

Chatterbox #273 – Anna's language learning and teaching journey

Episode description

Since you're listening to Culips, that means you're learning a language! Have you ever wondered what it'd be like to teach one? Today, Anna and Andrew chat about their experiences as both language teachers and language learners.

Chatterbox is a Culips audio series for intermediate and advanced English learners. It features natural, unedited conversations between native English speakers about what's going on in the world today. Tune in today to practice your English listening skills and expand your English vocabulary while also getting an inside look at what it's like to teach a new language.

Fun fact

Almost half of the world's population is bilingual! 43% of the world is fluent in two languages. 40% only speak one, 13% speak three, 3% speak four, and 1% can speak five or more languages fluently.

Expressions included in the study guide

- The blind leading the blind
- Wallflower
- Go through the motions
- Put in the time
- Bring to the table
- Fire [someone] up



Transcript

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.

Andrew: Hello, everyone. My name is Andrew.

Anna: And my name is Anna.

Andrew: And you're listening to the Culips English Podcast.

Hello, everyone. Welcome back to Culips. This is Chatterbox, the Culips series for intermediate and advanced English learners that features natural, unedited conversations between native speakers about interesting topics or trending current events, or maybe even a hot issue. And today, I'm joined by my co-host, Anna. Hey there, Anna, how's it going?

Anna: Really well, thank you. And you, Andrew?

Andrew: I'm doing pretty well myself and today we are going to talk about your experience as both a language teacher and a language learner. And I think this is a topic that our listeners will find really, really interesting.

Anna: Yes, I'm really excited to tell you all a little bit more about my experiences teaching English and also some of the interesting things I've learned learning another language as well. So looking forward to it.

Andrew: Yeah, stay tuned for that story, everyone. But before we get into it, I want to let everyone know that there's a transcript and a study guide available for this episode for all of our Culips members. And following along with the study guide while you listen is one of the best ways to study with us. And also by becoming a Culips member, you'll be able to support us and keep allowing us to make English lessons for people all over the world. And if you become a member, there's also many other extras that you'll get. So to sign up, and to get the study guide, just visit our website, Culips.com.

Anna: We also wanted to give a shout out to our listener Rico from France, who left us a lovely comment and a five-star review on Apple Podcasts. Rico, you wrote "Simply the crème de la crème English podcast." Aw, that's very nice. "I'm so happy I discovered your podcast guys. I'm no longer living in a country where I can practice English. And listening to you daily helps me a lot. Bonjour from the French Alps. Love you guys. Whoop, whoop, Rico." Smiley face, I need to include that as well. Smiley face. Thank you so much, Rico.

Andrew: Thank you for the nice comment Rico, and listeners leaving a positive review and a five-star rating on Apple Podcasts, or really whatever platform you use to listen to Culips helps more English learners around the world find us and study with us. So even if you leave just a short one-word review, we'd really appreciate it. And with that said, it's time to talk all about Anna's language learning journey, so let's get into it.

All right, Anna. So in the last episode, we learned that you're originally from the UK, but you're now living in Spain. And I imagine that part of living in Spain is learning how to speak Spanish. And I know that you are a Spanish learner. And I was hoping that you could tell us a little bit about learning Spanish and what that process is like?

Anna: Absolutely. So I'm learning Spanish. But an interesting fact that I don't think many people know is that the language is actually called Castellano. So this was the language that was created when some of the kingdoms in Spain united, and then it was taken across to the Americas. So around the world, it's known as Spanish but the actual language is Castellano which comes from the region in Spain which is Castilla or the kingdom in Spain, which was Castilla another really interesting thing is that Spain has many languages that are that are spoken for example, perhaps Catalan is the most famous one which has spoken in Catalonia but there's also Gallego which is in Galicia, Euskera which is in País Vasco (Basque Country), Valenciano and there are actually more as well, which I don't think many people know about Spain. But I think it's good to give that background because I think a lot of people don't know that.

Andrew: Yeah, I had no idea. I'm definitely one of those people, I guess. It sounds like there's a ton of language diversity in Spain. So Anna, how long have you been learning Spanish for?

