

Elementary Podcasts Series 4 Episode 17

Adam

Adam: Hello and welcome to Episode 17 of Series 4 of LearnEnglish Elementary Podcasts. My name is Adam and my colleague Jo will be here later to talk about some of the language in the podcast.

Last time, Carolina and Jamie were both involved with their end-of-year university exams, and now they're waiting, nervously, for the results. Will Jamie get the marks that he needs to get the job he wants in Borneo? Jo and I talked a bit about how university students are assessed in Britain. It might be just by the marks that you get in the final exams, or it might be by continuous assessment – which means that all of the work you do during your course (for example, essays or small presentations) counts towards your final mark. Or it could, of course, be a mixture of the two – maybe your course work counts for half of your final mark, and the other half is the mark from the final exams. We asked you to tell us which system you have in your country and which you prefer.

Abdalmonem said that, in his university in Sudan, there's one exam at the end of every year – and it's really hard! Omarimanal said that universities in Jordan have exams at the end of every year too, and they all count towards the final mark. On the other hand, Meldenne from Brazil has a mixed system at her university. Some of the final degree marks come from exams and some from continuous assessment for each subject.

I said in the last podcast that I liked the exam-based system when I was at university. Lolachannel from Saudi Arabia wrote to say that she loves exams – I'm not sure I'd go that far! She says exams make her study in the evening and the morning, even if she doesn't sleep – and that's why she loves them!

But most of you disagree with Lolachannel and me; you seem to prefer a continuous assessment system. Eliot Alanís from Mexico prefers it because 'if you study hard during the year, you don't have to make a big effort at the end for the final exams'. And Abdullah Musa from Sudan agrees. He says 'continuous assessment keeps me working hard through the year which makes my studies interesting instead of just trying to pass exams'.

Reza Saadati from Iran says he's been studying in an exams system for the past eighteen years, but he thinks the students would be more motivated and active with continuous assessment. Reza says 'I'm going to organise my own class with a continuous assessment system when I make one of my dreams come true and become a teacher'. Good luck making your dream come true, Reza.

Jola matulessey from Indonesia thinks that a combination of both systems is the best way. Continuous assessment helps students to keep their brains active all the time and exams make us show our knowledge of the things we've learnt. And mazenhajmohammed from the Palestinian Territories puts it very simply. He says 'Both of them, so if you study you will pass!'

So thank you to everyone who sent comments and let me remind you again about the Elementary Podcast app. Get it from the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store, or follow the link from the LearnEnglish website.

And now it's time to hear from Tess and Ravi talking about something that is 'typically British'. And today Ravi's going to talk about something – or someone – he really didn't like studying at school. Let's have a listen.

Tess and Ravi

Ravi: Hello everybody. My name's Ravi.

Tess: And I'm Tess. And here we are again to talk about some of the things that you think of when you think of 'Britain' – things that are typically British. And I think it was your turn this week, Ravi, to find out about something ...?

Ravi: It was Tess. And I must say, not my favourite topic. William Shakespeare.

Tess: Shakespeare? Fantastic.

Ravi: Oh! Hours of my life at school, reading Henry the Fifth and what's that one about the old man? Goes mad ...

Tess: King Lear?

Ravi: That's him. Boring.

Tess: It's one of the best plays in the English language, Ravi.

Ravi: It's not the English language that I know. 'Thee' and 'thou' and 'didst' and 'dost'. Impossible. OK. Here we go. He was born in fifteen sixty-four, in a town called Stratford on Avon. He married a woman

called Anne Hathaway and they had three children. Then he went to London and worked for a theatre company at the Globe Theatre. And he wrote thirty-seven plays. And he died when he was fifty-two. And that's it.

Tess: 'That's it'?

Ravi: I'm not being funny, Tess. We really don't know very much about his life. Some people even say that Shakespeare didn't write the plays ...

Tess: Why?

Ravi: Different reasons. For example, they think that a man from a small town like Stratford didn't know about the world, and he wasn't well educated, so how could he write those plays?

Tess: That's ridiculous.

Ravi: I agree. What else? Ah, the Globe Theatre in London. It's a copy of the original Globe Theatre from the seventeenth century. It's a big circle, and, um, I think you have to stand up. There aren't any seats.

Tess: Of course there are seats! Lots. But there's a big space in the middle where you stand up and it's really cheap, five pounds a ticket I think. I went there to see Hamlet last year.

Ravi: 'To be or not to be: that is the question.'

Tess: Very good, Ravi. But do you know, the people in the theatre were nearly all tourists. I sometimes think that foreigners like Shakespeare more than British people do.

Ravi: Well, look at me. I'm not a fan. How many people do you think read

Shakespeare – for pleasure I mean, not study?

Tess: Not very many. But they're plays – it's better to watch them, not read them. Think of all the films, and the TV versions, all the BBC programmes.

Ravi: That's true. Another fact – 'There are more than four hundred and twenty film versions of Shakespeare's plays. He is the most "filmed" writer in the world, in any language.'

Tess: There are some great films. I saw a fantastic Japanese version of King Lear once.

Ravi: Hmm. I liked West Side Story, the musical. That's based on Romeo and Juliet, isn't it?

Tess: Yep. I didn't know you were so romantic!

Ravi: And that's enough for today, I think. Time to go home. 'A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!'

Tess: Don't be so dramatic, Ravi. My car's outside. I'll give you a lift to the station.

Jo and Adam

Adam: Hello again, Jo.

Jo: Hi Adam. It's nice to be here again.

Adam: I think Shakespeare is great. There's a reason people still say he was the greatest writer in English. And what do you think of him, Jo? Are you a fan?

Jo: I can't say I'm a big fan, to be honest. I like watching his plays, but I find it quite difficult to read Shakespeare. It's not always

easy to understand, even for a native English speaker.

Adam: You're not alone. Tess thinks that foreigners like Shakespeare more than British people do. But is that true? Write and tell us what you think about Shakespeare. Did you study him at school? Which is your favourite play?

Jo: And tell us about the most famous writers from your country too.

Adam: Write to us at www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish. And now let's look at some of the language in the podcast.

Jo: Today we're going to look at negative verb forms. Listen to Ravi and Tess and count how many negative verb forms you hear.

Ravi: *I'm not being funny, Tess. We really don't know very much about his life. Some people even say that Shakespeare didn't write the plays.*

Tess: *Why?*

Ravi: *Different reasons. For example, they think that a man from a small town like Stratford didn't know about the world, and he wasn't well educated, so how could he write those plays?*

Jo: How many did you hear? There were five. In the present – 'I'm not being funny' and 'we really don't know'.

Adam: And in the past – 'he didn't write', 'he didn't know' and 'he wasn't well educated'.

Jo: Different verb forms make the negatives in different ways. Verb forms that use the verb 'to be' make negatives by adding 'not'.

Adam: Like 'I'm not' in the present or 'he wasn't' in the past.

Jo: But other verbs use the auxiliary verb 'do' to make the negative. 'We don't know much about his life' in the present.

Adam: And 'Shakespeare didn't know about the world' in the past.

Jo: 'Didn't know'. 'I knew about the party but my friend didn't know.'

Adam: So 'I went to the party, but my friend didn't go.' Use the infinitive after 'didn't'.

Jo: Or 'doesn't'. 'My friend likes the cinema but she doesn't like the theatre.'

Adam: As usual, there are some exercises on the website to give you some practice with negative verb forms.

Jo: Including the verb 'have'. When do you say 'I haven't' and when do you say 'I don't have'? Look at the exercises and find out!

Adam: And that's all for this time. Don't forget to write to us about Shakespeare. See you next time.

Adam/Jo: Bye!