

BBC Learning English

Talk about English

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About this script

Please note that this is not a word for word transcript of the programme as broadcast. In the recording process changes may have been made which will not be reflected here.

Jo: Hello this is Talk about English, I'm Jo Reffin and we're coming to you live from the offices of BBC Learning English in London.

Callum: I'm Callum Robertson and today - more on this month's topic of consumerism with a look this week at shopping malls in India.

Jo: We'll be comparing British English and American English.

Callum: And we have some tips for those of you studying business English.

Jo: That's all coming up in Talk about English.

As we said there, we will be talking about studying English for business and to help us do that is this week's guest Timothy Blake from the London School of English. Hi Timothy.

Timothy: Hello there.

Jo: So tell us about business English at your school Timothy?

Timothy: (replies)

Callum: Today we're talking a lot about shopping malls. Can you just explain this word mall for us Timothy?

Timothy: (replies)

Jo: There are malls in most big cities around the world but we're taking a look at India where an amazing number of shopping malls are being built. Mike Embley from the BBC World Service travelled to India to find out more about consumerism there. How many shopping malls does he say are being built over the next year?

MIKE EMBLEY

So sure are the banks and the developers that shopping malls will be the key driver of a colossal expansion in retailing – that within a year 225 malls like this are to be built. Two years ago there were fewer than 30 developers are acquiring land for malls in 67 of India's biggest cities. The prize – a projected 11 billion dollars worth of sales.

Callum: So 225 malls are expected to build over the next year – which will be a big increase when you think that only two years ago there were less than 30 malls in India. Did you catch how much money is expected in sales from all these malls?

Jo: It's a very big number – 11 billion dollars. Now 1 billion is 1000 million so 11 billion is a lot of money!!

MUSIC ABBA – Money, Money, Money

Callum: So what do the people of India think of these malls? Anou Priajem is an economics student in Delhi – do her friends like going to malls or not?

Anou Priajem

I think a lot of my friends do enjoy checking out new malls – I mean the young generation now has a lot of purchasing power because a lot of my friends are getting these call centre jobs which gives them a lot of liquid cash so you have this young generation who are still living with their parents they gonna get into semi luxury goods or luxury goods and malls give them that opportunity.

Jo: So she said a lot of her friends enjoy checking out the malls – check out means to go and see what something is like. Interestingly checkout is also the place in a shop where you pay for your goods – you pay at the checkout.

Callum: Now Anou used some nice business related expressions there Timothy that we can discuss – the young generation now has a lot of purchasing power – what did she mean by that?

Timothy: (explains)

Jo: Anou said a lot of her friends are getting call centre jobs – now a call centre is a main office of a company where people can call to find out information – so lots of people answering telephones – and a lot of these call centres for international companies are now based in India. And because a lot of people are getting jobs there they have a lot of liquid cash – what does she mean by liquid cash Timothy?

Timothy: (explains)

Jo: So with this liquid cash, people can ‘get into’ – start to be interested in luxury goods. So give us some examples of what Anou might mean when she says luxury goods Timothy?

Timothy: (gives examples)

Jo: And she talks about semi-luxury goods – now the word semi can be put in front of several different words – what does semi mean and how does it change the word it is in front of?

Timothy: (explains)

Callum: So what is the difference then between luxury goods and semi-luxury goods?

Timothy: (explains)

Jo: So can we just go over that language again Callum?

Callum: Yes, basically young people in India have more money these days to buy things so they have more ‘purchasing power’ and more ‘liquid cash’ to spend and buy luxury goods like MP3 players and TVs. Let’s listen to Anou again.

Anou Priajem

I think a lot of my friends do enjoy checking out new malls – I mean the young generation now has a lot of purchasing power because a lot of my friends are getting these call centre jobs which gives them a lot of liquid cash so you have this young generation who are still living with their parents they gonna get into semi luxury goods or luxury goods and malls give them that opportunity.

Jo: So according to Anou there, young people do quite like shopping malls but not everyone thinks they are good things. Here’s Aditi Padness who is a journalist for a business newspaper in India. Can you pick out the two idioms, expressions, Aditi uses to explain why she thinks consumerism in India is bad?

Aditi Padness

There are so many things to buy now – I mean there are candles – nobody ever thought of buying candles – scented candles? Frankly a lot of what we’re consuming is rubbish now – we are not very discerning consumers, so we tend to buy things to keep up with the Jones’ and we also tend to buy things which we have no use for at all. A consumer at the moment is pretty much a lamb led to slaughter....

Jo: We’ll look at those idioms in a moment, but Aditi says a lot of what they are consuming, buying, is rubbish – rubbish is a British English word meaning really not very good at all. Now she said we are not very discerning consumers – what does that mean Timothy?