Anna: I've been learning Spanish now for four years. I'm coming up to my fourth year learning Spanish. And it's good to say that before I came to Spain, I didn't speak any Spanish, nothing. Maybe that's a little bit of a lie. I did a small course, a small beginner's course there's a way to survive when I arrived here. But I really didn't have, I couldn't speak at all. I'd studied Spanish when I was at school. But I mean, I'd forgotten everything by this point, I was 26 when I moved to Spain, I was 14 when I was studying Spanish. So I essentially forgotten everything. And I arrived here, and little by little, I have been learning this language. And I have to say, for me, it's been an interesting journey because I think a common misconception is that when you arrive in a country, you're automatically within three months, going to be completely fluent, you're going to be immersed in another language. And actually, in my case, it's really not how it's worked for me. Partly because I work in my own language, I work in English. So the majority of my time is spent in English, I'm thinking in English, I'm working in English. So the time for me to speak in Spanish is more limited. So even now, after four years, I don't like to put labels on it. But let's say I'm a high intermediate in Spanish, but I still feel like I have so much more to learn.

Andrew: Right.

Anna: So I'm just on the edge of, you know, learning more things about the language.

Andrew: I can relate to that, because I've been studying Korean, learning Korean for around eight years now. I keep making just incremental progress. And that big breakthrough never comes. So I've just kind of think now that that is what language learning is all about. Always being on the edge, ready for a big breakthrough. But it never seems to come. That's one of the frustrating things, I guess, about learning another language. But I can relate to that, for sure.

Anna: Yeah, I mean, you think that you've mastered an area of Spanish or you think you think I'm doing really well. And then you have a conversation with somebody, or you have an interaction with somebody, and you think I didn't understand anything. And that happens to me all the time, especially when I'm doing things like administrative stuff, updating my documents, I have to go to, you know, offices and government offices, and I find it really difficult still, after years being here. So I agree with you as well, it's, you're always on the edge of something. And I think that's also, as you said, why it's can be really frustrating, and why you have to have a lot of determination and also a long term view when you're thinking about learning a language.

Andrew: Yeah, for sure. And another thing that I can totally identify with, is that just because you live in the country, where the language is spoken, it doesn't mean that you're just going to pick up the language, especially when you do the work that we both do when you're English teachers because that means when we you know, get up in the morning, we go, quote, unquote, to the office, we speak English all day, that's our job. And so it obviously means that we can't use that time for learning the language of the country that we are in. I mean, that's not true for everyone. I think a lot of people will be completely immersed. But that's our story, right? That it makes it a little bit harder to become fluent in Spanish and Korean respectively because we're spending large parts of our day speaking English.

Anna: That's one thing that I look back and I think why wish I had spent more time and for sure it's on me too. I could have spent more time speaking Spanish. But there's also that you know, the social element when you move to a new place, and you have to make new friends. And maybe some of you the listeners will relate to this is when you're trying to make friends with people in another language. It's really hard because you can't express yourself, you can't make the same jokes. You can't describe things and you think oh, but that would be funny if I said it in English, but in Spanish, I sound like completely weird and not funny at all. So, you can't express yourself in the same way. And so making friends, I think, from the place where you are or is quite, quite difficult in another language. That's one thing that I've definitely struggled with. But as you said, not everybody has that story. Some people they come they get immersed and they spend all their days speaking the other language and of course, people like that are going to improve really, really fast. So again, it's it's just a different thing. But I think it is a common misconception that when you move to a place automatically you're going to be immersed, you know it still takes a lot of effort to immerse yourself, even if you're in the country, learning the language with native

people, you still have to make an effort. It's not just automatic, I guess from my experience, is what I would say.

Andrew: Yeah, I completely agree with you. However, Anna, you did learn Spanish to a pretty high level. And I'm curious how you did that. Did you take a class? Did you study with podcasts? Did you do language exchange? Did you read books? Maybe all of the above? How did you learn Spanish?

Anna: I haven't had a very systematic approach to learning Spanish. I've kind of done it on my own as I've been going along, I haven't had specific grammar classes, I've mainly had conversation classes. I've studied at home with books. One thing that's really helped me are translation lists from English into Spanish, and vocabulary lists from English into Spanish. So they are about learning short, automatic phrases, especially if you're a beginner, they help you build a foundation in a language quite quickly. So they were they've been like, essential in my learning of Spanish. And honestly, I've just kind of done it myself, which means that now when I speak Spanish, sometimes I have some gaps, which is when you know, I feel quite frustrated because I think well, I can't say this or I know what I'm saying, but I don't understand why I'm saying it. I've got no idea why I'm saying it like that.

