

# 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.

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**Callum:** Hello, I'm Callum Robertson

**Jackie:** I'm Jackie Dalton

**Callum:** And this is Talk about English, live from London. In today's programme we focus on England and Journey around the country

**Jackie:** We visit a monument in London

### **MONUMENT TASTER**

308, 309, 310, 311, and we finally made it up to the top. What a spectacular view we have from up here

**Callum:** Discover how people feel about the city of Manchester

### **MANCHESTER TASTER**

I'm new to Manchester, I moved from London nearly a year ago and I think it's a much friendlier and less stressful place to live.

**Jackie:** And we also have your comments, a quiz and much more coming up in today's Talk about English

**Callum:** Our guest today is Amanda Smyth from Visit Britain

(BRIEF CHAT ABOUT AMANDA'S ROLE AND THAT OF VISIT BRITAIN)

**Callum:** Jackie, one reason we're talking about England today is that we've been travelling around the country on a road-trip

**Jackie:** Yes last week we went to a number of different cities in England, Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield and Cambridge. We met lots of teachers and students and talked to them about our website.

**Callum:** What kind of reception did you get?

**Jackie:** We got an excellent reception and the people we met also helped us out with a project we are running on journeys.

(Explains a bit about the Journey project)

And we can listen to one of the entries now –

### **ANDREA and ROMAN JOURNEY**

My name is Andrea, I come from Switzerland, from the Italian part of Switzerland.

I'm Roman, I'm from Switzerland too, but from the German part of Switzerland.

And I think we really didn't know what to write and then we chose to write about the last journey of the life, about the death

The title of the poem we wrote is;

The Last Journey of the Life

Are you ready for the last journey, how can you prepare for it? Can you?

Everyone is going to make this journey, it can be unexpected, too early but sometimes too late.

Your life is the judge and at the end you receive the bill.  
It can be expensive or cheap; it depends on your behaviour, your age, your destiny.  
Do you feel pain? Is there a door? A lift? A corridor?  
Is there a connection to another world, to other people, to another life?  
Perhaps it's just the end of life.  
Perhaps it takes a long time to reach the other side.  
Perhaps it will be there in a second, or never.  
But what comes after? Will there be everybody there?  
Imagine to be in a beautiful garden with sweet fruit and delicious food.  
Perhaps you will land in a dark, hot room with flames and you can't go back  
Because this is the beginning of the end.  
Do you want to know where you will end?  
Yes? No? You will discover it!

### **Jackie & Callum respond to poem.**

**Callum:** And next week we'll be visiting more cities around England – this time we are going to Oxford, Bristol, Bournemouth and Brighton and you can find out more about our journeys and the cities we've visited by following the road trip link on the webcast page.

**Jackie:** And because the team is away on the road trip there won't be a webcast next week. So remember, no webcast next week, but we will be back on November 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Callum:** Now I want to read an email we had in, this is from Noelia, in Buenos Aires, Argentina

I'm writing to congratulate you on the excellent programmes about film you presented.

I learned about the webcasts by chance, one day surfing the net in June, and now I listen to you every week. I'm very interested in British accents and dialects I was wondering whether you speak like that (so clearly!!) all the time or only for the programme so as to be understood easily. Then, I suppose you speak a sort of RP accent, am I correct?

(JACKIE AND CALLUM QUICKLY COMMENT)

It happens to me that I can understand you perfectly, but it gets complicated with an American accent or an Australian one. It's unbelievable the amount of English varieties that exist. It would be great if you could deal with "Accents" one week.

**Callum:** Well Noelia, thank you very much for your email, today, we are going to be talking a little bit about English accents.

**Jackie:** Well, one accent in particular. a Birmingham accent – or a 'Brummie' accent some might say. 'Brummie' is an informal word to describe someone or something who comes from Birmingham – Britain's second biggest city. And it was one of the cities we visited last week.

**Callum:** The Brummie accent is loved by some, but hated by many. In surveys, many people say it's the most annoying accent there is. A lot of people make fun of it.