Timothy: (explains)

Callum: She also said people buy things to ‘keep up with the Jones’- now that is a great expression isn’t it – what does she mean by that?

Timothy: (explains)

Jo: And finally Aditi describes being a consumer in India like being a lamb led to the slaughter

Timothy: (explains)

Jo: So doing something because other people are doing it. So can we just recap that language again Callum?

Callum: Discerning means having good judgement about what is stylish or good quality. ‘Keeping up with the Jones’ means doing things because other people are

doing them and being like 'a lamb led to slaughter' means to have no future really. Let's listen to Aditi again.

Aditi Padness

There are so many things to buy now – I mean there are candles – nobody ever thought of buying candles – scented candles? Frankly a lot of what we're consuming is rubbish now – we are not very discerning consumers, so we tend to buy things to keep up with the Jones' and we also tend to buy things which we have no use for at all. A consumer at the moment is pretty much a lamb led to slaughter....

Jo: We've had a lot of emails and comments sent in about your shopping experiences. We're going to listen to a few of them read out by our BBC Learning English colleagues – a lot of you talked about shopping malls and the issue of choice and choosing things. You've all made very interesting comments so have a listen to these, but see if you can recognise any problems with the language...

COMMENTS

- I like to go to small shops because I don't like to waste my time in choicing things.
- I personally prefer to go to large malls because of too much choices.
- I prefer to go to large malls because there are a lot of things to choice and that I can buy

Jo: So Callum – small shops or large malls prefer?

Callum: (replies)

Jo: And any ideas about the language there?

Callum: Well it does seem that there people are confused between the word choose and choice. So we asked our colleague Nuala to explain a little bit more.

NUALA

Choose is a verb and it means to pick from a number of options. So, for example, you could say, "Between tea and coffee, I choose tea every time".

Choose is one of those irregular verbs – it goes choose, chose, chosen.

"I choose tea every time" – present

"He chose to wear the blue shirt for his interview last week" – past

"They've chosen a name for their baby – it's Anna" – that's the present perfect

That's the verb choose.

The word choice, on the other hand, is a noun. It's the noun from the verb choose. You could say "Customers in supermarkets have a lot of choice". That means there are a lots of things available at those supermarkets.

Choice is often used in the singular – so you might hear people say they have 'a lot of choice' or maybe even 'not a lot of choice'. What you can't say is "much choices" – that's wrong. Instead you should say 'a lot of choices' or 'many choices'.

So, I hope that helps you choose the right word next time!

Jo: This is Talk About English coming to you live from London. I'm Jo Reffin and here with me today are Callum Robertson and our guest Timothy Blake.

Callum: You've been telling us all week what you think about shopping malls on our website bbclearningenglish.com. And earlier on today Jo managed to talk to some of you on the telephone. Here's Camilla from Italy. Listen out for another word which means a small shop.

Jo started off by asking Camilla if she liked shopping malls...

Camilla

Yes I like even if my city's not a great shopping place – there are not many shops but if you go outside for example in Genoa there are many others.

Are there any big shopping malls where you live?

Not big shops maybe small shops – it depends on the part of the city you go but mainly there are not big shops – medium is the size.

And do you get the chance to visit big shopping malls very often?

Twice a year when I have to go to some big place for other things – for example to university or such things like that

Do you prefer big shopping malls or the smaller shops in your home town?

It depends on the kind of shops for example for clothes I prefer going to my shops – my boutiques – it's personal I know everybody there but for example electronics computer stores etc I prefer big shops because there is a variety of products – it's very large so I can choose something more than small shops.

Do you think having big shopping malls in big cities is a good idea or a bad idea to have so many big shopping centres?

Well it depends – if you have not many kinds big shopping malls it reduce the time to go shopping and if you have many times – it's more enjoyable to walk on the street and try to buy stuff with more time if you have more time and if depends on how many time you have –

And do you have lots of free time for shopping Camilla?

It depends on the period of the year – for example in summer I have many times – in autumn and winter it's really less.

Jo: Thanks Camilla for taking the time out to tell us your thoughts on shopping malls. So did you catch the word she used to describe a small shop?

Callum: That word was 'boutique' and a boutique is specifically a small shop selling fashionable clothes or jewellery. And Camilla made a very good point about smaller shops or boutiques maybe giving you a more personal service than larger shops because they are in the local area and you know people. Do you agree Jo?

Jo: I think she is right because where there are smaller shops there are generally fewer customers so the shop assistants have more time to talk to you and help you then maybe in a very busy big mall.

Callum: Camilla said malls are a good idea if you have a lot of time. Remember we are more likely to say a lot of time rather than much time or many times – if you have a lot of time it's nice to walk around different shops in a big mall.

