

## Chatterbox #254 – Answering listener questions: Part 2

### Episode description

In this Chatterbox episode, Andrew and Kassy are back to answer some more questions submitted by Culips listeners. Don't be afraid to submit your own questions after listening to this episode!

### Fun fact

Humans learn about life by asking questions. From the time they can talk, children are naturally learning about the world through observation, testing, and questioning. According to *The Miniature Guide to the Art of Asking Essential Questions*, "Questions are the engine, the driving force behind thinking."

### Expressions included in the study guide

- To pick things up where [one] left off
- In one ear and out the other
- I've got to say
- A bygone era
- The butterfly effect
- A tough one



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## Transcript

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Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

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**Andrew:** Hello, everyone. My name is Andrew.

**Kassy:** And I'm Kassy.

**Andrew:** And you are tuned in to the Culips English podcast.

**Andrew:** Hello, friends. Welcome back to the Culips English podcast. Today's episode is a Chatterbox episode. Chatterbox is our series that features completely natural English conversations that you can listen into. It's kinda like you're right in the room with us having a conversation between friends. And the topic for today's episode is a continuation of the last episode, where we answer some of the recent questions that we have gotten from you guys, our beloved listeners. So I am joined here by my cohost today, Kassy. Kassy, hello.

**Kassy:** Hello.

**Andrew:** Don't forget, guys, that there is a study guide available for this episode that includes a transcript, as well as detailed vocabulary explanations and examples, some prompts that you can use for writing and speaking practice and a quiz. It's a great idea to follow along with the guide while you are studying with this episode, and you can download it just by visiting our website, Culips.com.

**Andrew:** All right, so we're gonna **pick things up where we left off** by answering a question from a listener named José, who is curious about how he can improve and increase his English vocabulary.

**Andrew:** Now on to a second question, though, Kassy, which is about vocabulary and how to increase his vocabulary. Do you have any suggestions there about what José could do?

**Kassy:** Yes. José, I'm gonna be honest with you. There's no easy way to increase your vocabulary. It comes from long hours of, you know, listening to Culips, talking with native speakers, watching YouTube videos, reading books. And the more vocabulary you're introduced to, and the more you repeat it and practice it over and over, the more fluent you're going to become in that vocabulary.

**Andrew:** And it's such a good feeling. Like, this just happened to me the other day. I was taking a Korean conversation lesson with a tutor that I have. And she said a word that I didn't know, didn't understand. And she told it to me and I made a note and I put it into my Anki flashcard deck, which is a great free program that you can use for studying vocabulary, which I really highly recommend. So I put it in there and studied it a bit.

**Andrew:** And then the next week that I had the lesson, she asked me about that word again and I totally forgot. But she reminded me and it was in my head, in my consciousness a little bit more. And then I went home and I was watching a Korean video on YouTube about mountain biking, and these guys were talking about how to do tricks, mountain bike tricks, and that word came up. And I saw that word in context and I understood it, and now I've got it. It's completely solidified. I don't think I'll forget it again.

**Andrew:** So it's like that process of hearing it and noting, right? You have to notice, oh, I don't understand this word. Of course, if it just goes **in one ear and out the other** means you're not ready for it yet, I think. But then when you are ready, and then you do the work to make it so that it's sticky so that you'll remember it by making a note or a flashcard. And then you always have to be exposed to the language, you need to meet these words in the wild again and again for them to stick. So far, I've only seen that word one time, but the more I read Korean, the more I watch in Korean, the more I listened to it, I'm sure that I'll see it again and again in the future. That's going to be just one less word that I have to learn.

**Kassy:** Yeah, and to add on top of that, I have a Korean friend here who is learning English. And he is so good at using idioms in a natural way. And the reason he's so good at it is because as soon as he learns an idiom he doesn't know, he will try to use it in the conversation, like, two or three times the same day he learned it. And it really gets stuck in his brain that way.

**Andrew:** Yes. So that's another great thing to do, as well, is to be productive with the new words, trying to make sentences and trying to use them when you have opportunities to talk, as well. So, Kassy, I agree with your advice, you gotta put in the hard work. You have to expose yourself to English as much as possible, immerse in the language by listening to podcasts and watching TV and YouTube. And then making an effort to remember the words by using them or by studying them through flashcards or a different kind of program like that.