Andrew: That's good, though, right? Because that means you have almost like a native speaker understanding of the grammar. You know, for most native speakers, people who don't teach the language, most of that understanding of the grammar is all automatic. And when people ask you to explain it, you're like, actually, I have no idea. So if that's happening to you with Spanish as well, it probably means that you instinctively understand the grammar, even though you can't explicitly explain why you said that kind of sentence.

Anna: Perhaps. I mean, you make it sound very good, Andrew. I think it's more a case of you know, **the blind leading the blind**, I have no real idea about what I'm saying. And that can be annoying for me, because I'm somebody, maybe you're like this or the listeners. But I like to know all the rules, that in language isn't always the best way to do it. Because if you become obsessed with the rules, obsessed with the structures, it actually holds you back from just saying something and saying a sentence. So that's something I have to grapple with is just saying things and having conversations and being confident to speak in front of a group of Spanish people. If I'm out with my friends, which can be quite intimidating. And as I said, in the last episode, I'm more introverted. So for me being social is more difficult and in a language even more difficult, another language.

Andrew: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. In my experience, I like hanging out with just one other Korean speaker one or two, I find that's OK, I can handle that. It gets really difficult for me and I tend to just be quiet and I'm **a wallflower** in situations where there's like five or six or seven people hanging out together, and everybody's talking really fast and talking over each other and it's loud. Those situations are the hardest for me to communicate in. Is that the same for you?

Anna: Oh, I'm just thinking I'm exactly the same when you were saying that I was thinking literally, you could be describing my experiences as well.

Andrew: Yeah.

Anna: I don't know if this is a cultural thing in Korea, but in in Spain, when people get together, they're very loud. And they talk over each other and it's just part of the way that they communicate, which is very different to in the UK. And we'll talk about that in future episodes. But yeah, big group of Spanish people chatting and laughing and it's just like, oh, my god, I don't know what I'm doing. And I'm just like you, I go quiet. And that's the thing is when it's intimidating, or when it's you don't feel as comfortable, you tend to just kind of close up. I'm exactly the same, I have to really push myself sometimes to try and get involved.

Andrew: Or what happens to me is I'll be following the conversation. And then I think, oh, I can talk about this. I can talk about this topic. How do I say that? And then by the time I'm ready to make my statement, the conversation has already moved on, and it's too late and I lost my opportunity.

Anna: Right. You're thinking about a clever comment in your head, you're like, oh, I'm gonna say this really nice expression. And then they've kind of moved on, you're like, OK, it's completely lost. And the thing about expressions as well, which I always talk about, especially I found with learning Spanish, it's really hard to use an expression right at the exact moment at the exact time in line with the conversation that people are having. So, I find that really difficult. But no, exactly the same experience, more than one or two Spanish people is for me intimidating. It's too much, too many. Too many, I should say, too many.

Andrew: Well Anna, I'm happy to hear that you are an experienced language learner because I feel like these people make the best English teachers because they can really sympathize with the students. They know exactly what the students are going through. And that's why I wanted you to join us as a co-host here on Culips because you'll know exactly what our learners are going through as they learn English. And yeah, so maybe now we could transition a little bit into your English teaching journey. I guess what I'm most curious about is how you became a teacher in Spain. What was the impetus for you moving to Spain and teaching English?

