

Chatterbox #316 – Interview with Matthew Skidmore (ad free)

Episode description

Improve your English listening comprehension and communication skills with Culips.

In this special episode, Andrew interviews Matthew Skidmore. Matthew shares his experiences growing up in Dudley, England, and his opinions about British food and music. He discusses his background in acting and drama school and his decision to move to Korea. He also reflects on his time in Korea and the memories he made there. He then talks about his unique hobbies that include dancing, tabletop gaming, and exercising, and the benefits they bring to his life.

By listening to this episode, you'll learn English vocabulary related to accents, music, food, hobbies, education, life abroad and cultural differences. If you're looking to improve your English speaking skills and learn more about different cultures, this episode is for you!

Fun fact

In this episode, Andrew and Matthew discuss various accents throughout the UK. Did you know that there are about 40 distinct regional accents across the country? Black Country dialect is spoken in the area where Matthew is from.

Expressions included in the study guide

- That's a tough one
- To crunch the numbers
- Rose-colored glasses
- To take a leap of faith
- To have it all figured out
- To blow [one's] own trumpet



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: Chatterbox episode 316. Interview with Matthew Skidmore. Featuring, Andrew and special guest, Matthew Skidmore. Hello, and welcome back to Chatterbox. The Culips series for intermediate to advanced English learners, which features natural conversations about fascinating topics. I'm your host, Andrew, and it's great to be here with you today. And guys, I have to say, I'm really excited for this episode. As some of you may know, I recently visited Australia. And while I was there, I was able to meet up with one of my friends who's living in Melbourne, while he's completing his PhD. His name is Matthew, I call him Matt, and he's originally from the UK, but he lived for many years in Korea. And that's where we first met. In fact, we lived on the same street in Seoul, and we'd often run into each other while walking our dogs at the same time. And we were also part of the same poker game. And we met regularly with a few other guys to hang out, to eat some pizza, and play cards, play poker.

Now, there's this idea that I've heard on many different podcasts and YouTube channels in the past, especially ones related to personal development and becoming a better person or athlete or businessperson. And that idea is that you are the average of the five people who you surround yourself with. Have you heard this idea before at all? After doing a bit of research, I learned that this idea was first put forward by a motivational speaker named Jim Rohn. And I guess what he's getting at here with this idea that you're the average of the five people who you spend the most time with, is that if the people who you spend time with are positive, motivated, successful, well, then the qualities that they possess are likely to rub off on you too. And that will influence your own actions and perspectives in a similar way. However, on the other hand, if you spend time with people who have negative habits or bad attitudes, well, then those habits and attitudes might influence you in a bad way. So, at the end of the day, Jim Rohn is suggesting that you should choose your company wisely, as the people you surround yourself with play a significant role in who you become as a person.

So, this is an interesting idea. What do you think about this idea? I'm not sure if I totally 100% agree with it or not. And perhaps in a future Chatterbox episode, we could talk about it in more

detail. However, if it is true, then today's guest Matt is definitely one of the people I'd want to be in the group of five people who I surround myself with. He's just one of those guys that seems to be good at everything and is passionate about everything he does. Whenever we hang out, the positivity and excitement he gives off is infectious. And it rubs off on me and makes me want to put in more time, energy, and passion into the projects that I have going on in my life. So, in our conversation, Matt and I talk about many different topics ranging from Matt's childhood in England, trying to make it as an actor and writer, moving to Korea, living and studying in Australia, and his unique hobbies, which include dancing, gaming and lifting.

Let's get to the conversation now. I hope you enjoy it. And please don't forget to leave a comment on our Discord once you finish listening. I'll be waiting to hear what you think. If you haven't already joined our Discord server, then the link is in the description, and you can follow it to join us on Discord. Here we go. Here's my conversation with Matthew Skidmore. Enjoy!

Hello, Matt, welcome to the Culips English Podcast. Thank you so much for joining me today. It's great to have you here.

Matthew: Thank you very much for having me. I'm honored to be on the podcast with you.

Andrew: Yeah. Well, it's fantastic. And I think you're going to make a wonderful guest. I was thinking about this a little bit earlier today because you have so many interesting stories and you're a natural behind the microphone. So yeah, I'm really looking forward to this conversation. And I guess where I wanted to start, Matt, is just at the beginning. It's a good place to start, right? So...

Matthew: Absolutely.

Andrew: Maybe if you wouldn't mind just giving a little self-introduction to our audience just about who you are, what you do, where you're from, that kind of thing.

Matthew: Absolutely. I'm from a little town called Dudley, very small, nondescript town right in the middle of England. Literally in the center of the country. It's kind of in between two big cities,

Birmingham and Wolverhampton, and we're just like this little kind of boring town. Sorry any Dudley people listening. It's not that great. It's just a small town in between these cities.

Andrew: I love the name of the town, Dudley. Do you know what the origin or why it's called Dudley? Is it like named after somebody?