**Andrew:** All right, the next question is a short one. It's a quick one, I think, I hope. It's from Leon from Myanmar. Wow. Myanmar. So thank you for listening to us in Myanmar. That's so cool. Leon says, I would like you to talk about the word aren't, aren't. OK? Aren't is the negative form of the be verb in the plural, right? They aren't. We aren't. And he says, I've heard some people say I aren't. But that sounds grammatically incorrect to me. Is it correct? Kassy, what do you, what do you think? Is this a new English trend? Are people going around saying I aren't?

**Kassy:** I've got to say, I have never heard anyone say I aren't. But I have heard people say I ain't.

**Andrew:** Yes. There are some dialects of English where it is OK to say I ain't, especially, I think, in the USA in the south. Maybe in African American English, as well, it's acceptable to say I ain't. And especially these kind of double negative sentences like I ain't going nowhere, which means I'm staying here. This is very different than standard English, but it's spoken by a lot of people. And it's understood by all English speakers, I think.

**Andrew:** But to get back to the question about I aren't, no, I haven't heard it except maybe Leon has heard a sentence, like, my friends and I aren't happy, right? In this situation, you're not just saying, I aren't happy. You're making it about a group you and a group of other people, together, we aren't happy. So my friends and I aren't happy. If we were to say something like this, then that would be perfectly correct and grammatical.

**Kassy:** Yes, I agree.

**Andrew:** We've got two more questions to go, Kassy, and I think this one is very similar to José's question. It is from, and I'm sorry if I pronounce this name incorrectly, it is from Faisalanka, Faisalanka. Not sure where he or she is from. But they would like to know how to study with Culips. So when they listen to Culips, Faisalanka understands about 65 to 75% of the podcast. And they're a Culips member, so they have the transcript and the study guide. They're just wondering what's the best way to go about it? Should, you know, should you listen to the podcast first and then check the transcript? Should you check the transcript first, then listen to the podcast? What should you do? So, Kassy, if you are in this situation where you are an English learner and you had our study guide and you are able to study with it, what would your strategy be?

**Kassy:** Well, I'm also a language learner, I think it fits for any language. And my strategy is to listen to the audio at least once, preferably many more times, and then to listen to the audio with the transcript and highlight or mark any words or phrases that I don't know or I'm not very familiar with. And then after I've studied those words and phrases, I'll listen again, to see how much more I can comprehend. Maybe after Faisalanka does that she can go from 60 to 75% to maybe 85 to 90%. And then, finally, the last step is to use those vocabulary words or phrases in a conversation group or journal writing.

**Andrew:** OK. Very cool. So I think that is actually essentially what I would do as well. I, you know, it's too bad, Kassy, we are learning Korean. We both learned Korean, and there's no Culips-like resource for us. So, guys, we make Culips based on the type of thing that we want to study with, like—

**Kassy:** It's so true.

**Andrew:** We are creating for you the material that we want ourselves. But, Kassy, I would recommend the same steps. So first listening to the episode without checking the transcript. And I would say not just once, but many, many times. If I was listening to it, I would listen to it for a week on repeat, just again and again and again. Especially if you're at that, like, 75% level of comprehension, that's awesome. That means that you're at the point where you can really absorb and learn that extra 25% that's unknown. So I would listen repeatedly to the podcasts.

**Andrew:** And after about a week of listening, I would go through, and I would find and highlight all of the phrases and expressions, vocabulary or grammar forms that are unknown to me, and that's what I would study. So in our study guides, we of course have detailed vocabulary explanations and examples. And I would take those explanations and those examples and I would make flashcards with them in Anki. I would study them based on the spaced repetition algorithm that's based into Anki, which is designed to help you remember. It's based around the forgetfulness curve and it really shows you the cards at the time that you need to review them to help you keep them fresh in your mind. So I would study with that.

**Andrew:** And then, like Kassy said, I would try to produce using those new words and expressions that I learned when I'm speaking. Or if you don't have a speaking partner available, then you could make a YouTube video or you could blog or you could write in a journal. There's other ways that you can still practice speaking English without having a conversation partner, necessarily.

**Andrew:** So I completely agree with you there, Kassy, that those are the good steps to take when studying with our episodes.

