a very good series. I enjoyed it very much.'

Adam: There are exercises on the website to practise some of the language that you heard in the podcast, including singular and plural words. But that's enough from us!

Jo: See you next time.

Adam/Jo: Bye!