

BBC Learning English

Talk about English

Live webcast

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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.

Anna: Hello I'm Anna Jones

Callum: And I'm Callum Robertson

Anna: And this is Talk about English coming to you live from our offices at BBC Learning English in London.

Callum: And coming up today

Anna: news and eyewitness reports from around the world

Callum: tips from the experts on how to report for the media

Anna: comments and questions from our learners

Callum: win a mp3 player by entering our eyewitness report competition

Anna: and we take a look at the language in this week's press

Anna: Today we continue our theme of looking at English in the media and this week we focus on English and journalism.

Callum: How do you write news stories for radio? How do you tell a story with pictures and words and how do you give an eyewitness report?

Anna: Well to help us answer those questions we're joined in our offices today by Jo Episcopo who is Manager in journalism and production training here at the BBC World Service. Hello and welcome Jo.

Jo: Hello

Anna: Tell us about your job as journalism and production trainer here at BBC World Service Jo– what does it involve?

Anna: Well we'll be talking to Jo in more detail about her work a little later and she'll be answering some of *your* questions about journalism. But first, don't forget our live webcast vote - .where do you get your news from? Radio, TV, online, newspapers or somewhere else. Let us know by voting on our website now. We'll give you the results at the end of the programme. .

Callum: Yes, it's time for our competition.. If you'd like the opportunity to win an mp3 player then listen on. We want you to send us your eye witness reports in words, audio or video describing something you've lived through or something that you are living through at the moment that you want to share with us. It can be anything that you have experienced personally – tell us what you saw and how it made you feel. The closing date for the competition is 18th September - if you want more details of how to enter then go to the competition section of our website

Anna: Well if you're not sure what an eye witness report is then what you're about to hear you may help. It's written by the BBC's former chief news

correspondent Kate Adie and defines a news reporter as an eyewitness.
“Being an eyewitness” is read by BBC producer, Amber Barnfather.

A reporter is an eyewitness. It's a **privileged position**, and one which is not easily granted, especially in conflicts or times of crisis.

Press conferences, official statements, public relations and spokespersons, photo-opportunities, and guided tour 'facilities' may be useful, but they are no **substitute** for **raw facts**.

A reporter should hold to a central principle of being a **first-hand witness**, for there is much that is **veiled**, interpreted and hidden

Anna: So that was the BBC's former chief news correspondent talking about how a news reporter or a journalist has a privileged position as an eyewitness – their job is to give a true and accurate account of events as they happen. Well Callum, can you help us with some of the language used there please.

Callum: **privileged position**
substitute
raw facts
first-hand witness
veiled,

Anna: Well Jo, what kind of advice would you give to our learners who want to enter our eyewitness report competition and who aren't chief news correspondents? Can you give them some handy tips about how to write an eyewitness account of an event or experience they want to share with us?

Callum: Well eyewitness reports are often associated with breaking news stories – stories that are unfolding or happening as they are being reported. Well just over a year ago the people of New Orleans were the victims of massive flooding after Hurricane Katrina hit the United States. You're going to hear some short news reports from that time – the first voice you hear will be the

opening headlines of an American news programme describing Hurricane Katrina as the one of the worst natural disasters ever to hit America.. This is followed by an American reporter describing how a family is stranded – they're unable to escape from the roof of a house and are about to be lifted to safety by a helicopter rescue team. We then listen to two personal accounts by people directly affected by the floods.

NEWS HEADLINE ROOFTOP RESCUE

The moment we got on the roof the entire house collapsed and the roof just flattened out. We literally floated and jumped from roof to roof and piles of debris that would not sink there was so much debris there until we got to a neighbour's pick-up truck that it floated back got back to not almost the fence and saw a refrigerator.

And the house kept popping up and down when the roof tried to come off and then all the water came through the floor and bubbled up and filled up the house and it was unbelievable, but my house is still whole and everything from here to the beach is gone.

Anna: Well the first voice we heard there was the newsreader or the anchor – the presenter – reading the top headline in an American news programme. What did news presenter tell us Callum?

Anna: And then we heard the first section of a report about the helicopter rescue from the rooftop? What's the expression the reporter uses that means they can go ahead with rescuing the people who are stranded on the roof?

Anna : We'll just listen again to the two personal stories of ordinary people who were there at the time. First of all we hear a man describe how his family escaped from their house after it collapsed. What did they do to escape?

The moment we got on the roof the entire house collapsed and the roof just flattened out. We literally floated and jumped from roof to roof and piles of debris that would not sink there was so much debris there until we got to a neighbour's pick-up truck that it floated back got back to not almost the fence and saw a refrigerator.