Matthew: Yeah there was an Earl of Dudley. I don't know if he was named after the town, or the town was named after him. But just down the road is a place called Kingswinford. And that was named because that is where the King used to keep all his pigs. It was King's swine ford, yeah, shortened to Kingswinford over time.

Andrew: How does it smell? I could imagine it probably wouldn't be like the cleanest of air there.

Matthew: Kingswinford is actually nice, is way nicer than Dudley, although like we are named after some important Lord. And they're named after the bunch of pigs, but that place is kind of better, frankly.

Andrew: Cool. So, what was it like growing up there?

Matthew: I mean, I don't want to sound too rough on the place. It's not a great place to live these days. It's economically a little bit depressed. Traditionally it was one of the homes of the Industrial Revolution. So, we had all of the coal mines and steel works and glassmaking as well. Because over time, especially in like the 1980s, those kind of got closed down. And it was like we're gonna open shops and shopping centers and stuff, which isn't very sustainable for the local area. So, growing up was kind of a little bit... here's a word that might be of interest to your listeners, it was a little bit parochial. It was very kind of small town minded, you know? Everybody kind of looked inwards rather than looking outwards.

Andrew: I see. And what was the population of Dudley? Or what is it? Like roughly.

Matthew: That's a good question. I have no idea what the answer to that question is. It feels like about a 100 people, but there's thousands and thousands.

Andrew: Thousands and thousands, OK, so it's not like a tiny, tiny little place.

Matthew: I'm making it sound a lot smaller than it is. It's actually relatively big town, but it's certainly not city status.

Andrew: OK, cool. And I know a lot of our listeners are really interested in UK English, and the various accents that can be found throughout the UK. How would you describe your accent?

Matthew: I remember reading a book once and someone was describing the accent and they sounded, they said it sounded like people chewing glass.

Andrew: That's a pretty harsh thing to say. I don't think that at all.

Matthew: As I get older, I appreciate it more. When I was younger, because I was used to listening to like, an American accent and like what we call received pronunciation English, which is like your BBC drama English. So, our accent was very different. And it sounded just like kind of weird to me. They call it a yam, yam accent.

Andrew: Yam, yam?

Matthew: Yam, yam. Because instead of saying words like "you are", we say "yam".

Andrew: Ah, OK.

Matthew: So instead of like, "You're a good friend" it'd be like "Yam a gooden."

Andrew: Really?

Matthew: Yeah.

Andrew: Wow. That is like, very, very different. I've never heard you say anything like that, though.

Matthew: Yeah, well I mean, because of kind of me going through like drama school and then spending so much time in other countries, my accent kind of flattened out. If I had a little bit too much to drink, occasionally, you'll hear the Dudley come through.

Andrew: And if you go back to your hometown, and you hang out with some of your friends there, does it come out a little bit more as well?

Matthew: Probably. Yeah.

Andrew: Interesting. OK. Well, I learned something new. I've never, I've never heard that before. I want to ask you a few more questions about England and growing up in England before we move on to other things.

Matthew: Sure.

Andrew: I know that a lot of our listeners have actually told me that they've heard that England has a bad rep for food. And it's not like praised cuisine from around the world. Do you think this is justified at all? And what are your favourite British foods?

Matthew: My favourite British foods. OK, so you have to think about the history of England. We don't have the best history when it comes to other countries. All right. We were expansionist, we kind of did as much as we could to take over as much of the world as we could. That's terrible. We did horrible things around the world. But what it does mean is we brought back some incredible food. So, the best British food is actually food from other countries. Easily 100% for sure, I think our national dish, I think the most common dish that we eat, is chicken tikka masala.

Andrew: Really?

Matthew: Which is of course an Indian dish. But England food, English traditional food is still pretty good. It's like potatoes and meat and vegetables. So, you can't really go wrong there, you know?

Andrew: Yeah, classic.

Matthew: As for like, my best, my favourite, I think not because of like the taste or anything, just because it makes me feel like I'm kind of young again and back in England. It has that like nostalgia about it, is going to be fish and chips. Fish, chips, and a pot of curry sauce on the side. So unhealthy. Probably doesn't taste as great as I remember it. But still, it holds that special place for me.

Andrew: The nostalgia factor.

Matthew: Yeah, absolutely.

Andrew: That's interesting that you eat it with curry on the side. I've only tried it with tartar sauce on the side.

Matthew: No, if you go to an English fish and chip shop: fish, chips and curry sauce. Or if you're feeling a little bit... mmm fruity, I'm gonna have some mashed peas, mushy peas instead.

Andrew: OK, good to know. And it's funny that you said that the best British food is food from other countries because that's my answer when people ask me similar questions about Canada as well. It's like Canadian food, no, not so great. Not really famous. But we have good food from other countries.

Matthew: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

Andrew: And I'm a music guy, Matt, and I know you're a music fan as well. And thinking about like rock and roll in the UK is just like, wow, there's so many good bands, right? What are some of your favourite bands from your country?