**Jackie:** But some people in Birmingham are fed up with this and defend the way they speak. Carl Chinn is Professor of community history at Birmingham University. Why is his Brummie accent important to him?

### **Carl Chinn**

For me being a Brummie is all about my identity, it's about who I am as a person, where I grew up, where I was born, where my mum and dad come from and the people to whom I

belong. I would never dream to say that my accent is better than anybody else's but it's certainly no worse

**Jackie:** Is important to him because it part of his identity – part of what makes him who he is. Professor Carl Chinn says not everyone hates the accent there are some people who really like it. What kinds of people?

### **Carl Chinn**

Outsiders who don't come from England when they hear the Brummie accent many of them say it sounds warm and endearing.

**Jackie:** He says people outside of England, who come from different countries often like the Birmingham accent and find it warm – friendly and endearing, which means pleasant, or nice – endearing.

**Callum:** Now let's hear from Joan Hunter. She works for a radio station that broadcasts to the large African Caribbean community in Birmingham....and says it can be funny when some people start to speak with a local accent....what is it exactly that she finds amusing?

### **Joan Hunter**

I heard a Polish girl with a bit of a Birmingham accent coming on. I think she's only been here like three years. I suppose it depends on who you're with and who you're living with and the people that you're talking with all the time, every day and so therefore you know it's bound to come in. But when you've got a bit of an accent because you're from a different culture or country and then the Brummie accent's like attached to it, it's kind of funny.

**Jackie:** Joan says she finds it amusing when people who have moved to Birmingham from a different country start speaking with a Birmingham accent – it creates an interesting mix – for example, some people will speak English with a

Brummie and Polish accent – perhaps that could be called a Birlish or Poliingham accent!

**Callum:** Professor Carl Chinn says there have always been lots of different kinds of Birmingham accents – not just one. What are some of the different kinds?

### **Carl Chinn**

There are a variety of Brummie accents today. There were in the past, there was always a middle class Brummie accent, there was a lower-middle class Brummie accent, there were a variety of working class Brummie accents. So there's always been varieties of accents. I think they've multiplied. But the Brummie accent will survive

**Callum:** Carl talks about middle-class, lower-middle class and working class accents. These all refer to accents spoken by people of different social statuses – for example middle class people in Britain are generally seen to have a bit more money and better jobs than people who are working class or lower class. One thing is for sure though, Carl is convinced that however many varieties of it there are, the Brummie accent is here to stay.

[Brief discussion – Accents – snobbery? Class issue? RP associated with middle and upper classes, look down on other accents as 'uneducated'? Much more so in past but now?]

**Callum: Introduce some comments about accents**

### **Diego, Sao Paulo, Brazil.**

I've never been to England before, however, I am really passionate about its history and heritage, if one day I visit this small island probably would feel living among queens, kings, princess..and of course, not forgetting the haunted castles. What else do I know about England? Like in all countries, we have in England many characteristic ways to speak English and, I think the most well-known is from Birmingham in which they speak "Brummie".

### **Soyoung, Korea**

I was in Manchester for 9 months.. To be honest, I was hurt that I couldn't understand what people said. There is a very special accent in Manchester. It was really hard to understand people's speaking when they said. But now I'm back in Korea I'm missing the Mancunian accent.

### **Paul, China**

I haven't been to London before. But if I have enough money, I'll definitely go there as I really enjoy speaking English. I would also like to make friends that have a British accent. Perhaps, one day, I'll have a cup of nice English afternoon tea with a fresh dish of fish and chips at a river side café overlooking the River Thames.

### **Phone Call – From listener - Krzysztof from Poland**

**Callum:** If you would like to join us on the programme then send your contact details in an email to [talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk](mailto:talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk). Don't forget to include your name, where you come from and your phone number if you'd like to talk to us in person on the programme

You're listening to Talk about English, I'm Callum Robertson. With me is Jackie Dalton and our guest today is Amanda Smyth from Visit Britain

**Jackie:** England is the topic of our programme today and we've had lots of comments from you on this topic

(A few comments mentioning monuments)

**Jackie:**

### **Francesco, Italy**

I visited London twice it is a fantastic city . I am very **fond of** England , its culture and, **above**

**all** its language and tradition . I am very interested in English .London is my favourite city . I like its monuments , its museums , and its shops.