**Andrew:** We got one more question here, Valentin from France. This is a bit of a fun one. He writes, it's a little bit science fiction, but if you could use a machine to go into the past, we call this type of machine a time machine, right? So if you could go into a time machine, go into **a bygone era** from the past, where would you go?

**Kassy:** Me?

**Andrew:** Yeah, Kassy, where would you go? If you could, if you had a time machine and you could travel to the past, what era would you like to visit?

**Kassy:** Well, as a physics major, I'm not sure I'd want to go to the past, because—have you heard of **the butterfly effect**? Everything that you do in the past could affect your future. But if **the butterfly effect** didn't exist, then I think I would go to American Revolutionary War era, because I learned so much about it in my history class. And I want to see if it really looks and was as inspiring as we learned about in history class or if it kind of happened similar to how revolutions happen throughout history.

**Andrew:** OK, interesting. American Revolutionary War time period, which was when, like, the 1860s-ish?

**Kassy:** One hundred years before that, 1776.

**Andrew:** Sorry, I'm getting it confused with the Civil War. Civil War was 1860s, right? Is that correct?

**Kassy:** Yes, that's correct.

**Andrew:** OK. I'm a history major, so I should know this. OK, so more about the War of Independence?

**Kassy:** Yeah.

**Andrew:** Gotcha.

**Kassy:** How about you?

**Andrew:** You know, interestingly, I am similar to you, Kassy, in that I kind of want to know about Canadian history, but not necessarily the history of European people and settlers and colonizers in Canada. But before that, before European contacts in North America. I'm really curious to know what the lives of the First Nations people in Canada was like way back in the day before contact with Europeans.

**Andrew:** So I would love to go back to Kelowna, my hometown, and maybe not even interact with the people that were living in the area. But just from a distance observe and see, because it's really sad, you know, we don't have good records of pre-colonial indigenous people in my area. Of course, we have some artifacts, and we have stories, but we don't have good historical records. And so it would be really cool to go back and see how people lived and what life was like back then, and what the language was like, because there were many, many different types of indigenous languages near my hometown. So to hear those I think would be completely fascinating and there's so much unknown about that time in history. So that would be my choice, I think.

**Kassy:** That sounds really cool.

**Andrew:** However, OK, one question, here that popped into my head. If you had the choice between going back in time, or travelling ahead to the future, which one would you choose?

**Kassy:** Again, if there were no consequences. Ah, that's **a tough one**. I'm not sure. Maybe if it was, like, really far into the future, because I'm a little bit nervous to know what life would be like while I could still possibly be living. I'm not sure I want to know. But if I could go, you know, maybe 100 or 200 years in the future and see what it's like, that might be interesting.

**Andrew:** That would be super interesting. Personally, I would choose to go back in time, because I think if I went forward in time, perhaps I wouldn't want to come back, right? Oh my gosh, things are so good 1000 years from now, I can't go back to the year 2020. Are you kidding me? Living in the Stone Age, we don't even know it.

**Kassy:** Why aren't there hoverboards everywhere and robots doing all of my cleaning?

**Andrew:** Exactly.

**Andrew:** I think we will wrap it up here. Thank you, everyone, for your questions. It's really great to connect with the community, and we enjoy it when you guys send us emails. So please keep them coming. Our email address is [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com). Or you could also connect with us through social media, we're on Instagram and Facebook and YouTube and Twitter, as well. Just search for the Culips English Podcast and you will be able to find us.

**Andrew:** And, finally, if you enjoy Culips, please support us. You can do that by signing up to become a Culips member or telling your friends about Culips or leaving us a five-star rating and a nice review wherever you get your podcasts.

**Andrew:** We will be back soon with another brand-new episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye

**Kassy:** See ya.

## Detailed Explanations

### To pick things up where [one] left off

Phrasal verb

To **pick things up where [one] left off** is to resume or start something at the exact point where one had previously stopped. **To pick things up** means to start doing something again and **where [one] left off** means the point where one last stopped doing something. For example, this episode is Part 2 of a segment answering listeners' questions. Andrew says that he and Kassy will **pick things up where they left off**; in other words, they started this episode right where Part 1's conversation ended.

The phrase **pick things up where [one] left off** can be used to describe any project or situation where one stops an action and then resumes it in the exact same manner after a certain period of time.