Matthew: I mean, that's a really, really **tough one**. I try to be kind of as eclectic as I can be with music. So, I try and listen to a bunch of music from all over the place. I when I grew up, I was super into like indie and rock. And then I kind of grew into like, a little bit of hip hop and stuff as well. So, like, as I was growing up, the indie scene was really big for me. Bands like, probably bands people have never heard of at this point, because they were popular when I was younger, bands like Supergrass.

Andrew: Oh, yeah. I know Supergrass.

Matthew: Oh, really? Fantastic. Supergrass and like Blur. And Jarvis Cocker and Pulp. Like, that kind of scene was really big for me. But as I've kind of grown older, like now, I think bands like The Arctic Monkeys have taken that kind of, that role of being like the foremost indie band from England. But we do have a great musical tradition of really getting some great music. But I actually heard a really great explanation for that.

Andrew: OK.

Matthew: Someone once told me that the reason England produces so much good music is because the weather's so bad, everybody stays home and practices playing the guitar.

Andrew: There might be something to that. There might be something to that. Definitely, I think the UK in general, just punches above its weight when it comes to music, if you think of, you know the population, compared to how many just amazing acts have come out of the country. Yeah, it's pretty amazing. Like, of course, I listened to more English music than I would you know, German music or something. But I think it's still the UK is a powerhouse for music creation. It's really cool.

Matthew: I think you're right. I do think in the modern age with the internet, I'm going to sound so old now. In the day, in this newfangled internet! With the internet and stuff, we do have a lot more access, and a lot of people have a lot more access to creating new music, which is fantastic. So, I try and grab as much from different places and different genres I can these days.

Andrew: Who's your choice in the great Britpop battle, Blur or Oasis?

Matthew: When I was a kid, it was Oasis. Like I was really, I just kind of hit my super like hormonal rebellious stage. So, I was like, "Yeah, I'm gonna be rock and roll." And then as I get older, I was like, actually, that wasn't that great. Blur were really innovative, and they played really good music. So, in retrospect, Blur, but at the time, it was Oasis.

Andrew: Nice. Yeah, I think I would agree with you on that one. Although I liked the attitude Oasis had, you know? That super rock-and-roll attitude was pretty impressive.

Matthew: Yeah, that I have to say thank Oasis for getting me into early music like the Beatles and David Bowie and stuff.

Andrew: Sure.

Matthew: Their influence led me to like, appreciate more the history of music.

Andrew: Right. Nice. So, you mentioned just a moment ago that you were in drama school, acting school, and that's one of the reasons why you don't have such a strong Dudley accent anymore. Actually, I didn't know that about you. Could you tell us a little bit about acting and your involvement with that activity?

Matthew: Sure, so that was my undergrad. My undergrad degree was in theater acting, drama. Yeah, about 10 years I was a theatre actor and writer. Never like super big. I played a couple of like big stages, but nothing like show stopping. I was involved in a lot of Shakespeare plays. Yeah, I wrote a couple of things and performed. It was pretty much my life for about 10 years in

Birmingham and in Liverpool where I went to university. Various kinds of plays, and stage poetry and that kind of thing as well. Yeah.

Andrew: Wow. So, do you have a role that was like your most memorable? Did you ever play Hamlet or, you know, some character that a lot of people would know?

Matthew: Richard II was probably my favourite. I did a couple of like, really interesting. Actually, maybe probably the most memorable, Richard II is probably my favourite. The most memorable, we did a cross-gender version of The Taming of the Shrew.

Andrew: Oh, OK.

Matthew: If anybody does Shakespeare, I played Kate, who is the shrew in that and that actually was incredible, just really fun to do. We played it like a black comedy, but it was, it's actually a really tragic story. It's a comedy. It's a Shakespearean comedy. We played it as a kind of black comedy with really tragic ending. It was really good, really well received as well.

Andrew: Nice.

Matthew: Yeah.

Andrew: So, when I finished my undergrad, I tried to make it as a musician for a couple of years. That was my goal to be a rock star.

Matthew: I didn't know this about you either. Wow, we're getting to know each other after several years now, Andy.

Andrew: Did you have the same ambition in your life? Did you try to make it as a professional actor after graduating? Was that your thing as well?

Matthew: Yeah, absolutely. So, once I graduated, I was I was acting and writing for a good, probably five years. But as you probably know, anybody who works in the arts means you're poor, pretty much all the time. Lots of work, but no money. So, sleeping on my friend's sofas, you know, trying to work part time at a bar and trying to do full time acting as well. Not the most conducive to a comfortable lifestyle. But that's when I got kind of an invitation to come out to Korea, just so it's like, oh, yeah, sure. I've never been to Asia, you know, I'm from Dudley nobody goes anywhere. If you're from Dudley you go to like, the hot parts of Europe for a week and then come home. That's kind of the extent of it. Sounds like a really interesting, exciting thing. And I moved to Korea. And of course, after that I kind of have never acted since.

Andrew: Well, this is a good time to transition into that part of your life then and to talk a little bit more about your experience in Korea. That's where we met each other for the first time. So you were there for a long time, right? Wasn't it almost 15 years or so?

