

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.

Jackie: Hello, welcome to Talk About English...

Callum: Coming to you live from the BBC World Service.

Jackie: I'm Jackie Dalton.

Callum: I'm Callum Robertson. In the programme today, we continue our look at politics and language:

Jackie: Why the Madagascan government wants its people learning English as well as French and Malagasy.

Education Ministry Man

If you know English, then you have access to more information and having a lot of information is going to help you choose better.

Callum: And your stories, poems and songs about journeys that were important to you.

Journey song

Jackie: That's all coming up in Talk About English.

Callum: Joining us today is English learner, Barbara Menegazzi. Hello, can you tell us a bit about yourself?

Barbara: (responds)

COMPETITION TIME!

Jackie: It certainly is! First, let's find out about the winner of last week's competition on slang. The question was: "What are Callum and my favourite slang words?" And "Give us a sentence using them."

Callum: And the winner is Tanuja Ghosh, who writes: Jackie's favourite word is 'malarky', Callum's is 'pants'.

Jackie: Do you know what these two words mean Barbara?

Barbara: (responds)

Jackie: So what were the two sentences that Tanuja gave us?

Callum: - What the President is saying, in justification of his wrong economic policies is all malarkey.

- If you ask me, this **much-hyped** modern art exhibition is actually a load of old pants.

Jackie: So what do you make of those sentences?

Callum: (responds)

Jackie: 'Much-hyped' was a nice phrase too.

Callum: (explain meaning)

Jackie: So well done Tanuja, a prize is on its way in the post. We also have a runner up I believe?

Callum: Yes, we decided to include this one just because she's introduced a rather interesting expression in the sentence which we can talk about. This is from Gwendoline Partsch. She wrote:

- The first half was pants but I stayed until the end and it was actually a great film.
- I'm **snookered** by a lot of malarkey.

Jackie: Snookered! What does that mean and does it make sense in this context?

Callum: (explains)

Jackie: Well, now it's time for this week's competition question. Because we'll be talking about journeys later on in the programme, the question is:

Callum: Who said 'A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step?' And you might find a clue through the 'Moving Words' link on the right hand side of the webcast page.

Jackie: Send your answers to talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk Barbara, have you heard that expression before? Perhaps you have a version in Spanish?

Barbara: (responds, mentions 'One step at a time'.)

Callum: Continuing our look at language and politics, we've got a rather interesting story from Madagascar this week.

Jackie: Yes, the official language there is Malagasy and French is the second language. But the President there has announced that this isn't enough, he now wants the nation speaking English as well!

Callum: We're going to hear a report from our correspondent in Madagascar, Jonny Hogg.

Jackie: As you listen to the first part of the report, try to answer this question:

Callum: Why might it be difficult for people in Madagascar to learn English?

Jonny

You may be surprised, but if the president of Madagascar is to achieve his dream of getting the Malagasy people to learn English, then this theme tune could become rather popular. English for Teachers is a radio programme aimed at improving the standards of English teaching in a country where, because of its poverty and size, passing on information can be extremely difficult.

Jackie: Did you get the answer? Jonny mentioned 'poverty' and 'size'. Because people are quite poor and the country is large, it can be difficult to pass on information and so difficult to get everyone speaking English – which must be especially hard when the Malagasy already have their own language and French to contend with. Isn't it asking a bit much to expect people to have good English as well?

Callum: Let's hear from Jean Malazamana. He is a presenter of the radio programme we heard earlier and also works with the Ministry for Education. As you listen to him, answer this question:

Jackie: Why does he think it will be good for the Malagasy to learn English? Listen out for two reasons.

Jean

First of all, there's this aspect of choice. If you know English then you have access to more information and having a lot of information is going to help you choose better. That's one thing. When you travel also, it gives you a lot of freedom. People who can't speak English, they have a hard time when they travel.

Callum: Did you get those two reasons? The first one Jean mentioned was choice. He said if you understand English you have access to more information, which means you can make better choices.

Jackie: And the other thing he said was it makes travelling easier. He said often when you travel you have 'a hard time' (things are difficult) if you don't speak English. We're going to hear now from two people in Madagascar about their views on learning English. What are some of the reasons they give?

Learners

Learner 1: I want to learn this language because it is the most spoken language in the world and it is an interesting language.

Learner 2: I decided to learn English because I think I need it and I like it. I'm a waitress so I prefer to learn English because English is much used by international people.

Callum: Well, the first person said he wanted to learn English because it's widely spoken and interesting.

Jackie: And the second said she was a waitress and she thought she needed it and liked it. Barbara, what motivated you to learn English?

All: (discuss)

END OF PART ONE

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

Callum: I'm Callum Robertson.

Jackie: And with us is language learner Barbara Menegazzi.

Callum: We're talking about politics, language and language learning.

Jackie: Let's go back to the Madagascar story we've been discussing and our reporter, Jonny, now because it seems that getting people in Madagascar to learn English isn't going to be all that straightforward.

Callum: What are some of the difficulties that the country is facing?