Jo: Now if you want to take part in our programme send us an email with your name, your country and of course your telephone number – and we might just give you a call.

Callum: Send your emails to talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk – that's talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk

Now one of the things I don't like about large shopping malls is that I always buy things I don't need. I see so many things tempting me – attracting me – I think oo maybe I'll just buy that.

Jo: You mean you just can't help yourself?

Callum: I can't help myself – and to find out more about what this phrase means in English – here's Yvonne Archer with this week's Songlines programme – teaching you a very useful shopping phrase with the help of a current pop song.

SONGLINES: RAZORLIGHT – Somewhere Else

Jo: That was Yvonne Archer who 'just can't help herself' teaching us those Songlines!

So we've been discussing shopping malls and we're going to take a look at the word 'mall' – this is a word used quite often in North American English that we have started to use – probably because of the increasing numbers of shopping malls around. In the UK we usually call a shopping mall a shopping centre.

Callum: So there are differences between the English spoken in America and the English spoken in Britain – as indeed there are differences in all the Englishes spoken around the world – Australian English, African English etc. – The most talked about ones are probably American and British English and we're going to look at some of those differences today.

Jo: Dana Hunter is Canadian and she has been living and working in the UK for six years. So as a speaker of North American English – what are the main different words you might come across in Britain?

DANA HUNTER

I'd have to say the most obvious words that are different that I come across are flat instead of apartment, rubbish instead of garbage – on a car in North America you would say trunk whereas in the UK you would say boot.

Jo: So Dana says the most obvious differences she comes across, she experiences, are the word flat which is used in British English – apartment in North America. When you talk about things you don't need, waste – we would call that rubbish in the UK and it's garbage in North America. And finally the back part of your car for storing luggage, bags or boxes is called a boot in the UK and the trunk in North America.

Callum: These are just a couple of words but there are many more aren't there Timothy?

Timothy: (gives other examples)

Jo: But it is all English isn't it and basically there is no problem with communication between a North American and a British person both speaking English?

Timothy: (replies)

Callum: British and North American English speakers do know that their English is different without necessarily knowing someone from the other country don't they?

Timothy: (replies)

Callum: Dana is going to mention three differences between British and North American business English – can you catch what they are?

DANA HUNTER

In business some of the words I come across that are different in the UK are the following:

In the UK you call the boss of the company the managing director or the MD and quite often in North America that same position is called the Chief Executive Officer or the CEO so there's a difference there.

Something else that's quite different – in the UK when you have a street of shops you often refer to that as the high and you can read in the newspapers when they talk about sales on the high street are increasing which means that business is generally good. In North America we don't have the concept of the high street. Yes we do have streets with shops and we do have what's called a strip mall which is a row of shops in one area or of course we have a shopping mall but we would never refer to it as the high street so that's quite a different term.

Another different word is the word for customer – in the UK they're sometimes described as punters so the punters would go into the shops but that's obviously a really colloquial term in the UK – I'd never heard of it before I came here.

Jo: So three differences in business language that Dana can think of – a boss of a company in the UK is called a managing director

Callum: In North America they would say CEO which is short for Chief Executive Officer

Jo: In the UK we talk about the high street to mention sales figures and to talk about consumers

Callum: In North America they talk about shopping malls and 'strip malls' – a row of shops in your local area – but they never talk about the high street

Jo: And in the UK you might hear the word punter in more informal English

Callum: And this is a British English word for customer.

Jo: So Timothy – do the different Englishes, vocabulary and pronunciation cause a big problem for your students?

Timothy: (replies)

Jo: We're going to look specifically at business English in a moment but first – it's competition time!

All this month we're running a competition to win not one but TWO BBC Learning English mp3 players. And to win those we would like you to write a report - a business report telling us about attitudes to consumerism in your country. You can report on whatever details you think might be interesting.

Callum: Is your country consumer-driven? Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Do you and people in your country like buying things or are there other aspects of life which are more important? Each report should be between 150 and 200 words. A report can be a text, audio or video file.

Jo: Now the closing date for entries is tomorrow Friday, 18th August – and we've had a lot of entries from you so thank you for that. But if you want the chance to win an mp3 player there is still time.

Callum: The best entries will be put on the site and two winners will receive mp3 players. For full details see the information on bbclearningenglish.com/webcast – so here's a plan for you – listen to the rest of the webcast – and then get writing!! Good luck!

Jo: We'll be choosing one winner for the mp3 player and you will get the chance to vote on the other winner if you look on our website next week. We've been

looking at some of your entries and we thought we'd read some parts out to give you some examples of what people have been writing.

Here's part of an opening paragraph from another report, this time about Spain. It really teases me as a reader; I want to know what's coming next. It begins on a positive note and then contrasts that with some negatives aspects so I have a clear sense that the report is going to be a balanced one.

