

**BBC Learning English**  
**Talk about English**  
*Live webcast – Politics & Language*  
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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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Jackie: Hello, this is Talk About English, live from the BBC World Service in London. I'm Jackie Dalton...

Callum: And I'm Callum Robertson.

Jackie: This week, in our final programme on politics and language, we hear about some of the tricks political speakers use to get us on their side.

**Tony Blair**

And I do it because I believe. I do it because the society I want to create is not some fantasy or dream. It could be true!

Callum: And tips for all of us on how to improve our public speaking skills.

**Sandy Miller**

It's important to be yourself. But be yourself as impactfully as you can.

Jackie: That's all coming up in Talk About English! But first of all...

Callum: It is competition time. And you'll hear the answer to this week's question during the programme. And the question is:

Jackie: What does 'rhetoric' mean? What is 'rhetoric'? And write a sentence for us using the word 'rhetoric'.

Callum: Send your entries to [talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk](mailto:talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk) and the first correct entry will win.

Jackie: We've got extra special prizes this week!

Callum: Yes, not only will you get a BBC Learning English bag, but also, a Learning English t-shirt AND a key ring.

Jackie: There's a reason why we're being especially generous this week...

Callum: There is, and that's that this is our last webcast of 2006. We're stopping for a few weeks but we'll be back in 2007.

Jackie: And this is where you could really help us. We'd love to hear your feedback. We want to know how you think the webcast could be improved. What kinds of things would you like to see in it? Maybe you think it's too short or too long...What sorts of topics are you interested in?

Callum: Yes, send your thoughts to [talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk](mailto:talkaboutenglish@bbc.co.uk).

Jackie: Now, as promised, let's turn our attention to the language tricks and techniques that politicians use to win us over ...

### **Tony Blair**

We are not going to win despite our beliefs. We will only win because of our beliefs!

Callum: The British Prime Minister Tony Blair in action ... Well, to find out how political speeches work, we spoke to Professor Max Atkinson, an expert on political communication. He's listened to hours and hours of political speeches in order to identify the language techniques that make an audience applaud.

Jackie: Now these techniques date back to ancient times and they're known as 'rhetorical devices' – from the noun 'rhetoric' which means the skill of using language effectively and to persuade. And the good news is that rhetorical devices are simple and easy to use! But before we listen to some examples, we asked Max Atkinson to explain why he thinks it's important to understand the tricks of rhetoric.

### **Max Atkinson**

Most people are dimly aware that, when they hear an effective communicator, that that person has skills that they don't have, but they're not quite sure what those skills are and I think knowing more precisely what it is that the effective communicators are doing enables audiences to distinguish between the form, the structure of what someone's saying, and its content, if you like. I think it may mean that audiences are in a better position to judge whether or not a speaker is worth taking seriously.

Callum: OK. It's important to know what good communicators are doing so you can separate the form and techniques from the 'content', so you can separate the 'how' and the 'what'! Then you can judge the content properly. Now good speeches are memorable so any rhetorical technique that makes the audience remember your message is going to be very useful.

Jackie: Listen to these three extracts from speeches made by Winston Churchill, when he was prime minister of Britain, Boutros Ghali, when he was Secretary General of the United Nations, and Margaret Thatcher, when

she was Prime Minister of Britain. They all illustrate a rhetorical device - used very frequently by politicians - known as THE LIST OF THREE. As you'll hear, this can be a list of three identical items or different ones.

### **Voices**

#### **Winston Churchill:**

Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.

#### **Boutros Boutros Ghali**

There is an awareness that the United Nations, for all its setbacks, is recognised for having done so much, so well and in such a short span of time

#### **Margaret Thatcher**

He wanted the commission to be the executive and he wanted the council of ministers to be the senate. No! No! No!

Jackie: Three very effective lists of three! Listen again.

### **Voices (repeat)**

Callum: And Max Atkinson explains that, like all rhetorical devices, lists of three are effective in many languages.

#### **Max Atkinson**

One of the interesting things about these devices is that, as far as we know, they're not specific to any one language - they seem to work cross-culturally. So if one thinks, for example, of the French revolution, the slogan was 'liberty, equality, fraternity' – a list of three. And you find that in many political environments. Hitler's slogan was 'ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer' - one people, one empire, one leader... and you find many political slogans have that structure.

Callum: Next, we asked Max Atkinson to talk about one of the most common and powerful rhetorical tricks used in political speeches - a device he calls

CONTRASTS. This device simply puts together two contrasting words or phrases. Here's Tony Blair contrasting 'despite' and 'because' ...

### **Tony Blair**

We are not going to win despite our beliefs. We will only win because of our beliefs!

Jackie: Max Atkinson believes that politicians love this device of "contrasts" because it is like a cue, a sign, for the audience to applaud! It tells the audience when to clap and politicians love applause!

### **Max Atkinson**

At a purely technical level, one of the problems audiences have, if you like, is coming in on time. And it's very important if a speaker wants to be applauded that he provides audiences with very clear completion points so they know when they've finished and they know when they can come in. And one of the things that these simple contrasts do is to enable audiences to anticipate the end of the line and therefore to come in immediately the speaker has finished.

Callum: Here's Tony Blair again. Notice how the simple contrast between 'despite' and 'because' gives his sentence a neat shape and indicates when the audience should respond!

