

What did you find most challenging about learning English?

Player Interviews

We asked seven big names, including Didier Drogba and Petr Cech, for their opinions about life in England and learning English. Find out what they said. For each of the questions, there's an exercise to test your comprehension.



Before you watch

Discuss these questions:

- Does a cake taste better with 'flour' or with 'flower'?
- 'Flour' and 'flower' are homophones. They have different spellings and different meanings but the same sound. Can you think of any others?
- A 'brummie' is someone from Birmingham. Where in England would you expect to find a 'scouser'?
 A. London B. Liverpool C. Manchester
- Would you be pleased if you bought something that was a rip off?
- Can you explain the difference between a pair of boots and the boot of a car?
- 'Boot' – like the boot of a car and the 'boot' that you wear are homonyms. They have the same spelling and sound – but different meanings. Can you think of anymore?

Activity 1 - Watch

Watch the players answer the question "What did you find most challenging about learning English?"

- Do the players mention anything you've talked about?

Watch again and decide if these sentences are true or false. (T or F)

- Ingimarsson says that speaking and spelling are difficult.
- Cech says that newspapers contain proper English.
- Kuyt finds 'scouse' difficult.
- Sun can't find some words in the dictionary.
- Mido thinks that lots of people pronounce words badly.
- Cech says that expressions are easy to translate.
- Sun still doesn't understand the two meanings of 'boot'.



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Activity 2 – Improving your English

Match these questions about learning English with the answers below.

- A. Do you find it easy to speak English? _____
- B. Do you worry about making mistakes? _____
- C. What else can I do to improve my English? _____
- D. What's the best way to learn grammar? _____
- E. Where do you use your English? _____
- F. Would you like to have a native speaker accent? _____

- 1. I speak English on the phone a lot. I talk to clients from Germany, Holland and Brazil.
- 2. I'd rather do the grammar for homework but I do like to practise it in class in speaking activities too. Different people learn grammar in different ways – I don't think there is a 'best' way.
- 3. It depends. I find some things very easy to talk about in English but other things are very difficult.
- 4. Not really. If I had a perfect accent people wouldn't know I'm not British. It would be a bit strange.
- 5. Of course, no-one likes making mistakes. But it's impossible to learn without making mistakes.
- 6. Reading. It really helps. When you're speaking you don't always have time to notice your mistakes but when you're reading, you do. You notice things and learn them.

Answers

Before you watch

- 1. flour
- 2. There are lots: (e.g. hour/our, cent/sent/scent, steel/steal, they're/their/there, bear/bare)
- 3. B Liverpool. People from Liverpool are sometimes called 'scousers' and speak with a 'scouse' accent.
- 4. No. A 'rip off' is when someone charges you too much money. You can be 'ripped off' by someone.
- 5. A pair of boots – on your feet. The boot of a car – where you put your bags.
- 6. There are lots. (e.g. plug (electrical) and plug (bath), tap (for water) and tap (verb 'he tapped his pen on the table')

Activity 1: 1. F, 2. T, 3. T, 4. T, 5. T, 6. F, 7. F

Activity 2: A – 3, B – 5, C – 6, D – 2, E – 1, F – 4

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Teachers' notes

Language: What did you find most challenging about learning English?

Level intermediate – advanced

Time 45 mins

Question: What did you find most challenging about learning English?

Aims Raising awareness of problem areas with English and suggesting ways to address them.

1. Dictation

- a. Ask students to work in pairs to decide what 3 things they find most difficult about learning English. Allow them about 5 minutes and ask them to write down the 3 points.
- b. Tell them they are going to hear the thoughts of a student from your country who is studying English in the north of England. You are going to dictate what the student says and your students should write down what you say.

Option

If you want to make the activity feel more 'real' for your students you can create a character for the student studying in England. Put a picture on the board and ask your students to choose a name, age, hobbies etc.

DICTIONATION

Tell them you are going to dictate what the student says and the Ss should write it down, exactly as you read it.

Read:

At school, I learnt to say laugh (/lɑːf/) but here, everyone says laugh (/læf/). Yesterday I heard someone say "I laughed my head off". Now what does that mean?

Read the text twice slowly, in chunks, as your students write it down.

Note

The first pronunciation of laugh (/lɑːf/) is the way the word is generally pronounced in the south of England and in traditional received pronunciation (RP). The second pronunciation (/læf/) is a typically northern pronunciation of the word. Neither pronunciation is 'right' or 'wrong'. The aim is to show that the rules of English pronunciation are flexible and it's difficult to master – a point the players make in the video.

Ask students to check their texts with each other. You can show them the whole text on the board if you want.

- c. When everyone has the correct text, ask 'What problems does the student have?' (he/she isn't used to the accent and doesn't recognise the idiomatic expression) 'Did any of you mention these problems?' Allow students to talk about the problems they identified with learning English but try to keep the atmosphere light-hearted and don't get bogged down in an 'English grammar is awful' discussion.

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2. Before you watch

Hand out the worksheet and ask Ss to work in pairs to answer the questions in **Before you watch**. Make sure that it's fun – Ss aren't expected to know all the answers.

Answers:

1. flour
2. There are lots: (e.g. hour/our, cent/sent/scent, steel/steal, they're/their/there, bear/bare)
3. B Liverpool. People from Liverpool are sometimes called 'scousers' and speak with a 'scouse' accent.
4. No. A 'rip off' is when someone charges you too much money. You can be 'ripped off' by someone.
5. A pair of boots – on your feet. The boot of a car – where you put your bags.
6. There are lots. (e.g. plug (electrical) and plug (bath), tap (for water) and tap (verb 'he tapped his pen on the table')

3. Watch

Tell students they are going to watch players answer the question 'What did you find most challenging about learning English?'

Watch the whole section once and elicit answers to the question – which things did they mention that we've talked about?

Answer: Most things the players mention have been mentioned in the **Before you watch** section.

4. Watch again

Answers: 1 F, 2 T, 3 T, 4 T, 5 T, 6 F, 7 F

5. Follow up

Tell the students that having listened to the players talk about their learning aims and challenges, it's time for the Ss to talk about their own objectives and challenges.

Give out Activity 2.

Ask students to do the matching activity.

Answers: A – 3, B – 5, C – 6, D – 2, E – 1, F – 4

Check answers in pairs then as a class before asking students to give their own answers to the questions (in pairs). Monitor their discussions. When Ss have finished you might want to encourage the class to think of some of the issues raised – accuracy & communication versus fluency. Is a native speaker accent achievable and/or desirable?