

BBC Learning English – Ask About Britain

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Foreign Language Ability 英国人的外语能力

Insert

Montage of foreign words

Feifei: Wow, I didn't know we have so many different languages spoken in our office.

Helen: Well, BBC Learning English is a department with hidden language talents. But is this the case with British people in general?

Feifei: 大家好，我是冯菲菲。欢迎收听英国问答 Ask About Britain, 我们在这个节目中专门回答有关英国文化习俗的各种问题。今天和我在一起的是 Helen.

Helen: Hello everyone. We have made many programmes on how people learn English, but today we're answering a question from a different angle.

Feifei: 我们的问题来自重庆的朋友 Circle. 他想知道英国人的外语能力怎样?

Helen: Do people in Britain speak other languages? Are they any good at learning foreign languages?

Feifei: 英国人对自己的外语能力是怎么看的呢?

Helen: Lindsey is a secondary school teacher. Let's hear from her first.

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They speak a lot of European languages. You have to do French or German and that's compulsory, up to GCSE. There is a desire to learn more languages; it's beneficial now to be able to speak a number of different languages. It helps with your career. But we don't have an automatic strength in it. No.

Feifei: 中学老师 Lindsey 告诉我们在校生至少要选择一门外语来学习，法语或者是德语，这是必修课 compulsory, 一直到初中毕业，也就是说一共学习 5 年。

Helen: Lindsey feels that students have the desire to learn more languages. It helps with people's careers.

Feifei: 很多人都认为会说一口流利的英语对事业的发展有帮助，英国人也不例外。

Helen: But British people are not very good at learning foreign languages, they don't have an automatic strength in it. This means they're not naturally good at languages.

Feifei: 不过很多英国人的外语能力不是很好，这不是他们的强项 they don't have an automatic strength in it.

Helen: And even though learning a foreign language is compulsory at school, if you don't have the chance to practise, it's easily forgotten.

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I learned French for five years. As time goes on and on, I keep forgetting more.

I also learned French at school, as well, but unfortunately I don't know any French now.

Feifei: 看来5年的外语必修课不一定能保证学生对外语的掌握程度。

Helen: Headmaster Stephen Winkley has strong criticism of British people's attitude to learning foreign languages.

Insert

British people are terribly bad with languages, and this is because they used to own an empire and everywhere they went in the world, so long as they spoke English and spoke it very loud, people would do what they wanted. As a result, there is a strong feeling in England that nobody needs to learn a foreign language. This is a disaster for our country and I'm very sad and embarrassed that it happens.

Feifei: 一所高中学校的校长 Stephen Winkley 对英国人的外语能力评价很低。

Helen: Stephen says that British people are poor language learners and this has a historical reason.

Feifei: 英国人普遍的外语能力很差，其中的历史原因是以前的日不落帝国 British Empire 的殖民地遍布世界的各个角落，所以英语也就广为使用。

Helen: So a lot of British people feel that with English they can go anywhere and there isn't the need to learn a foreign language.

Feifei: 就是因为英语现在已经成了世界通用语言，所以很多人觉得没有必要去学外语 no need to learn foreign languages.

Helen: And Stephen feels that this lack of interest in learning foreign languages is a disaster for the UK.

Feifei: 是的，英国人不喜欢学外语对英国这个国家来说是一个灾难 a disaster.

Helen: Now let's hear from people who are learning a new foreign language. What difficulties have they experienced?

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I'm sometimes OK and sometimes not so good. I think my memory isn't great, so I tend to forget new words, and also I'm a little bit lazy.

I'm a very lazy linguist. I like learning foreign languages, but I find it difficult to do out of context. So it's difficult to sit here in London and study Japanese when you don't actually have to use the language to communicate.

Feifei: Linguist 语言家，其实英国人学习外语碰到的问题和我们中国人学习英语也是一样的。

Helen: Laziness is hard to overcome.

Feifei: 惰性 laziness 是非常难避免的。

Helen: I have a terrible memory too. I forget what I've learned quite quickly.

Feifei: Memory 记忆，记忆力随着年龄增长也会衰退。

Helen: Also, it's hard to learn a new language in your home country because you don't have the chance to practise.

Feifei: Out of context, 脱离上下文，这里的意思是在没有合适的语言环境下学习一门外语相对比较困难。

Helen: Well, I hope we've given Circle some ideas about British people's attitudes to learning foreign languages.

Feifei: 是的，和其他国家相比英国人的外语水平就稍显逊色。感谢收听，我们下次节目再会。

Helen: Bye bye.

Glossary

| | |
|----------------|----------------------|
| compulsory 必修的 | career 事业 |
| GCSE 英国初中文凭 | used to 习惯了 |
| empire 帝国 | strong feeling 很强的感受 |
| disaster 灾难 | embarrassed 觉得难为情 |
| memory 记忆力 | communicate 交流，沟通 |