Matthew: Yeah, I was there 15 years. Yeah. 2008 I moved out there.

Andrew: 2008. And were you there continuously that whole time? Or did you go back and forth a little bit?

Matthew: So, after. I think I did two years, and then I went back to the UK for six months, and then I went to Korea which is kind of a common story. I think with a lot of people who lived in Korea, they're kind of live in Korea for a little bit. They go home, they're like actually, Korea was really fun. I really enjoyed it. And go back over there. That was what I did. And it's kind of great the second time around, because you after the first like, year or two I found was very... it was very surface level. So, I had a great time meeting all these people, but then you kind of go home like, "Oh, that was great. I'm gonna go back again." But then when you go back the second time, you're like, OK, now I'm actually invested in the place. It's less about kind of going out partying, it's more about kind of getting to know the place itself, and the people and the culture and the history. So that's a much more worthwhile experience, I think.

Andrew: OK. And you lived in Seoul that entire time or were you in different parts of the country?

Matthew: No. So, when I first moved to Korea, I was in a small town, well a small city actually called Gumi.

Andrew: Gumi, OK.

Matthew: Which is in Gyeongsanbukdo close to Daegu. I was there for two years. Then I moved to Seongnam where I was there for another two years and then I moved into Seoul to do my master's degree.

Andrew: OK, so all over the country. You know, all roads lead to Seoul eventually, I think. Everybody wants to get there.

Matthew: Absolutely. Yeah, that's definitely true. It's... Seoul is very different to the rest of the country, I think.

Andrew: Yeah, it's a special place.

Matthew: It is.

Andrew: What were some of the difficulties that you had when you moved to Korea for the first time adjusting to a totally new culture, new language, new cuisine, all of these things? Do you remember any of those difficulties?

Matthew: Well, so when I moved to Korea for the first time, I was vegetarian.

Andrew: Oh, really? OK.

Matthew: I was vegetarian. I've been vegetarian for about five years. And I think within the first week of being in Korea, I was like, this isn't gonna work.

Andrew: A tough place to be a vegetarian.

Matthew: It is, especially when you walk past the meat restaurants, and you realize the smell of the barbecue is just so insanely attractive. You're just like, ah, can I really keep being a vegetarian? So, a little bit of context, I was vegetarian, like partially for the moral reasons, and partially for the health reasons, but mostly because when I was in university, somebody made a bet with me that I couldn't be vegetarian. So, I was like, forget this. I'm going to be vegetarian. For no particular reason, I was just young and stupid.

Andrew: Just stubborn.

Matthew: Yeah, basically. So, when I got to Korea I was like, well, I don't need to be stubborn anymore. I'm gonna eat this meat.

Andrew: You went over to the meat side.

Matthew: Although, I have to say, and give respect where it's due, I think a lot more vegetarian-friendly places are opening in Seoul particularly.

Andrew: Yeah, yeah, for sure. So, you spent 15 years in Korea. What are like a couple of the very good memories that you have from your time there?

Matthew: So many. And it's really weird, because I spent so long there and so many of my kind of formative and important years of my life there. Now, if I get homesick, I get homesick for Seoul, rather than I do for England.

Andrew: Yeah, that's interesting.

Matthew: So, like, being able to just try to pick a couple out is almost impossible, because I've had most of my good times, most of my bad times, and most of my indifferent times have been in that place, you know? I think rather than, like picking out just a couple of memories, it's more thinking about the things that mean a lot to me, like the relationships that I built there, my feelings towards you know, the landscape and the culture and all of that. It all kind of stays with you, I think.

Andrew: Have you ever calculated the time you actually lived in England versus the time you've lived abroad? Like I was calculating that for my life now. And I thought, wow, if I live in Korea for not too many more years, then I'm going to spend more than half of my life abroad versus the time that I actually spent in Canada. Have you done that calculation? **Have you crunched that number yet?**

Matthew: It's actually not that difficult to do 'cause I left England when I was 26. So yeah, so it was like 10 years more in the UK? I don't see that number going up, any more, to be honest. So, it's not... at about 10 years later, it's going to be 50/50. And it's probably going to be mostly abroad at that point.

Andrew: Yeah, it's interesting, eh? Time flies.

Matthew: Yeah, doesn't it. How about you? What's your number then?

Andrew: Well, I went back and forth between Korea and Canada for so long. But in total, I've been in Korea coming up, I think around 13 years. I got another eight to 10 years to do somewhere in there. But yeah, as long as things continue the way they do, and I keep living in Korea, then eventually I'll hit that point. Eventually, I will have lived longer abroad than Canada. Unless we go back to Canada. Like, who knows what the future will hold. But that was just something I was thinking about the other day.

Matthew: Yeah. So, let me ask you a question, Andrew. I'm going to turn the tables on you now.

Andrew: Go for it.

Matthew: If you were to leave Korea, where is the place that you'd want to go? I'm talking not just like a vacation or anything like an extended time, like to live.

