

BBC Learning English
Talk about English
Live webcast – Poland and news
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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.

Jackie: Hello, this is Talk About English coming to you live from Bush House in London. I'm Jackie Dalton.

Callum: And I'm Callum Robertson.

Jackie: In the programme today: the importance of choosing your words carefully

Callum: Your views on how other people perceive your country

Clip

Callum: And a special look at Poland, our country of the month.

Jackie: This is the last programme in our series focusing on news and the media. Last week we looked at how to write and speak in good, plain English. This week we're going to look a bit more at language and also explore the issue of stereotypes in the media. To help us with that, we're joined by Karen O'Brien, Regional Editor for the BBC's Arabic Region. Could you tell us a bit more about yourself?

Karen: (responds)

Callum: And we'll be looking at some of these issues in relation to Poland, which is the country of the month on our website at the moment. If you go to the 'Communicate' section of our site, you'll be able to find pictures, facts, questions and answers on Poland. And here to provide us with some special insight into Poland is Kaz Janowski who is of Polish origin. Welcome Kaz – tell us about yourself.

Kaz: (responds)

Jackie: And English learner and journalist Stefan Roemermann is back with us because he enjoyed all the English language questions we fired at him last week so much.

Stefan: (responds)

Jackie: We're going to start with a closer look at a topic we touched on last week, but want to explore in more depth this week. And that's language use and objectivity. Callum, can you remind us what we mean by 'objectivity'?

Calum: (explains objectivity)

We could also say impartial, neutral, unbiased.

Jackie: Karen, you must be very aware of the importance of using neutral language, especially given the political sensitivities in the area you focus on?

Karen: (responds)

Jackie: And the language you use can also subtly influence politics or people's beliefs.

Karen: (responds – give sectarianism as an example)

Jackie: Last week we heard from Fouad Razek formerly Head of News and Current Affairs for the BBC's Arabic service talking about the difficulty in describing suicide attacks, and problems with words like 'martyr' or 'terrorist'. He's about to give us an example of a recent difficulty with language that came up related to events in Israel and Lebanon. What is it?

Fouad Razek

Callum: Fouad says they had difficulty finding the right language to talk about the Israeli soldiers who were kidnapped, seized, captured or detained by Hezbollah

Jackie: Karen, could you explain some of the issues that the language here raises.

Karen: (discuss problems with this language)

Jackie: Stefan, this is your first challenge on the programme today and of course, if you're listening at home live, you're welcome to join in. Karen is going to give you a sentence which has a few problems with it. You have to try and make it better.

Karen: 'The armed gunmen kidnapped a soldier in a daring bomb attack on the army patrol.'

Callum: And feel free to try this if you're listening at home, send us an email with your suggestion to talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk

Jackie: We've had a question in from one of our listeners about impartiality.

Listener question

I am Eduardo from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

You said you teach the journalists who work for BBC how to write in an impartial way and not to express their own opinion. How long does this process take? I mean, How long does it take for a journalist to be ready for work, to go to the streets and begin to work?

Jackie: Karen – does it take a while to learn how to write news reports in an impartial way?

Karen: (responds)

Jackie: As we mentioned earlier, Poland is the country of the month on our website at the moment. So in this programme we're going to take a look at Poland and how Poles are portrayed or shown in the media. Polish people have certainly featured quite a lot in the media here in Britain recently.

Callum: Yes, that's because one of the largest groups of new migrants to Britain are Poles. In 2004 Poland entered the European Union which gave Polish people much greater rights to live and work in other European Union countries.

Jackie: Immigration is a hot political issue here right now and is being talked about a lot in the media. Emma Kwesiga Lydersen is a journalist who has been following this topic closely. How does she think Poles are portrayed in the British Media?

Emma

I think Polish people are generally portrayed in a positive way in the British media. I think they are portrayed as hard working, that they have high education level, that they're trustworthy, industrious – so I think they have a positive image here.