**Callum:**

**Lúcia, Portugal**

London is an attractive place with many green areas (parks and gardens). The monuments are also remarkable especially the Houses of Parliament located by the river Thames.

**Jackie:**

**Eric Lee, Hong Kong**

I've been to England several times. Last time was 2003. I liked visiting England because I enjoyed seeing a lot of monuments. I also liked to see so many old buildings in England.

**Callum:** A lot of comments about the monuments in London. Monuments and historical buildings are all over London and earlier I went to visit one. What is it? When was it built? And how big is it? Now, over to, me.

London is famous for many of its sights and historical buildings. Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, the Tower of London, to name but a few.

Today I'm visiting one, a monument, which perhaps you may not have heard of but is also well worth a visit. A monument is a statue or building that is put up to remember and honour a person or event and this one is rather tall.

My guide today is James Clare who's the Historic Buildings Architect for the City of London and we are at the Monument to the Great Fire of London.

James I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about this monument.

**James:** Yes, it's a tall stone column and there are stairs inside that you can climb and view London from the top. Just above that viewing platform there is a golden ball of fire that commemorates the Great Fire of London in 1666.

**Callum:** You said there that the Great Fire of London was 1666, when was the Monument built?

**James:** It was started in 1671 and finished in 1677.

**Callum:** Who was responsible for designing it and building it?

**James:** There was a Commission set up jointly between the government, which was the Crown and the City of London and they had equal representation on that committee. The leader for the Crown was Sir Christopher Wren and the leader for the City was Robert Hooke.

**Callum:** And Christopher Wren had an important part in another one of London's most famous buildings, didn't he?

**James:** Yes, he designed and supervised St. Paul's Cathedral, the new cathedral in the classical form which replaced the old Gothic cathedral which had been destroyed in the Great Fire. And you can get a good view of St. Paul's from the top of the Monument.

**Callum:** Well I think that's a prompt, I think we should go up into the Monument, go to the top and have a look at St. Paul's from up there.

(Entering the building)

**Callum:** We've just come into the monument and were at the bottom and if I look up I can see there's a very tall staircase which we're going to climb. How tall is this?

**James:** Well it's over 200 ft tall, that's about 61 metres and there are 311 steps to the viewing steps to the viewing platform.

**Callum:** 311 steps! Well we better get going, 1...2...3...

James, as we're going up here, how many times have you been up this monument?

**James:** Well over the past twenty years I must have been up here about 50 times and it's exhausting!

**Callum:** Well, we've just stopped for a little breather as we've got a tiny window here and from it we are lined up directly with the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. And James you don't think that's an accident, do you?

**James:** No, the building doesn't seem to be aligned on a North, South, East, West axis. It seems to be slightly twisted, almost as if it was intended it should be possible to view St. Paul's from it.

**Callum:** So do you think Christopher Wren was maybe just pointing out some of his other work?

**James:** I think it was jointly Hooke and Wren were keen experimenters and they were both working on St. Paul's, it was just them being playful probably.

**Callum:** Ok, well let's continue our journey up to the top.....308, 309, 310, 311. And we finally made it up to the top and what a spectacular view.

Well we're out now on the viewing platform. We're looking towards one of London's more famous landmarks which is Tower Bridge. Really is a fantastic view from up here. James, I wonder if you could tell us a little bit more about the Monument.

**James:** Yes, it was at the time probably the tallest free-standing building in Western Europe. Another interesting piece of trivia is the fact that the height of the building is considered to represent the distance from the building to the site where the fire started in Pudding Lane.