And the house kept popping up and down when the roof tried to come off and then all the water came through the floor and bubbled up and filled up the house and it was unbelievable, but my house is still whole and everything from here to the beach is gone.

Anna: So Callum – how do they escape from their house after it fell down following the flooding?

Anna: And what did the woman say about her house. Did it survive the flooding?

Callum: **My house is still whole and everything from here to the beach is now gone**

Anna: Jo – writing a news story for the BBC – what kind of training are BBC newsroom journalists and correspondents given?

Callum: And while we're on the subject of news and current affairs we have a question from a learner for you Jo. Ana from Peru wants to know the following:

Anna: You're listening to Talk about English. I'm Anna Jones,

Callum: I'm Callum Robertson

Anna: And today we're talking about English and journalism.

Callum: And don't forget to vote on today's topic – where do you get your daily dose of news from? – all the details are on the website so please vote before the end of the programme.

Anna: And while you're doing that here's a Songline to listen to. This looks at the phrase 'make or break' and comes from a song by the Sugarbabes.

Callum: Well we asked you to write in with your comments about the kind of journalism or type of publication you read for pleasure. Nerius from Lithuania sent us his thoughts – his e-mail is read by a native speaker.

I guess that is a tricky question. The main point here is for pleasure. I could hardly imagine journalism as a kind of pleasure, what I agree upon is that good journalism should bring you some degree of pleasure when you are coming across the serious issues on the media and media should come up with good professional view on it. One shining example is BBC reports from Our Own Correspondent. Keep going...

Anna: Nerius says that there should be a good professional view on the serious issues in the news and he mentions the radio programme From Our Own Correspondent as a good example of this. Jo, can you explain what this BBC programme is about?

Anna: Well we happen to have a short extract from a report that featured on From our own correspondent. It's by Mark Doyle who is the BBC's world affairs correspondent and in it he describes his trip to the Liberian rainforest with the American charity, Conservation International. It's a very descriptive piece of journalism and could also be described as an eyewitness account even though it's not describing a breaking news story. Listen out for the descriptive language- what does he describe in detail?

I was travelling with Liberians working for the American charity, Conservation International.

They soon started pointing out the trees to me in the forest canopy and reeling off their Latin names.

I can't remember the exact names now, but most of the trees seemed to be called something *Liberiensis*, the Latin tag for "originating in Liberia".

I cannot remember all the names now but I will never forget one majestic specimen.

With a giant trunk, it soared into the canopy. Its leaves were like umbrellas with dainty twisted edges.

Partly dark green, partly light, the umbrellas shaded fruit the size of footballs.

This elegant giant competed with coffee bushes, mango and rubber trees.

These crops were wild, their seeds having somehow made it into the natural jungle that is thick with a biodiversity scientists can only dream of.

I had never seen this side of Liberia. I had spent too long watching the war in the capital.

I was told of elephants that live here and boa constrictors that can swallow a small deer. When a boa constrictor is digesting, I was told, he or she lies down for days to sleep it off.

Don't tell the people from Conservation International, but that is apparently the best and safest time to kill a snake. It was a new world to me.

The idea was even mentioned, in the future, of "eco-tourism" in Liberia. For someone who has mostly seen war here, that sounded surreal. But, thinking about it, if the peace holds, why not?

Anna: That was part of a report by BBC correspondent Mark Doyle. Now you must hear a lot of descriptive reports in your job Jo - were there techniques or a specific use of language used there which you recognise as typical of a report written for From Our Own Correspondent?

Anna: Well I've been looking at the BBC News Style Guide to see what kinds of language issues come up for journalist. There's a section on reported speech – or indirect speech. Can you explain reported speech Jo?

Jo: Well, briefly, reported speech involves taking what was actually said and reporting it in such a way that we know who said it in the first place. Direct quotes from people involved in an event can add impact to a story but reported speech is a way of summarising what happened.

Callum: And the basic rule is very simple. If the main verb is in the past tense – for example “he said” , then the tense of the verb in reported speech must be changed. For example if a sportswoman says: I will carry on competing until I win.” Then the reporter would change this into reported speech: “The sportswoman said that she would go on competing until she won.

Jo: But the change of tense is not needed if you are directly quoting what was said as in: The sportswoman said: I will carry on competing until I win.

Anna: Now Jo we've spoken quite a lot about writing for radio and being an eyewitness but what about video or TV? How do you go about writing to pictures?