Here are a couple more examples with **to pick things up where [one] left off**:

**Lucy:** Hello, Ms. Rogers. Are you there?

**Brigit:** Yes, I'm here.

**Lucy:** Oh, good. I'm sorry about getting cut off earlier. We were going through a tunnel and my phone suddenly lost all connection. Shall we **pick things up where we left off**?

**Brigit:** Yes, sounds good. You were in the middle of telling me about your plans for the new science center.

**Lucy:** Ah, yes, that's right.

**Victor:** OK, good work. I think we can stop there for now. We can **pick things up where we left off** after lunch.

**Mike:** Sounds good to me. I'm starving!

**Victor:** Then let's go grab a bite to eat. I know a great Italian place right around the corner.

**Mike:** Great! Lead the way.



## In one ear and out the other

Idiom

**In one ear out the other** means to hear something and then immediately ignore or forget it without processing it. **In one ear and out the other** is mainly used in two situations: when someone ignores information and when someone forgets information immediately after hearing it. In the first case, an example could be a man who receives some advice that he really doesn't want to hear, so the advice goes **in one ear and out the other**. He doesn't take the advice and simply ignores it. In the second case, an example could be a grade 2 student who is trying to learn calculus. His cognitive ability isn't advanced enough to process and remember calculus, so it simply goes **in one ear and out the other** and is forgotten instantly.

Here are a couple more examples with **in one ear and out the other**:

**Martha:** Ugh. I'm so tired of all this teenage angst. Darcy is impossible to deal with since she turned 13.

**David:** Yeah, but we just have to remember that this is a phase. She'll grow out of it once she makes it through puberty.

**Martha:** I'm just sick of her ignoring everything I say. It goes **in one ear and out the other**, no matter what I say.

**David:** Even though it seems like that, she's listening. She just doesn't want you to know she cares. It's part of her cool-girl act. Don't let it get to you too much.

**Freddy:** Can I borrow your physics notes? I was totally spacing out in class today.

**Martin:** What? You didn't take notes either? I was gonna copy off of you today. I didn't get much sleep last night, so I couldn't focus. It all just went **in one ear and out the other**.

**Freddy:** Dude, we are doomed. Neither of us took any notes and the quiz is on Friday.

**Martin:** I'll ask Sarah if we can take a look at hers. She owes me because I helped her ace that Spanish test last week.

## I've got to say

### Phrase

The phrase **I've got to say** or the more colloquial **I've gotta say** is used as a prelude to an opinion or statement about something. For example, look at the sentence "**I've gotta say**, your dress is fantastic!" In this sentence, the speaker starts with the phrase **I've gotta say** and follows with an opinion about the listener's fashion. The phrase **I've gotta say** is simply used to introduce an opinion or thought, like other words such as: well, actually, in fact, and you know.

Phrases with a very similar meaning include **I must say** or **I can't help but saying**. All three phrases give the impression that the speaker feels strongly about whatever opinion they are about to say.

Here are a couple more examples with **I've got to say**:

**Cara:** Wow! This soup is really good!

**Francine:** Yeah, I totally agree. **I've got to say**, this might be the best clam chowder I've ever had.

**Cara:** The reviews about this place were spot on. I'm glad we decided to come here even though it's kind of touristy.

**Francine:** Hey, we're tourists, too, so we're allowed to be a little cliché.

**PJ:** **I've gotta say**, that movie was pretty terrible.

**Ryne:** I know, right? It was totally boring!

**PJ:** At least we got the tickets for half price. It doesn't feel like such a waste of money.

**Ryne:** It was such a dud. I feel bad for the actors. That movie is gonna be a black mark on their careers.

## A bygone era

Noun

**Bygone** is an adjective that describes something belonging to an earlier time, and **era** is a period of time in history with distinct characteristics or defining features; therefore, **a bygone era** is a period of time in the past with particular characteristics that are no longer found in the present day. For example, phone books belong to **a bygone era** before cellphones and caller ID.

**Bygone** can be used with several nouns to describe things from the past, such as **bygone days**, **bygone names**, **a bygone society**, or **bygone fashion**.

