
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Cat got your tongue?

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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Rob

Hello and welcome to The English We Speak. I'm Rob and joining me is Feifei.

Feifei

Hello. [sneezes]

Rob

Bless you!

Feifei

[sneezes]

Rob

Are you ok? Have you got a cold?

Feifei

No, not a cold. Something's making me sneeze. Errr... Rob, is that a cat on your lap?!

Rob

Yes. Meet Tiddles. I decided to bring him to the office because he gets lonely at home on his own... don't you Tiddley-widdly? It's a good idea don't you think? Feifei? You've gone all quiet – you've usually got something to say. Feifei?

Feifei

[sneezes]

Rob

Can you speak? Cat got your tongue?

Feifei

No! Your cat has not got my tongue – or anything else – I'm allergic to cats.

Rob

Oh dear Feifei - but saying 'cat got your tongue?' means 'you're very quiet' or 'you've got nothing to say'.

Feifei

Really?! Well let's hear some examples of this phrase...

Examples

What's the matter? Cat got your tongue? I did say we'd use up all our money on the car!

A: Has the cat got your tongue? You usually go on about how amazing your boyfriend is.

B: We split up.

Feifei

So 'cat got your tongue' is an informal question you might say to someone who isn't saying much. [sneezes]

Rob

Oh I get it now. You weren't saying much because you were too busy sneezing!

Feifei

No Rob. I was angry because you know I am allergic to cats – don't you remember me saying that I can't be in the same room as one? Rob? Rob! What's wrong? Cat got your tongue now?

Rob

It appears Tiddles needed the toilet... but it's too late now. I'm all wet!

Feifei

Oh Rob. You stink! I'm off. Bye.