"On the face of it, Spaniards enjoy a high standard of living now. However, there are some facts that may halt that engine in the medium-term."

Jo: You're listening to Talk About English from bbclearningenglish.com and our guest today is business English teacher Timothy Blake from the London School of English – and as well as helping us throughout the webcast – the main reason he is with us today is to talk about business English. How popular is business English these days Timothy?

Timothy: (replies)

Callum: And what are the main problems that students have with learning English for business?

Timothy: (replies)

Jo: We've had an email from Canan Aksoy asking do you need to follow a book to learn business English?

Timothy: (replies)

Callum: Mark Gurav has sent us an email – he’s from India and he has some questions about doing job interviews in English – interviews can make you very nervous even in your own language – so what general tips would you have for someone who has to do an interview in English when it’s not their first language?

Timothy: (replies)

Jo: So can you give us say three businesses phrases that people studying English for business really need to know.

Timothy: (replies)

Jo: Let’s take a look at some more of your comments on shopping malls. Nhi from Vietnam says

frankly, I prefer shopping at small but comfortable shops than the big ones because I find it difficult to be a selective shopper.

Jo: Selective means choosing certain things and not others – but Nhi says it’s hard to choose and be selective – there’s too much choice.

Callum: Musthafa Mangalore in India says I would rather prefer the idea of one-stop shopping; where we can find something for everyone.

One-stop shopping means you go to one place and you can buy everything there – so a large shopping mall would be a one-stop shopping experience as you can do everything in one building

Jo: Now there’s one shopping mall we haven’t looked at yet – which is probably the biggest in the world where you can buy absolutely anything you might need. Any ideas Callum?

Callum: You wouldn’t be talking about the internet would you?

Jo: Well done Callum – yes the internet is I guess the biggest one-stop shopping mall you can find – and Alexander from Ukraine is just one of many of you who like to shop on the internet. He says:

The best way to shop is internet. You can find whatever you want and get it not even leaving your house. Go for it.

Jo: Do you ever shop on the internet Tim/Callum?

Callum/Tim: (reply)

Jo: Earlier this week I went to Oxford Street – the main shopping street in London, with BBC World Service business news presenter Russell Padmore to find out more about internet shopping – before we listen to him – here’s some language to help you out.

Callum: Russell talks about internet shopping being a significant part of the retail sector – significant means important and the retail sector businesses that sell things to the public.

Jo: Russell mentions the advent of low cost airlines – the arrival of cheap airlines

Callum: A phenomenon is a successful or popular trend

Jo: Developed countries are countries with more advanced industries

Callum: Landlines are wires carrying telephone signals under the ground and sending data up these lines means sending information electronically. Have a listen to Jo’s interview with Russell – what percentage of UK adults bought something online this year?

Jo: And what things do people not like buying online?

RUSSELL PADMORE

How big is internet shopping in the UK Russell?

Perhaps 10 years ago we'd have been talking about virtually zero but I can tell you today internet shopping is a really significant part of the retail sector in the UK – as an example just over the last year 5% of all shopping was done online

How quickly is that increasing?

Year on year we're seeing more people spending their money buying goods online – not just goods services as well – I think of airlines for e.g. – 10 years ago the advent of low cost airlines in Europe could not really have taken off without the internet – I've seen a survey which says that approximately 50% of all UK adults actually bought something online over the last year.

Now this phenomenon of buying things on the internet is it just something that happens in big developed cities countries or happening all around the world. It's not just confined to the developed economies of the world – the so called G8 – it's not just the United States or Western Europe or Japan – elsewhere we're starting to see the internet become a serious area where people can do business. In Africa many telecom companies are developing their business by not having landlines but looking to mobile telephones and also those that have the landlines are looking to send data up the lines – in other words they also see the growth of the internet.

Internet shopping only going to increase?

Internet shopping is definitely going to increase in the future – it's changing the shape – it's changing the traditional method of shopping – but let's remember there are some things that people still want to buy in a shop – if you're buying a pair of trousers – if you're buying a new shirt – people still feel more comfortable going into one of those grand shops where we're here on Oxford St in London – these traditional retailers – they want to see that particular piece of clothing – feel it touch it – perhaps more importantly if it's a pair of shoes

try them on – because if you buy them on the internet you’ve got the problem of sending them away if they don’t fit again!

Jo: So 50% of adults bought something online this year and 5% of all shopping in the UK was done online last year.

Callum: Now the things people don’t like to buy online are of course clothes or shoes because you can’t try them on.

Jo: And that just about brings us the end of today’s Talk About English. Thanks to our guest, business English teacher Timothy – we’ll see you next time!

Everyone: Bye!