**Callum:** So we're at the top of the Monument and I'm going to find some people to speak to, I've got some people here, hello, what's your name:

(introductions)

**Callum:** We're up over sixty metres, what do you think of it?

**Man:** It's a really amazing view, it's really nice, we have a perfect view over the whole city and I really enjoy it.

**Woman:** It's really cool, I can't say any more. You must be here and see it, all the city

**Callum:** Did you find it very tiring coming up the 311 steps?

**Man:** It's the perfect sport and so I don't need to go the gym later.

**Callum:** So it's good exercise and a good view at the end?

**Man:** Yes, of course!

**Callum:** OK, thank you very much.

**Man:** Thank you.

**Callum:** Well some good advice there from some visitors to the monument, good exercise and it's a good view. James, thank you very much for joining us today and telling us all about the Monument.

**James:** It's been a pleasure, thank you.

**Callum:** Well that's all from this programme 61 metres above the streets of London. Now, time to go back down those 311 stairs!

### **Callum, Jackie & Amanda chat about favourite places to go in London.**

[**Discuss with Amanda** – London is most popular place to visit but England isn't just about London – talk about some of the other aspects of the country – what else is there for people who maybe don't want the big city experience

Number of comments that England is an expensive place to visit .....]

Some more Comments – Lot regarding football, particularly from Vietnam

#### **David Yang, Vietnam**

I have never been to England. My dream is to go around the world, experience human's life, nature and cultures. But what I wish most is to visit England, talk to native speakers, participate in rituals, festivals, ceremonies, holidays and to visit all the stadiums where famous football clubs are located - I'm a crazy fan of the Premier League - for MU – (Manchester United)

**Bill, Vietnam**

Hi, everyone! I have never been to England and just known it via Premier League on TV, I am **really into** watching football matches, I'm a fan of Arsenal football club. Since I started learning English on the BBC, I have been getting it more. I love to travel there and I will.

**Huu, vietnam**

England, the football capital of the world, where there are dozens of beautiful stadiums with thousands of fans watching exciting games at every weekends. It's really my dream!

**Thu Thuy, Vietnam**

I've never gone to England but it is a familiar country with me because I always up to date news about Manchester United-my favourite Team. I wish I could visit England, especially Manchester!

**Callum:** A lot of comments there about Manchester one of the cities visited on the road trip.

**Jackie:** We talked to some young people who had come to Manchester to study and asked them what they thought of the city, how it compared to where they had come from. This is what they said.

**STUDENTS NEW TO MANCHESTER VOX**

I'm Pauline, I'm new to Manchester. I Moved from London nearly a year ago and I think it's a much friendlier and less stressful place to live.

I'm Samantha and I found Manchester to be very big. It was a little bit daunting but I'm slowly getting used to it. There's a hell of a lot going on and I'm from Liverpool originally so I expected the two cities to be quite similar but in terms of size at the very least Manchester is much bigger and Manchester does feel a lot more cosmopolitan and quite like a capital city I'd have to say.

I'm from London actually so it's quite different coming to Manchester. It's a lot smaller, which is a bit odd, it's a lot more compact as well, everything's more in one place, which is really good. I really enjoy it here actually, it's a good university and everyone seems really nice. I think it's a great place to live and I think it's always going to continue to grow. I just hope it keeps up with every other city and continues to be better than everywhere else. It's great, it's a great place.

**Callum:** Very positive views there, though from different perspectives – those who had come from bigger cities, like London, found it to be small and friendly, very compact – everything close together.

**Jackie:** But coming from a smaller city, like Liverpool, we heard Samantha saying she found it 'daunting'. If you find something daunting it's a little bit scary, it's a challenge. But all the comments were positive.

**Callum:** Jackie, you were in Manchester, what did you think?

Jackie talks of her impressions.

**Callum:** This is Talk about English, live from London. I'm Callum Robertson, with me is Jackie Dalton and Amanda Smyth from Visit Britain.

**Jackie:** Now we're going to look at a word which has fairly recently become popular in the English media to describe a certain kind of person.

**Jackie:** Professor David Crystal is one of the world's leading experts on the English language and here he is to tell us about the word Chav. What does the word mean and where does it come from?