Jonny

Jonny: It's not going to be easy. To find out how tough it is, even now, I went to the Teaching Resources Centre in Antananarivo, where English teachers can find books and materials, as well as attending training courses. There I met Micheline Ravelonananahary, who runs the centre. I asked her how many teachers relied on it.

Micheline: At the moment, because we run a regular workshop here in this room, we approximately have about 400.

Jonny: The room we're in here is perhaps the size of a small classroom and it's got a row of books on one wall - do you think you have enough here to be able to help all these four hundred teachers?

Micheline: We don't have that. As you can see, here we have very little. We really need more support from the government because so far we don't get enough from the government.

- Jonny: Lack of funding isn't the only issue. There is a danger that, unless everyone gets equal opportunities to learn English, it could become another divisive factor between town and country or rich and poor.
- Callum: So Micheline, who runs a centre for teachers, says she doesn't have enough resources – enough books and so on - to help English teachers.
- Jackie: Jonny also mentioned something about English learning causing divisions between certain groups of people. He said learning English could become a 'divisive factor'. A divisive factor – something that separates people and causes disagreement or conflict.
- Callum: Listen again to the clip: which groups of people might be affected by this problem?

Jonny

There is a danger that unless everyone gets equal opportunities to learn English it could become another divisive factor between town and country or rich and poor.

- Callum: Jonny said unless there were 'equal opportunities' – in other words, everyone had an equal, fair chance of learning English, there might be an imbalance between rich people and poor people.
- Jackie: Or those who live in the cities and have easier access to a means of learning English and those who live out in the countryside. Barbara, when you were learning English, was there a sense that you were more privileged than other people in your country who weren't?
- Barbara: (responds)

Jackie: I think there are some other rather political issues that this recent drive to focus on English has raised. What about the French-speaking population in Madagascar – how do they feel about the fact that English is becoming such a priority. I asked our reporter, Jonny, earlier on.

Jonny

Jackie: So indeed it looks like not everyone will be too happy about the changes. But this is an interesting question which comes back to the whole issue of globalisation and English. There can be very different reactions in different parts of the world to this. There are places where populations will wholeheartedly embrace their government's efforts to get people learning English and others where there's some resistance because, understandably, language and identity are closely linked and people can feel like their culture is threatened. Barbara, is there any resistance in Spain to English?

Barbara: (responds)

Jackie: After this programme, you can listen to Jonny's full report on English and Madagascar with more of a discussion about some of the issues that have been brought up by following the link on the webcast page.

Callum: Don't forget, there's still time to enter our competition this week: Who said 'A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step?'

Jackie: Send your answers to talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk

END OF PART TWO

Sheffield Hallam students

Jackie: This is Talk About English. I'm Jackie Dalton

Callum: I'm Callum Robertson and with us is language learner Barbara Menegazzi.

Jackie: During the past few weeks we've been on a road trip, travelling around different language schools in England where students have come to learn English. Callum, you were recently in southern England, how did it go?

Callum: (responds)

Jackie: The theme of our trip was 'journeys' and we asked students we met to write poems or stories on the theme of journeys. We also had a couple of people who did some music. Among these was Viet Do, who is from Vietnam and is studying at City College, Manchester at the moment. He's written music that takes us on a journey to the stars in the night sky.

Jackie: Viet Do, you've come all the way from Vietnam, a very long journey to a completely different world, to England. How do you feel about that?

Viet Do: This is the first time I go abroad and I go by airplane. Even so, it's very interesting because I have the chance to try myself in a new environment.

Jackie: Viet Do, we've had all kinds of stories and poems from different people, but what you did for us was a song, Can you tell us a little bit about it?

Viet Do: It was a quiet night, I sat on my bed with the guitar [in] my hands. Its melody conjures up nice pictures [of the] mysterious night and in the sky, the moon and millions of stars are bright.

Jackie: So you wrote your song, *The Moonlight At Midnight*, one night and for you, it conjures up - it creates - nice images of the night and the stars...

Viet Do: I love night, I love the moon. Actually almost all my songs were composed in the evening – that's the time for peace of mind.

Jackie: You compose most of your songs at night – that was a nice phrase there: night is a good time for "peace of mind". Peace of mind – a time when you can relax and stop worrying about things. Viet Do, thank you very much for sharing your music with us.

Jackie: Well if you liked that, you can find another of Viet Do's songs on a link on the right hand side of the webcast page, which he devoted to his mother after she commented that he'd never written a song especially for her. There were lots of other journey stories that we collected. Amber of BBC Learning English has been reading them all and is going to tell us what she made of them.

(Amber and Jackie discuss)

Callum: You can find some of those journey stories that students have written by following the 'Journeys' link on the right-hand side of our webcast page.

Jackie: We've also had some messages in from many of you around the world talking about journeys that were important to you.

(read messages)

Competition results

Who said "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step?" (Lao Tzu)

Jackie: That's almost all we have time for in this programme, but to finish, let's listen to one more recording we did on our road trip. This one was in Brighton.

Callum: (describes)

Jackie: Let's have a listen, meanwhile from all of us here at BBC Learning English, it's goodbye.

All: Goodbye.

Brighton British Center Song