Callum: She believes that they have a positive image, they are seen to be trustworthy and industrious, which means they are seen to be honest and hardworking.

Jackie: We asked a couple of people on the streets of London what image they have of the Poles?

Vox

Jackie: The first man, who was originally from Czechoslovakia, says many Poles work on building sites – we'll talk more about jobs later because I know not all our Polish listeners agree with those stereotypes. And he said they like drink – Kaz, would you agree that drinking is a popular pastime in Poland?

Kaz: (responds)

Jackie: The second man said he thought Poles work a lot harder than the English, which confirms the view we heard earlier on from Emma, the journalist.

Callum: But this isn't always a positive, as this British man, Mark White comments. What does he say is the 'flip side' of being seen as hard working, the 'flip-side' which means the opposite side.

Englishman

I think a lot of people recognise in the media that many of the Polish people that have come to Britain in recent years are very hard working, very reliable, people of considerable integrity who do a very good job especially in the construction industry, catering and cleaning industries and I think the flip side of that is that some elements of the press are of the opinion that they are possibly taking jobs from English people. But I think the truth of the matter is that if native English people were doing those jobs well enough there would be no jobs for the Poles in the first place.

Jackie: Mark thinks that the flip side is that the hard-working Poles could be seen to be taking jobs from British people. But Mark makes the point that the Poles are only doing jobs that British people won't do. Kaz, do you think that's true?

Kaz: (responds)

Jackie: Stefan, we set you a task earlier on. We asked you to come up with a better version of this phrase 'The armed gunmen kidnapped a soldier in a daring bomb attack on the army patrol. ' What have you come up with?

Stefan: (responds)

All: (discuss)

Jackie: Karen, how would you have phrased this news story?

Karen: (responds)

Callum: Can we have another phrase for our listeners and Stefan to try?

Karen: 'The terrorists say they won't liberate him until their legitimate demands are agreed to '.

Jackie: Well if you're listening live and also have a suggestion on the kind of language that could be used, or a question about it, do send us an email to talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk and we'll ask the expert what she thinks.

END OF PART ONE

Jackie: You're listening to Talk About English. I'm Jackie Dalton.

Callum: I'm Callum Robertson.

Jackie: And our guests today are Karen O'Brien editor for the BBC's Arabic service, Kaz Janowski our Polish expert and Stefan Roemermann, an English learner.

Callum: In the first part of this programme we asked some people in the UK how they perceive Polish people who've come to the UK. Some of these of views are of course inevitably influenced by the media. Now we'll take a look at the language of some of the British news reports that have come up on the topic of migration and the language they use.

Jackie: Let's look at how the same story is covered in two different newspapers. This first story is about how some banks in the UK are hiring Polish-speaking staff because of the large numbers of Polish speakers who've arrived in the UK. The banks have also been offering Polish people special classes on how to buy homes and set up business in the UK.

The Sun's Headline for this: Banks go to Poles

The Guardian: Banks aim to cater to Polish communities

All: (discuss language)

Jackie: Another recent migration-related story – this one about figures showing more than 400,000 migrants from Eastern Europe have arrived in the UK in the past two years:

The Sun says: Migrants have poured into Britain

The Guardian: UK receives more than 400,000 migrants

Stefan, any thoughts on the effects this different language use has?

Stefan: (responds)

All: (discuss)

Jackie: Another story about immigration from the Sun.

The headline: 'Migrants out of control' schools, hospitals & housing face meltdown as migrants swamp Britain

'Meltdown' means schools, hospitals and so on will stop working, but the key word here is 'swamp'.

All: (discuss swamp)

Jackie: Guardian: So far, migrant workers have been just the job

All: (discuss)

Piotr phone call

Jackie: Thanks to Piotr for that insight – a lovely expression he used there which I'd like to pick up on 'Poles can do!'

Callum: (play on expression 'no can do')

Jackie: We heard Piotr's views on the Britain there – it has a liberal economy, but also Polish people might not trust the British because of Britain's behaviour during World War II. Kaz – do you think that's an issue?