## **PROFESSOR CRYSTAL**

Chav. It came to the fore as a word in 2005 really, I didn't remember hearing it much before that. It refers to a type of youth, supposedly uncultured, maybe a bit anti-social, perhaps even violent, but certainly marked out, at least from the point of view of the critic, by very bad taste. Chavs are supposed to wear a lot of flashy jewellery, white trainers, baseball caps, sham designer clothes, girls expose a lot of mid-riff ... nothing racial about it all, I should say. Now, whether it's cool or not to be a chav, I couldn't say, at least, not at my age! I find the linguistics much more interesting. It's a problem though, the linguistics. Where does the word come from? It's been around since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lexicographer Eric Partridge mentions it in his huge dictionary of slang and unconventional English. He talks about it coming from Romany (the language of the gypsies), 'chavy' – a child, or 'chaval' – a boy. And then later it was used for 'men' as well.

But nobody knows who's reactivated it in recent times. It's a noun, 'a chav', 'chavs', and also an adjective - people talk about 'chav behaviour' or 'chav insults' and that sort of thing. O, don't believe the popular etymologies that you read sometimes in the press and on websites ... I saw one the other day, people said, 'It's an acronym, 'chav', from council house and violent' – well, no, it isn't, that was made up in recent times. Appealing as these etymologies are, they're nothing to do with the real Romany history of this very interesting word.

**Callum:** That was David Crystal on the word Chavs. Its etymology, its history is from the Romany language, the language of the gypsies.

**Jackie:** While we were visiting people on our travels we played this to one of the groups we met and we were able to find out a bit more about this word. One person we spoke to, who goes by the name of Professor Poppycock was from a Romany background himself and he gave us some more interesting information. Which language does he say Chav comes from and where does he say the name gypsies come from to describe Romany people?

## **PROFESSOR POPPYCOCK 1**

Well the word 'chav' is from Hindi. Obviously the original gypsies were from India, they were thought to be from Egypt so they were called gypsies, but a lot of gypsy language today is based on the old Hindi words. They say paani, if you ask a gypsy man what paan is it's water, if it's raining, it's paanying.

**Callum:** Gypsies were originally from India, he says, but people thought they were from Egypt, which is why they were called gypsies – gyp from Egypt.

**Jackie:** And as they were originally from India a lot of their words come from the Indian language Hindi. The 'Professor' continued to tell us more about the word Chav.

## **PROFESSOR POPPYCOCK 2**

Chav I've always known to be, if you say to a gypsy woman, How many kids have you got? "I've got five chavvies" she will say. But quite why a couple of years ago it suddenly appeared on the popular, amongst the young as a burberry-wearing, argos shopping, clubbing teenager I don't know, the Chav culture sun-reading, bingo-playing, benson and hedges smoking , but it means child.

**Callum:** So Chav originally means child, from the the romany – as Professor Crystal said.

Interesting use of compound adjectives, groups of three

**Explain** burberry-wearing, argos shopping, clubbing teenager / sun-reading, bingo-playing, benson and hedges smoking

**Callum:** Finally we asked if coming from a Romany background he was annoyed that the word Chav had taken on a new meaning.

### **PROFESSOR POPPYCOCK 3**

No, not really. Our language is such an ebullient moving thing. It'll disappear I'm sure, it won't stay I don't think, it won't enter into the popular culture. Like so many words it's fashionable then falls away.

**Callum:** So he's not annoyed, it's all part of the way the English language is changing and evolving, but he doesn't think the word will stay and become a permanent part of the language.

Now it's time for our quiz, it's time for Jackie to take on Amanda to see who knows most about England! Our quizmaster is Caroline Dunton, who has just joined us. Hello Carrie.

**Carrie:** Hello – rules  
Choose easy question for 1 point or hard question for 2 points

#### **Quiz – Jackie and Amanda**

**Callum:** That's all from today's Talk about English.

**Jackie:** Remember there is no webcast next week but we're back on November 9th.

**Callum:** Thank you very much to our guest today Amanda Smyth.

Goodbye

**All:** Goodbyes