Anna: I think as well, just to mention first that, I would even argue, based on what you said that if you're going to be an English teacher, or a teacher of English as a second language, whatever you want to call it, I would almost argue that to be a better English teacher, you kind of have to have a knowledge of what it's like to learn a language, so that you can sympathize with the students and empathize with them. So I think it's an essential part, actually, of being a language teacher of any language is actually learning a language because I think without that, you just don't understand the struggles, the frustrations, the mindset behind somebody learning a language. So I think that's been really valuable for

me as an English teacher. And one thing that's really interesting is, you start to understand where the mistakes are, because you can think like them. So you think, ah, they're making that mistake, because they're thinking in Spanish in a specific structure. So you actually start to understand why they make the mistakes they do. And then you can set up little traps and little tricks to try and make them make mistakes. And then and then correct them and challenge them, I guess is what I should say, rather than playing tricks on them. But yes, essentially playing tricks on them to try and test them a little bit. But back to your question, you asked me about why I moved to Spain and became an English teacher here. I was 26 at this point, I was living in the UK, I was working in healthcare and a really normal thing for people to do in the UK, it's a little bit part of our culture, is to have a gap year when we are 18. We go away, some people travel, and they explore, and they learn, and they grow. It's quite a common thing that people do between leaving school and starting university.

Andrew: OK, it's like a year off, right? Between school.

Anna: Yeah, a year off, a gap year is how it's called. Well, I didn't do that when I was 18. I went straight into university, I went straight into working. And so for me, this was like a point in my life where I thought, OK, I've always wanted to live somewhere else, I'm at a really good point in my career, where I can perhaps move into something different. So for me, it was just the opportune moment to say, let's make a change because if I wait any longer, maybe I'm not going to be able to do that. So I decided one weekend, when I was at home, and I said, that's it. I'm sick of talking about it because I was always saying that I wanted to move to Spain, I wanted to live somewhere else. I was like, no, you can't keep talking about it, you have to do it. So I did it. I planned it. And I came to Spain with the idea of perhaps teaching or maybe working in a company in a similar area. And when I came here, I came across this company that had a really interesting method of teaching English. And I applied and I went through a really rigorous process, they have a very intense training period. And that's how I ended up being a teacher here. And as I said, it just fit my skill set and was actually a skill set. I didn't really realize, I realized that I had it, but I wasn't able to make the most of it in my previous jobs. So communication, being able to manage groups, being a problem solver, because essentially, as a teacher, you're a problem solver. I don't really like the word teacher. I think it's like two dimensional, but you're like a problem solver. You're trying to help people solve their problem. The problem is that they feel, or they have an issue with English. They don't feel confident speaking English and you have to try and help them solve that problem, guide them, mentor them, coach them. And that's the style that I've been trained with is seeing the teacher more like a coach guiding the student rather than being kind of one way telling the student what they should do. Giving a person the tools to be able to learn English and be successful in English.

Andrew: Yeah, I'm glad you use that word coach, because that's actually how I see myself as well, I don't really think of myself as a teacher, as more as like a mentor or a coach as sort of guiding the students towards becoming better at English, because I'm not really, you know, telling the student anything that they can just immediately apply and make them fluent. The students have to do the work themselves, they have to put in the

time, especially, it's mostly time commitment to learning English. And I can give feedback, and I can give guidance and help. But I can't really just take the English from my brain and put it into a student's brain. So I also think of myself as being more like a coach. And that's a cool thing that we have in common that we both kind of picture ourselves as coaches rather than teachers.

Anna: Yeah. And I think, coming back to what you said, there, I think a lot of people studying put a lot of emphasis on the teacher or the coach, and they say, they're the person that's responsible for whether I'm successful or not. And actually, it's really a lot more 50/50, you have to bring as much to the table as the teacher or the coach. It's all about the student's attitude as well. If you have a good attitude, you're open, you're committed, then you're going to do better. But it's just as much about the mindset and the attitude of the student as it is of the teacher. And it's important that people take responsibility for their learning. Like if you want to learn English, that's down to you. Like you said, I can't make you learn English. That's you. You're the one that does the hard work. And so also when students say to me something, you know, "Oh, Anna, thank you so much. You know, I've learned so much with you." And I think well, no, you're the one that did the work. I've guided you. And I've given you some tools, but you should be congratulating yourself because it's you that's done the work.

Andrew: Yeah, I'm laughing because my students say the same thing if they get like an A on an exam, they'll say, "Oh, Andrew, thanks for the grade." I'm like, I didn't give you the grade, you earned the grade.

Anna: Yeah, exactly. You did the hard work. The student's attitude, their mindset to languages is so important. If you have a good mindset and a good attitude, you will do much better learning languages and just have a better experience doing it as well.