Andrew: If we're throwing out the realities of the country aside, like finding work and speaking the language, that kind of thing. My wife and I visited Helsinki, Finland a few years ago, and we really

liked it there. We were only there for three days. And you know, sometimes when you visit a new place, you have the **rose-colored glasses** on?

Matthew: Absolutely, yeah.

Andrew: And you're like, "Oh, this is so amazing. Like, wouldn't it be amazing to live here?" Maybe that was happening to an extent. But we were both like, "This country, this city seems amazing." So, Helsinki would be one and right now, Matt, we are both in Australia.

Matthew: We are.

Andrew: And my wife and I have been here for two weeks, just over two weeks now. And you know, at first, I thought I got those rose-colored glasses on again, because this country seems really, really sweet. And we both really enjoy it here. But it's been you know, over two weeks now, and I'm still thinking the same way those rose-colored glasses haven't fogged up or anything yet.

Matthew: Excellent.

Andrew: So, I'm thinking yeah, maybe Australia who knows? A strong contender for sure.

Matthew: Fantastic. Well, if you do **make that leap**, I'll probably still be here. So, we can do this again sometime.

Andrew: Well, let's get into that a little bit then because eventually after a long stint in Korea, you did leave and now you're here living in Melbourne. And yeah, we were able to meet up the other day and catch up and hang out. And that was so fun.

Matthew: It was. It was great.

Andrew: What about your experience here? Maybe you could tell us first, like, why you decided to come here and what you're doing here?

Matthew: Yeah, so I kind of got to a point in my work life where I'd kind of hit a wall, I think. There was not much more that I could do, particularly as a foreigner. So, it was like, OK, I've always wanted to do a PhD. It was something that had been on my mind for a while since I've finished my master's degree really. Mostly because I just want my niece and nephew to have to call me Dr. Matt. So, I was like, right, this is probably about time. So, I was looking at different universities to go to. Originally, I thought going back to the UK, just because you know, my family's still there. And I got accepted into a couple of really good ones, actually. But then somebody who had, a friend of mine, a Korean friend had just come back from Australia said, "Have you thought about Australia?" I hadn't thought about it at all.

Andrew: OK.

Matthew: So, I had a look, and it turns out, Australia has some of the best universities in the world.

Andrew: Nice.

Matthew: Who knew? So yeah, so yeah, sent across my research proposal got in touch with my current supervisor. They offered me a scholarship. And I said, "Yes, this is great." Looked at my offers from the UK. And they said, because I'd been out of the country for so long, that I was now going to be treated as an international student.

Andrew: Really?

Matthew: I would have to, would have to pay three times the fees of like, a domestic student.

Andrew: Oh, come on.

Matthew: So, this other country's given me a scholarship to come here. My "home country" in quotation marks, want to charge me three times the normal price? So, I think I'll probably go to Australia.

Andrew: Yeah, and I think you made a good choice. Like I said, it's a really awesome place here. What are you studying? I know, you've pivoted away from acting now. Could you tell our listeners, what you're doing your PhD in and what you're researching?

Matthew: Sure. So, it's very broadly speaking, it's kind of sociolinguistics. So, it's looking at language, language use among 1.5-, and second-generation immigrants to Australia. I'm sure many of your listeners will be aware that Australia's kind of famous for its immigration policies. It's quite a welcoming country. So, there is quite a large influx of people from all over the world here. So, I'm looking at how the children of the immigrants kind of navigate their cultural identity through language in different semiotic resources. So yeah, how do they express themselves as someone from their like, parent's country and someone from Australia at the same time, and how does that change depending on what spaces they're in and what artifacts they're using and what language they're talking, that kinda thing.

Andrew: Interesting. What does it mean, if you're a 1.5 immigrant? Does that mean, like you were born in a different country, and you immigrated as a child?

Matthew: That is exactly right. Yeah, absolutely. Everybody asks me that. You're the first person to also offer an answer. Thank you. I mean, technically, there are different definitions of it. I'm going by the definition of if you arrived here before you're 12 years old. So that means you have also extensive schooling in Australia as well, which has a big impact on your kind of how you construct your identity.

Andrew: And have you thought about what you're going to write as a thesis or your doctorate dissertation? Have you decided on that yet?

Matthew: Yeah, pretty much. I think so.

Andrew: Yeah? Nice.

Matthew: So, I'm at the stage, this is my second year. So, I'm just going to writing of the methodology and stuff. But this is the year where I get into the big-data stuff. So, I'll get my participants, we'll do a lot of work together. We get data, we'll look at it together, and then I'll start analyzing stuff. And then next year is when yeah, I write the whole thing.

Andrew: Nice. That's amazing.

Matthew: Yeah, it's pretty fun.

Andrew: It's so cool that you just went for it. You said you always wanted to do a PhD. And then you made it happen. And I know that's not an easy thing. Like you were out of academia for how many years before you decided to go back?