Kaz: (responds)

Jackie: The BBC has done a survey of Poles in Britain to get their opinion on the British. We're about to hear the BBC's economics editor Evan Davis with some of the results. As you listen answer this question:

Callum: Does the *survey* show that most Polish people don't trust the British?

Survey results

The Poles have been among the changing faces of Britain in recent years but what do they think of us? Have the British generally been friendly and welcoming? Out of our 135 Poles 105 said 'Yes' only 4 said we'd been hostile or suspicious. Three quarters said you can generally trust British people not to cheat you.

Callum: So far so good. To the Poles British people seem mostly to be friendly and trustworthy. But it's not all good news for the British.

Survey results

Now the bad news, are the British hard-working and diligent? Well I'm afraid 80% of those with an opinion thought not and there was a similar result on British food.

"Do you like the food in England?"

"Mmmm, no, I'm going to be honest with you, just no."

Jackie: So although British people seem to regard the Poles as hard working, the Poles do not think the same about the British – and again English food does not get a positive response – Kaz, you've experienced both Polish and British cuisine – what do you think?

Kaz: (responds)

Callum: Well despite the food, most of the Poles in the survey do come across as content. Here's Evan Davis again.

Survey results

Do they regret coming to Britain? Only 8 said they did. 113 had no regrets. In fact the vast majority also said they were happier than in Poland.

"I'm planning to stay for a little bit longer than I was planning at the beginning but that's just because life in here seems to be much easier than in my country"

Callum: So it seems that at least some Poles are happy to be here in Britain. Coming up later we'll hear more of your views on perceptions and misconceptions of your country.

END OF PART TWO

Jackie: You're listening to Talk About English. I'm Jackie Dalton.

Callum: I'm Callum Robertson.

Jackie: And our guests today are Karen O'Brien. Regional Editor for the BBC's Arabic Region, Kaz Janowski our Polish expert and Stefan Roemermann, an English learner.

We had lots of great entries to our eye witness report competition. But we had to narrow it down to one winner and we did this with the help of Alex Ritson, the BBC editor who appeared on the programme a few weeks ago with tips on how to write good eye witness reports. He's very kindly selected a winner for us, and here he is:

Alex

Callum: Thanks to Alex Ritson, a BBC editor for that.

Callum: You can find a link on our site to the stories we just talked about there. Thank you for all your entries to the competition, there were all sorts of interesting stories. If you didn't win, don't let that put you off, try again next time – we'll be bringing you details of our next competition soon – this will relate to films, so keep your eyes open for that.

Jackie: Stefan we set you a task – you had to come up with a neutral way of saying: 'The terrorists say they won't liberate him until their legitimate demands are agreed to '.

Jackie: What's wrong with this and how might you re-phrase it?

Stefan: (responds)

Karen: (what do you think?)

Jackie: So far we've looked at Poland and the media and but what something that doesn't make the headlines here quite so often, but certainly does in Poland, and that's the effect of Poles leaving their country on Poland.

We've talked a lot so far about how many Poles come to work in the UK as builders, plumbers, doing jobs that people originally from here don't want to do, but I think it's important to remember that it's not just the lower wage jobs that are being taken – Poland is seeing many of it's highly qualified teachers, doctors, lawyer and other professionals leave.

The Polish Deputy Prime Minister and Education minister Roman Giertych is one person who's worried about this – Poland is suffering from a serious 'brain drain'. A brain drain – Callum?

Callum: (explains)

Jackie: The education minister is worried about the brain drain. As you listen to him answer this question.

Callum: What does he hope will happen in the coming years?

Roman Giertych

Against Poland participation in EU, hopes many people or heir children come back with money, experience know-how But many never come back for GB that's good news they are very active very intelligent one of reasons western governments wanted Poland in the EU. Maybe needed programme against brain drain.

(Listener comments)

All: Goodbye