Andrew: I couldn't agree more, motivation is so important when it comes to learning English or any other language. And if you have high motivation, if you're geared up and ready to learn, then the learning will happen. But if you have a bad attitude, or you're just **going through the motions**, not really **putting in the time** that it takes well, then the result is not going to be as good. So yeah, I guess what we're saying here is that you can't just really join a class and expect the teacher to do all of the magic, right? It's up to you to put in the time and the effort to get it done.

Anna: Absolutely. And the teachers important part of the equation, you know, we have to **bring to the table**, bringing you new things and helping you guide you, telling you what your common mistakes are, how you can get better in certain areas, but it's really all down to the student and isn't that great? Like you have responsibility for that it's totally under your control, which is great. You are in control of how well you do in English. So it's all about the student and how they see things.

Andrew: Now with that being said, a big part of my job is also motivating students, and I love to try and **fire students up** and get them excited about English when maybe they had

a negative attitude toward it before. That's one part of my job that I really like. So I don't just you know, have this attitude like it's all up to you, you have to do it. I do try to motivate my students of course, as well. But yeah, students being self-motivated goes a long, long way, absolutely.

Anna: And one one thing especially from my experience teaching students Business English specifically, and I'm sure some of you listeners have this experience as well is that you know, being in a workplace speaking English, it's kind of different because in your own language and you know, you're an expert in your field, you're an expert in your job. And when people come across and they start speaking in English, they feel really bad because they feel like, you know, they can't express themselves in the same way. You know, Anna, I feel stupid, you know, I can't say these things, or I can't express myself in the way that I want. So there's also that dynamic of when you have to be a beginner again, because I teach a lot of people who are very senior, they have very senior jobs, their managers, their business owners. And then to come back and be a beginner again in something is really hard. And it's challenging to motivate people in that context.

Andrew: Yeah, that's a unique challenge that you have that I don't really have teaching university students. But I could imagine that, that would be pretty humbling to have to go through that experience to go from a high level in your career down to, you know, the basics again with English. But yeah, very interesting. So Anna, I think we'll wrap things up here, actually, that was so nice to get to know a little bit about your language learning experience, and also your experiences as an English teacher. Now, we should mention here before we wrap things up about your podcast as well, because we'd be remiss to not mention it. So could you let all of our listeners know where they can find you on the internet and what your podcast is called?

Anna: Yes, of course, my podcast is Anna with 2Ns. That's the number 2. And you can find me on any podcasts or any of the major podcast platforms. And you can also find me on Instagram at Anna2NsEnglish.

Andrew: All right, well, that brings us to the end of this episode, everyone. Thank you for listening. We hope you learn a lot with us today. Our website is Culips.com. And if you want to get the study guide and transcript for this episode, plus the practice exercises, just check out the website to download it.

Anna: Becoming a Culips member is a great way to support us. But it's not the only way. You can also support us by leaving us a five-star rating and a nice review on your podcast app, telling your friends about Culips and also following us on social media.

Andrew: Yes, you can stay up to date with Culips by following us on Instagram and YouTube. Our email address is contact@culips.com. And if you'd like to send us a message feel free to do that. We love to hear from you all and we read every message we receive and reply as soon as we can. We'll be back soon with another brand new episode and we'll talk to you all then. See ya.

Anna: Bye.

Detailed Explanations

The blind leading the blind Idiom

The blind leading the blind describes a situation where someone asks for help or advice from another person, who also knows little or nothing about the topic. It can also describe a leader who doesn't know any more than their followers and is likely to lead them astray.

In this episode for example, Andrew mentions that native speakers know grammar instinctively. Anna observes that "it's more a case of the blind leading the blind". This is because native speakers are often unable to explain why certain things are said the way they are.

Here are a couple more examples with the blind leading the blind:

Aiden:	Do you know how to change a tire?
Shelly:	Not really. My dad showed me how once. Why?
Aiden:	I got a flat just now and I've been asking everyone I know how to change it.
Shelly:	Well, I can try to walk you through it, but it'll be the blind leading the blind . I've never actually changed a tire myself.
Aiden:	I'll take whatever help you can give at this point!