Matthew: Not that long actually. I finished my master's degree, I think about five years before I started the PhD. So it took quite a while to do my master's degree as well. And I do recommend this to anybody. It's like don't do any higher education unless you're sure you want to do it. So many people, so many people drop out of PhDs, particularly because it's so much intense work. If it's not something that you're passionate about, it's going to really have that kind of mental strain on you. I'm used to always being somewhat poor, so it's OK if I lose a bit of money because I really am interested in the subject, it's a lot easier to commit myself to the work. And I think that's a kind of perspective I couldn't have had if I had just jumped straight from my undergrad to masters to PhD. I'm really glad I took the time to, you know, experience life and figure out what it is that I wanted.

Andrew: Yeah, for sure. That's the way to do it, I think. So Matt, we're going to wrap things up here very quickly, because we're hitting our time limit. But before I let you go, I have to ask you about your hobbies, because you've got some hobbies that are, to me really unique I think. Because they're so different from my own hobbies. But yeah, they're really, really interesting. And I love it when you talk about them, because it's an insight into a world that I know really nothing about for all of your hobbies. So, I know that you're into dancing, you're also into D&D. And any other games or just D&D?

Matthew: Well it's kind of tabletop/roleplay generally. D&D is the main game that we play. Although I'm currently running, if you know, the Alien franchise?

Andrew: The movies?

Matthew: Yeah, the movies. I'm running, I'm currently running a short three-session game on the Alien franchise as well, which is pretty fun.

Andrew: Cool. So, tabletop gaming, and also exercising, like working out. I also like exercising, but I run, and you hit the gym. So, it's like totally two different styles.

Matthew: Very, very different. You run an insane amount that would kill me.

Andrew: It's something we always joke about, right? Because I say the same thing. Like with you doing weightlifting or pull ups, that kind of thing. I'm like, "How can you do so many pull ups? I can only do three". So that's, that's always funny. But why don't we talk about those hobbies really quickly, what about dancing? What style of dancing are you into?

Matthew: Yes, so I do Latin dance, particularly a dance called the bachata. Not as famous as salsa, salsa is obviously the one everybody kind of knows. But the kind of second most popular one or famous one is bachata, super popular these days, pretty much everywhere. One of the really, really great things about learning to dance is wherever I travel, whatever city I go to, there's always a Latin dance club where people who dance go. I can always meet somebody, have a drink, go dancing, and like have a great time. Thanks to this, yeah this really cool hobby that I've got.

Andrew: That's one question that I get a lot here at the podcast is from people who have moved to an English-speaking country. And they're having some problems like getting to know people, or to meet new friends or to find English speakers to interact with, like they can find people from their own country to hang out with. But to try and hang out with, you know, English speakers can be a little intimidating. But I was thinking like, this is the perfect hobby for doing that kind of thing, right?

Matthew: It absolutely is. Well, I would say, so my hobbies are pretty good for me, because there's kind of three styles, is like the working out, which is just me in the gym, my alone time, I've got a podcast on and I'm kind of lifting those weights and you know, making myself better and just focusing myself. Then there's D&D, or any kind of tabletop role playing game, I think any kind of small group hobby, where you meet the same people week in week out, you get to build those bonds with the same people, those kind of close friendships. Like some of my best friends in Korea. And some my best friends here in Melbourne are from the D&D table that I kind of come with. And then you've got dance and dance is great for just meeting a huge variety of people. Like every week, I'm meeting new people, I get to kind of occasionally see the same people and go, "Oh hey, do you want to dance? Awesome. Oh, what's your name? What's your name?" But it is very kind of short, like atoms colliding for a few moments, kind of social interaction. But it's still really great for getting that kind of social practice. I guess just constantly meeting people, you know, saying hello, getting to know a little bit about them, just saying hi, and then dancing. And then a couple of weeks later, you bump into them again. So, I think I've got the kind of three spheres of social interaction in my hobbies, which is really good for me.

Andrew: **You've got it all figured out.** The secret right here.

Matthew: There you go. There you go, folks, you heard it right here.

Andrew: Matt's secret.

Matthew: Most people would put that in a book and sell it but no, you get it for free on Culips.

Andrew: Quickly, I just wanted to ask you how you got into dancing, because that seems like something that is a little bit difficult to pick up. How did that start?

Matthew: I went to my friend's birthday party and my friend was a dancer and he invited a bunch of dancers and I saw them I was like I want to know how to do that. That looks amazing. It looks so incredible. And the fact that it was all improvised when I was watching it, it looks like so smooth and so wonderful, so beautiful, so graceful. I was like, but that's improvised between two people. It blew my mind. So, like, a couple of weeks later, I found a class, I sucked, sucked at it so bad. And

if you start it, you will suck so bad. But if you keep going at it, you'll be with other people who suck at it, people who suck a little bit less, and you'll learn from them. And people who are pretty good, you'll learn from them. And over time, you'll get really good at it. And then you'll be the kind of person that other people look at. And I'm like, wow, that's so cool.

Andrew: And you're one of those people now, right? Like, as far as I know, you've won some awards or traveled to different places to participate in different, it wouldn't be like a tournament, what do you call it an event?