Anna: And what other courses are you involved in?

Anna: We asked you to write in with your comments about the kind of journalism or type of publication you read for pleasure. Here's Yulya from Ukraine and Muhammed from Pakistan with their comments. Their e-mails are read by a native speaker.

Yulya, Ukraine

Hello everyone! Like any woman I like to read magazines for women very much, where I can find information about fashion news, cosmetics, relationship, gossip about celebrities, some interesting stories from everyday life. I like also magazines containing recipes, advice in cooking. Here in Ukraine magazines for women are very popular.

Muhammad Asim Munir, Pakistan

I like to study & analyze current affairs. Internet Publication is my favourite medium being cheap, up-to-date and having diverse point of views. I read to enhance my knowledge but feel pleasure when something new is added to my knowledge.

Anna: This is Talk about English, live from BBClearningenglish.com. I'm Anna Jones

Callum: I'm Callum Robertson.

Anna: And continuing our topic of journalism this week we can now listen to a personal point of view from world affairs correspondent, Mark Doyle whose report about Liberia we heard earlier in the programme. I asked Mark to describe one of the qualities needed by reporters to get things done in a difficult situation – what quality does he describe? You'll hear the answer to that question in the interview.

Anna: That was World Affairs correspondent Mark Doyle.

Anna: Now its time to answer in detail a question about the English language sent to us by a learner. This one is about phrasal verbs from Yana in Moscow. She wants to know the difference between the phrases 'to end up' and 'to be up to.' Here's language teacher Gareth Rees.

It is not a secret at all that foreigners learning English have a lot of difficulties with phrasal verbs. So do I. I would be glad to know explanations for the phrases: 'to end up' and 'to be up to'.

Well Yana, thank you for your question which as you say is about phrasal or multi-word verbs. These are verbs which have more than one part and they can be difficult for learners of English partly because there are so many and also because they often have more than one meaning.

The two you've chosen though are not so difficult. First of all 'to end up' means to reach a final position. For example, about travel: "They are travelling across Europe by train and they'll end up in Paris. From there, they fly back to the US." Or, another example, from life: "I studied medicine at university but I ended up working for an accountancy firm." In that second example the final job for the person was as an accountant even though they started by studying medicine. They 'ended up' working as an accountant.

Now, 'to be up to' has two meanings. The first means that someone is capable of doing a task or facing a challenge. For example: "She's up to the job. In fact, she'll probably deliver the report early." Here the woman is definitely able to do the job. She's 'up to' the job.

The second meaning, and I think it is the more common one, is similar to 'to do something'. If a father hears his children making a noise he might shout: "What are you up to?" and he wants to know what they are doing. This meaning of 'to be up to' is often used when you are

suspicious of something. You think someone is behaving in a strange way and you don't know why they are doing something. For example, a teacher sees three students go into an empty classroom. The teacher might say: "Did you see those students go in that room? What are they up to? Let's go and have a look."

Now, this phrase, 'to be up to' is also used to talk about someone's free time. For example: "What are you up to this weekend?" is an informal way to ask what someone is doing over the weekend, to ask if they have any plans.

So, I think I've ended up at the end of the explanation, I hope it has helped. By the way Yana, what are you up to tonight?

Anna: Now its time to look at language in this week's press. And our first headline is: from the Daily Telegraph

HEADLINE: Running late for lunch: a Mumbai tragedy

Anna: Jo, what do you think this story is about?

SUMMARY: Eyewitness account by Daily Telegraph reporter Peter Foster on a road accident in Mumbai in India . He was in a minibus with a group of journalists – travelling in convoy with other vehicles one of which contained the British Conservative party leader – David Cameron who was on a 4-day visit to India. The reporter starts off by saying that they were running late. The driver of the minibus was driving very fast to try to get to their destination and to make matters worse it was all taking place during the monsoon – so road conditions were bad – unfortunately a woman stepped out in front of the minibus as was knocked over.

Looking at it purely as an eyewitness account it has some very descriptive language within it. He sets the scene so they are clearly in India – let's take a closer look at the language

CHAT: How well does this work as an eyewitness account?

Anna: Our second story today is from The Guardian newspaper

Callum: Now it's time to find out the results of our live webcast vote. And our vote this week was: where do you get your news from? And the results are.....

Anna: Well a big thank you to our guest this week Jo and of course to Callum. That's all from today's live Talk about English. Don't forget to join us next week at the same time 12.15 GMT. Don't worry if you missed some of the live broadcast, you can listen again on the website, bbclearningenglish.com.....Bye for now.