Min:	Ugh. My mom is driving me nuts.
Seo-Jun:	Why, what's she doing?
Min:	She's convinced that she needs to teach me how to knit.
Seo-Jun:	Your mom knits?
Min:	If she does, I've never seen her do it.
Seo-Jun:	So, it'll be the blind leading the blind then?
Min:	Definitely. Especially since I'll have my eyes closed 'cause knitting is so boring I'll fall asleep!

Wallflower

Noun

A **wallflower** is a shy, reserved or awkward person who stands to the side at a party or has no one to dance with at a school dance. **Wallflowers** tend to stay on the fringes of social events. They are usually introverted, with extreme cases having social anxiety. They distance themselves and avoid being in the spotlight.

The term comes from the **wallflower** plant, which grows against walls and in cracks and gaps in stone walls. Like the plant, **wallflowers** stand against a wall and observe others, hence the term. Like flowers, these people have their own beauty or skills, like creativity, kindness or intelligence.

Here are a couple more examples with **wallflower**:

Daniella:	How was your big party last weekend?
Yasin:	Well, it wasn't much of a party, actually.
Daniella:	What happened?
Yasin:	There were too many wallflowers , so things never really got going. We all just, stood there. Bobbing our heads to the music.
Daniella:	Next time, bring some board games. Seriously, games make every party better.
Yasin:	I'll do that. I wish you'd given me this advice a week ago though!

Khalid:	Did I see you at the club last night?
Ida:	Oh, probably? I was there.
Khalid:	Yeah, I did see you! It was around like, 10 and I was getting a drink. You didn't look so thrilled to be there.
Ida:	Hah, that's an understatement. I felt like a miserable wallflower . I only went because my friend wanted me to go.
Khalid:	Well, next time, I'll come say hi. We can be miserable wallflowers together.

Go through the motions

Idiom

Go through the motions means to do something without enthusiasm or commitment. When you **go through the motions**, you do something even though you don't think it's important. You might do it half-heartedly, not caring if you do it well.

Someone who **goes through the motions** says or does something because it is expected of them, not because they want to, and they don't feel overly passionate about it. This idiom can also be used to describe someone who is pretending to do an action, or just performing a task out of habit.

Here are a couple more examples with **going through the motions**:

Rosemary: How are you doing? How is your father? We've been so concerned about you after we heard about your mother.

Anya: Oh. Thank you. I'm managing. As for my father, it feels like he's just **going through the motions**. Nothing seems to really engage him, and he never smiles anymore. I just don't know what to do.

Rosemary: Oh dear, I am so sorry. Why don't my sister and I drop by tomorrow. We'll help you with any chores and maybe play some cards. See if we can't lift your spirits.

Anya: Would you? That would be wonderful. I really appreciate it. You and your sister were such good friends to my mom and dad. I think he'd like to see you, really.

Homer: Did you see the game last night?

Akram: I did. It was horrible, right?!

Homer: Right?! No drive. No ambition. It's like the team just turned up to **go through the motions**. Don't they want to move on to the finals?

Akram: I guess not. Not with the way they played last night.

Put in the time

Idiom

Put in the time means to dedicate a certain amount of time to learning a skill or doing a specific activity. In essence, it means to make an effort. People who **put in the time** are investing their effort into something worthwhile. This can be school – getting good grades, work – actively working towards a promotion or raise, art – painting or crafting something. Anything, really, that requires time and effort.

So, when you invest time and effort into learning, creating, or achieving something then you **put in the time**.

Here are a couple more examples with this expression:

Madeline: Oh, Leah. I just heard the project was cancelled. Those jerks!

Leah: Thanks, Madeline. But it's okay. The project was, apparently, not going to make enough money. So, now I'm on a new team working on something the company thinks will be more profitable.

Madeline: I would be so angry if they did that to me. **To put all that time into** a project and then have it cancelled just as you're about to finish it. I would be livid!

Ken: Man, I'm so sore. My trainer put me through this intense workout yesterday. I couldn't even stand this morning!

Jesse: Dude, your workouts are definitely paying off. You're ripped.

Ken: Thanks, man. It's been a lot of effort!

Jesse: I guess if I want to get fit, I have to start **putting in the time** at the gym.