Matthew: Competitions and stuff. **I don't want to blow my own trumpet too much**, right? There are professional dancers out there who spend all of their time dancing, traveling while I am not one of those people. It's a fun hobby for me. I've won a couple of competitions, just small-scale competitions. And I have traveled a little bit with it. I'm lucky that it's allowed me to do that. I've got a couple of things coming up this year, I've got, I'm going to Adelaide and Brisbane.

Andrew: Wow.

Matthew: And hopefully over to Jeju at some point as well, for the festival there. Because there are like huge festivals where you get to meet people from all over the world to come together to take classes and dance together.

Andrew: Yeah, fantastic. Well, Matt, thank you so much for this interview. That was amazing. You're a natural behind the mic, just like I anticipated. And I think our audience is really going to enjoy listening to all the stories that you shared with us here today. So, thanks so much. And we'll have to get you back on again in the future.

Matthew: It has absolutely been my pleasure, Andrew, thank you so much for inviting me and I'd love to come back on anytime.

Andrew: All right. Thanks, Matt.

Matthew: Cheers mate. Take care.

Andrew: So, that brings us to the end of today's episode. Thank you for listening everyone and great job today. You put in some time and effort to improve your English and I think that's just so awesome. I'm proud of you for that. And you should be too because this is exactly what you need to keep doing to get closer to achieving your goals with the English language. I'm curious about what you thought about this episode. Please leave any comments or feedback that you might have on our Discord server. I'm going to take off now. Please take care and I'll talk to you next time when I'm back with another brand-new episode. Bye, bye!

Detailed Explanations

That's a tough one

Expression, informal

In this episode, Andrew brings up bands from the UK. When he asks Matthew to name some of his favorite bands, Matthew begins his response by saying, "That's a really tough one."

That's a tough one is an expression that we use when describing a challenging situation or a difficult choice. In this episode, Matthew uses it to communicate how complicated it is to name his favorite bands, as there are a lot of really good options.

You can use this expression when you or someone else is faced with a particularly challenging problem or decision. For instance, if a friend shares a workplace dilemma they're dealing with, you can respond by saying, "Wow, that's a tough one." This expression serves as a way to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation and express empathy, even if you're unsure how to help.

"That's a tough one" is commonly used in everyday spoken English, particularly in casual conversations. However, in more formal or academic contexts, it's best to use more suitable alternatives such as "that's a challenging situation" or "that's a difficult question."

Here are a couple more examples with **that's a tough one**:

Owen: You're in your final year of college, right? What are your plans for after you graduate?

Madison: I'm not sure yet. Choosing between doing a master's degree and working full-time. You know, I can't do both.

Owen: Yeah, **that's a tough one**. You need to weigh both options carefully and decide on what's best for you right now. You can always get a master's degree later, you know.

Alexander: Well, now that we've interviewed all the candidates, it's time to choose. Who do you think would be best for this job?

Scarlett: **That's a really tough one**. They were all well-qualified and experienced. Let me think about it, and I'll get back to you as soon as I make my choice.

To crunch the numbers

Idiom

Andrew mentions that he was calculating the time he lived in Korea versus the time he spent in Canada, and he wonders if Matthew has crunched that number yet.

To crunch the numbers means to process or calculate numerical data, typically in order to find answers, solve problems, or make decisions. The verb “to crunch” here refers to breaking down large amounts of information into smaller figures.

This expression is commonly used in conversations about finances, budgets, statistics, and data analysis. Professionals such as accountants, financial experts, and analysts frequently crunch numbers as part of their job.

Additionally, you can use this expression in any situation that involves calculations. For example, if you’re planning to buy a car, you might crunch the numbers to calculate the total costs of owning a car, including taxes, insurance, fuel costs, and maintenance expenses.

Similar expressions that convey the same meaning include “to run the numbers” and “to do the math”, though the latter can also mean considering all the facts, not just numerical figures.

Here are a couple more examples with **to crunch the numbers**:

Emma: How are the wedding preparations going?

Noah: Well, Meg and I have been discussing our preferences, and it turns out she wants a big wedding with fireworks and a lot of guests, and I actually wanted to have an intimate gathering, just close friends, and family, you know. Our budget is quite limited, too.

Emma: **Have you crunched the numbers yet?** It might help. Just calculate the expenses for both options, and when you see the difference, it’ll be easier to decide which one is best.

Dan: I can’t decide if I should keep renting or finally buy a place of my own.

Susan: **Have you crunched the numbers** to see which option makes more financial sense?

Dan: Not yet, but I’ve been researching mortgage rates and rental prices for a while now.

Rose-colored glasses

Idiom

During the interview, Matthew asks Andrew where he would go if he were to leave Korea. When responding, Andrew mentions that when you visit a new place, you see it in a positive way, because you have rose-colored glasses on.

Rose-colored glasses is an idiomatic expression that refers to having an overly optimistic perspective and seeing things in a more positive light than they may actually be. Often, this expression is used in situations where a person idealizes things, ignores the negative aspects of something, and doesn't see the real picture with all its downsides.