### **Tony Blair**

We are not going to win despite our beliefs. We will only win because of our beliefs!

Jackie: Let's end our look at rhetorical tricks in political speeches by listening to a famous speech from William Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*, which begins with the words: Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears! So imagine please - we're in Ancient Rome, in the year 44 BC. Julius Caesar, the Roman Emperor, has been murdered by Brutus, one of Rome's most popular politicians. It's Caesar's funeral. Sombre music.

Throng of people. Brutus has made a speech to the crowd justifying Caesar's murder and the crowd agree.

Callum: But now Mark Antony, a young friend of Caesar, steps forward. He's been given permission by Brutus to speak at the funeral. He stands beside the coffin of his murdered friend. Mark Antony wants to persuade the crowd that Caesar was NOT a personally ambitious man and that he was unjustly murdered.

Jackie: It's a brilliantly persuasive speech. We're just going to hear the opening two lines and as you listen can you catch any rhetorical devices at work?

### **Mark Antony**

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.

I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.

Callum: Well, Mark Antony contrasts the words 'bury' and 'praise'. And he uses this contrast after addressing the audience by a list of three - he calls them 'friends', 'Romans' and 'countrymen'. And Mark Antony also uses a poetic image – 'lend me your ears' - to mean simply 'listen to me!' So we hear three tricks in a row - a list of three, a poetic image, and a contrast.

### **Mark Antony (repeat)**

Callum: Well, now you must be experts in political rhetoric! We've talked about politicians and leaders making speeches, but what about the rest of us? Maybe you have to do a presentation at school or university. Perhaps your job sometimes involves public speaking, or you have to do a speech for a friend's wedding or birthday.

Jackie: A lot of people really hate public speaking. And later on in the programme, we're going to hear from Sandy Miller, who can offer expert advice on presentations. But, first of all, let's hear from Nadim, a Syrian student studying at the University of Newcastle in the UK. He did a presentation about his research work and he actually won a prize for his presentation because it was so good. But was Nadeem, like all of us can be, rather nervous about having to do a presentation?

## **PART 2**

**(Discussion Nadim and Sandy Miller about good presentations)**

## **PART 3**

Jackie: You're listening to Talk About English with me, Jackie Dalton...

Callum: And me, Callum Robertson.

Jackie: And now we have another very important competition to tell you about and this is open to teenagers only. Matt Cleghorn is organising the project and he's here to tell us about it.

All: (discuss)

BBC Learning English is running a competition. On the 27th of November, the competition opens. Visit the Learning English site and look for the "Your Dreams, now!" links on the competition page. In 250 words or fewer, answer the question "What's my dream and how can the BBC help me achieve it?" Two lucky winners will receive a once in a lifetime experience to help them towards fulfilling their dream. Tell us what we can do to help you, think laterally- if you want to become a musician, you're much more likely to win music lessons than a guitar, for example. We want to see you thinking practically about how to achieve your dream, what your first step will be and how we can help. This competition is only open to 12-18 year olds inclusive. Visit the

Learning English site and look for the "Your Dream's, now!" competition starting Monday November 27<sup>th</sup>.

Jackie: I received a letter of complaint, which also raised an interesting issue about language, which we can discuss. In our last programme, we were talking about language and politics and those countries which have more than one language. We also talked about dialects and during a conversation about Spain, I must've made the mistake of implying that Catalan was a dialect – which upset one of our listeners. Catalan is, in fact, a language.

All: (discuss language vs dialect)

Jackie: Here in Britain we have plenty of our own dialects which belong to different regions. 'Scouse' for example, is the word used to describe both the accent and the dialect of people who come from Liverpool... We have 'Brummie' for people who come from Birmingham. Perhaps one of the most famous dialects though is Mancunian – which comes from Manchester.

Callum: As you listen, try to answer this question: What does 'sorted' mean?

### **Mancunian**

Presenter: Welcome to the Mancunian in 10 minutes programme. Please listen to each phrase and repeat it.

Phrase 1.

Posh lady: Hello, how are you today?

Mancunian: You aright?

Presenter: Repeat

Mancunian: You aright?

Presenter: Phrase 2

Posh lady: This is a really good idea and I'd like to get involved

Mancunian: Mad for it

Presenter: Repeat

Mancunian: Mad for it

Presenter: Phrase 3

Posh lady: Everything seems to be in order

Mancunian: Sorted

Presenter: Repeat

Mancunian: Sorted

Presenter: Phrase 4

Posh lady: I don't think that you're seeing my point of view

Mancunian: You're off yer trolley

Presenter: Repeat

Mancunian: You're off yer trolley

Presenter: Phrase 5

Posh lady: Hello, I had a lovely night out with my friends. We went to a nice pub, and then onto a night club that was very exciting. We then went into town for some supper.

Mancunian: Hiya. Eh, (I) went out mad last night wi' (my) mates. We went to a banging bar and then to a club. It was kicking! Then we went down (to) Rusholme for some scran.

Presenter: Repeat

Mancunian: Hiya. Eh, (I) went out mad last night wi' (my) mates. We went to a banging bar and then to a club. It was kicking! Then we went down (to) Rusholme for some scran.

Presenter: And that concludes the programme. Thank you.

**Answer: 'sorted' means everything is all right!**

All: (discuss messages on the theme of presentations)

Jackie: That's all there's time for this week...and indeed for this year! We'll be back in 2007!