Ken: Yeah, man. And it a lot of time, too. It's been like a year since I started working with my personal trainer and I feel like I'm just getting started.

Bring to the table

Idiom

Bring to the table means to provide something that will benefit the group. This can be a skill or attribute. It could also be a physical thing, like food or materials. In this episode, for example, Anna says that teachers “have to bring to the table ... new things.” This means that teachers have to always help their students achieve their goals and have to find effective ways to work with each individual student.

You can also say “**bring [something] to the table**”, as in “he brings considerable knowledge to the table”. This expression is often used in a business context to talk about skills and knowledge that you could provide to a company. You may even be asked the question, “what can you bring to the table?” during a job interview. To answer this question, you should talk about your skills and talents.

Here are a couple more examples with **bring to the table**:

Cal: We have to decide who to hire now that the interviews are all finished.

Lawrence: I think Clarkson is the right person for the job.

Cal: Yes, I was considering her too. She’s got the right background.

Lawrence: She **brings a lot of experience and important skills to the table**.

Cal: Excellent. I’m glad you agree. I’ll make my recommendation to the HR department.

Jenna: Amy! I need your help!

Amy: What, what’s going on? I’ll help however I can!

Jenna: I can’t decide if I should go out with Jeff or Mike.

Amy: Wait. Did they both ask you out?

Jenna: Yes! Both of them did!

Amy: Oh my. Well, you’ll have to figure out what each of them **brings to the table**.

Jenna: You’re right! Well, we’re going to need some ice cream if we’re going to figure this out.

Fire [someone] up

Phrasal verb

Fire [someone] up means to motivate, excite or anger someone. When someone is fired up, they're more passionate and excited about someone or something. In this episode, Andrew says "I love to try and **fire students up** and get them excited about English." Teachers, coaches, and other leaders are often the ones who are responsible for **firing people up**.

Here are a few more examples with **fire [someone] up**:

Yaz:	You ready for the big game?
Jordan:	I am, but I don't know about my players.
Yazhu:	Ah, are they nervous? I know I would be. Very nervous. It's the championship.
Jordan:	I know my players are very nervous about the big game. But it's our job as coaches to fire them up . Get them excited rather than nervous. And that's exactly what I plan to do.

Ashley:	I saw Jane on the weekend.
Fadia:	Oh? And how's she doing? I haven't spoken to her in ages.
Ashley:	She's doing well! She's taking a new course and it's fired her up . Something to do with graphic design. I couldn't quite follow, but she seems to like it.
Fadia:	Yes, I recall her mentioning that she had an eye for visual arts when we were growing up. Good for her! I'm sure she'll do very well.

Chris:	Are you all fired up and ready to go? The meeting starts in a few minutes.
Eddie:	I am! I practiced my presentation all weekend. If we impress the clients, we'll be able to make a huge sale.
Chris:	Good stuff! You're going to do great. Let's go!

Quiz

- 1. Which might you say if you saw someone doing a task without passion?**
 - a) They're going through the motions
 - b) They're making weird motions
 - c) They're going through a phase
 - d) They're making it through

- 2. What does it mean to fire someone up?**
 - a) You light them on fire
 - b) You motivate them
 - c) You bring them to a fire on a hilltop
 - d) You put them on an elevator

- 3. Which of the following is a shy, introverted person who stays off to the side at a party?**
 - a) Walltree
 - b) Floorflower
 - c) Wallflower
 - d) Floortree

- 4. If a potential employer asks what you bring to the table, what are they asking about?**
 - a) What food you've brought for dinner
 - b) What gifts you've bought and brought with you
 - c) Your ability to set the table for dinner
 - d) Your skills, knowledge or other beneficial traits

- 5. If you make an effort to learn a skill and spend many hours studying, which of the following might you say?**
 - a) I've put in the time to get good grades
 - b) I've got all the time in the world to get good grades
 - c) I've killed time and will get good grades
 - d) I've made the big time with my grades

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of an example you know about where the blind led the blind?
2. Are you a wallflower? Why or why not?
3. Describe a time when you were just going through the motions.
4. What skills, knowledge, ability, etc. do you bring to the table?
5. Have you ever had to fire someone up? How did you do it?

Quiz Answers

1.a 2.b 3.c 4.d 5.a

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