Here are a couple more examples with **bygone era**:

**Sandie:** What is that?

**Hayeon:** Oh, that? It's called a hanbok. It's traditional Korean clothing from a **bygone era**.

**Sandie:** Wow, it's so pretty.

**Hayeon:** You can try it on if you'd like.

**Sandie:** Really? That would be amazing! Thank you.

**Hector:** Dad, what band is this? They're really good.

**Dad:** Oh, that's The Beatles. They were popular long before you were born, in a **bygone era** when music was actually good.

**Hector:** Hey, that's not fair! Music is good now, too.

**Dad:** Yeah, maybe, but not like it was before.

## The butterfly effect

Noun

**The butterfly effect** is a phenomenon that states that something small or seemingly insignificant could have a big impact on a complex system. This comes from the idea that the flap of a butterfly's wings could lead to a tornado. **The butterfly effect** also shows that, because of this complex system of interdependence, it is almost impossible to forecast the future.

Here are a couple more examples with **the butterfly effect**:

**Tyler:** If you could go back in time, what time period would you want to go to?

**Brandon:** Do we take **the butterfly effect** into account?

**Tyler:** No, pretend that you being there doesn't have any effect on the future. You would be like a ghostly observer.

**Brandon:** OK, in that case, I would love to go back and watch the Boston Red Sox win each of their World Series championships.

**Raj:** Let's go to the movies tonight.

**Derek:** Sorry, I can't. I've got a game.

**Raj:** Just skip it. You're the water boy. You don't even play.

**Derek:** I've gotta go. Haven't you ever heard of **the butterfly effect**? Even though my role might seem insignificant, it could affect the outcome of the game if I'm not there.

**Raj:** I think you're thinking too highly of yourself. How could your presence make a difference?

**Derek:** The water might run out and someone could get overheated, or my lack of cheering could cause a drop in the players' motivation.

**Raj:** Wow, I never thought of it that way. You're right. You should go. The team needs you.

## A tough one

Noun

**A tough one** refers to something that is difficult to do. For example, a question that is described as being **a tough one** is a question that is difficult to answer. Similarly, a choice could be considered **a tough one** if it is hard to choose one option over an other, like trying to choose between winning a million dollars or going on a completely paid and planned 6-month around-the-world vacation—both options are amazing, so it's hard to make a choice.

Here are a couple more examples with **a tough one**:

**Johnny:** Hey, Dad, I have a question.

**Dad:** What is it, Johnny?

**Johnny:** Why is the sky blue?

**Dad:** Wow, that's **a tough one**. I'm not sure, but there's definitely an answer. How about we look at a YouTube video about it later?

**Johnny:** OK, Daddy.

**Deb:** What should I get Ming for Christmas?

**Tran:** Oh, hmm. That's a **tough one**. He's kind of picky.

**Deb:** I know! I want to give him something more personal than money or a gift card, but I also want him to actually like the gift.

**Tran:** How about something he could use at work, like a fancy pen or a new briefcase?

**Deb:** That's not a bad idea. It's not exciting, but it's practical.

**Tran:** Has he started any new hobbies recently? You could get him something related to that.

**Deb:** Oh! He started playing tennis on the weekends. I could get him some new gear. Thanks for the idea, Tran.

## Quiz

**1. Which of the objects below is NOT from a bygone era?**

- a) tape recorder
- b) phone book
- c) cell phone
- d) videocassette recorder

**2. Fill in the blank: In one \_\_\_\_ and out the other.**

- a) eye
- b) ear
- c) door
- d) side

**3. In the phrase that's a tough one, what does tough mean?**

- a) strong
- b) violent
- c) strict
- d) difficult

**4. True or false? The butterfly effect is a phenomenon that happens when something weaker overpowers something that appears to be much stronger.**

- a) true
- b) false

**5. The phrase "I've got to say" most often goes where in the sentence?**

- a) the beginning
- b) the end
- c) the middle

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## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Which piece of advice in this episode was the most helpful for you? How will you implement it in your learning?
2. What is your favourite way to practice listening in English?
3. What resources do you wish were available to help with your English learning?
4. What is something from a bygone era that you wish was still popular or still frequently used in present-day society?
5. Have you ever listened to something and have it go in one ear and out the other? Talk about the experience.

## Quiz Answers

1.c    2.b    3.d    4.b    5.a

### Episode credits

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