This expression originated from the idea of wearing glasses with rose-colored lenses that make everything appear rosy. The adjective "rosy", besides referring to the pink color, also means optimistic, positive, and happy.

This expression is often paired with verbs like to wear, to see, to look, to have. For example, if a friend of yours always focuses on the positive aspects of any situation, regardless of how difficult it is, you might say that he sees the world through rose-colored glasses.

Common variations of this expression are "to see the world through rose-tinted glasses" and "to look at things with rose-colored lenses." They convey the same idea and are used in a similar way, to express that someone is overly optimistic or idealistic.

Here are a couple more examples with **rose-colored glasses**:

Lucas: How's it going with your new business idea?

Sophia: It's been more challenging than I expected! I guess I **had rose-colored glasses on** when I thought I could open a restaurant in a month. There's so much to do, so many inspections. I've already spent more than I anticipated.

James: Did you see Lina's new boyfriend? He's so rude! I can't believe she's with that guy, and she seems so happy!

Emily: She might be **looking at him through rose-colored glasses**. She just met the guy! She can only see his good qualities. I'm sure she'll realize soon enough that he isn't that perfect. But let her do it herself, though.

To take a leap of faith

Idiom

In this episode, Andrew mentions Australia as a potential country he could move to. In response to that, Matthew says that if Andrew and his wife decided to take that leap, he'd probably still be there, so they could meet again.

To take a leap is a shortened version of the expression “to take a leap of faith.” We use it when talking about doing something when we’re not sure about the consequences. When someone takes a leap of faith, they’re taking a risk without knowing for sure if things will work out, but they’re choosing to believe they will. The verb “to leap” means to jump, so taking a leap is like jumping into the unknown, not being certain if the landing is going to be soft.

For example, if someone moves abroad without any guarantee that it will be a success, based solely on their intuition and belief in the best possible outcome, you might say they’re taking a leap of faith.

A common variation of this expression is “to make a leap of faith.” These variations can be used in both formal and informal contexts to communicate the idea of taking a risk without any guarantee of success.

Here are a couple more examples with **to take a leap of faith**:

Natalie: Hey, Ben! Congratulations on your book! It's a huge success.

Benjamin: Thank you so much, Natalie.

Natalie: I know that it took you a long time to muster the courage to publish it, so you must be thrilled.

Benjamin: Yeah. **It was a leap of faith** for me. I didn't know for sure if it'd work out. I'm happy I **took that leap**, though. I'm officially an author now!

Elizabeth: I can't believe you're quitting your job to start your own company. It's a huge risk!

Oliver: I know that. Starting your own business is always **a leap of faith**, but I've always wanted to do that, so I'm willing to take the risk.

To have it all figured out

Expression, informal

In this episode, Andrew and Matthew discuss how hobbies can help you meet new people, which is especially important when you move abroad. Matthew shares that he has three spheres of social interaction in his hobbies, which is working out well for him. In response to that, Andrew says, "You've got it all figured out."

To have it all figured out or **to have got it all figured out** means to successfully arrange one's life or situation in a way that leads to happiness and fulfillment. This expression is often used to describe someone who has made wise decisions that perfectly suit their goals, needs, and desires, resulting in a positive and happy life. In this episode, Matthew discusses how his hobbies give him time alone, help him meet new people, and develop close friendships, making it socially rewarding.

For example, let's say you have a friend named Sarah. Sarah has always been passionate about art and has turned her passion into a successful career. She sells her artwork online, teaches art classes on weekends, and often gets commissioned to do murals in the city. Despite the uncertainty often associated with creative careers, Sarah is happy, financially stable, and enjoys a great work-life balance.

You're discussing with another friend how well Sarah is doing, and your friend comments, "Wow, Sarah really has it all figured out. She's doing what she loves and has made a great life for herself." This example demonstrates how Sarah has made decisions that are a good fit for her life and career, leading others to observe that she seems to have understood and organized her life in a way that brings her success and happiness. In other words, she has it all figured out.

Here are a couple more examples with **to have it all figured out**:

Jacob: Hey, is everything OK?

Victoria: Yeah, it's just... I've been feeling a bit lost lately. I'm looking at my friends, and it seems like they all know what they want, you know. I have no idea what to do with my life.

Jacob: It might look like **they have it all figured out**, but trust me, nobody really does. Just trust that you'll eventually figure it out, and don't give up trying. You'll get there!

Chloe: So, what are you going to do now that you've dropped out of college?

Ethan: Don't worry, **I have it all figured out**: I'm going to spend the summer working at my dad's shop, and then reapply for another program.

To blow [one's] own trumpet

Idiom, informal

When Matthew talks about how he got into dancing, Andrew comments that he must be good at it, since he's won some awards in dancing competitions. When responding to that, Matthew says that he doesn't want to blow his own trumpet too much.

To blow [one's] own trumpet is an idiomatic expression that means to brag about yourself. This expression is mainly used in the UK, whereas the variations "to blow [one's] own horn" or "to toot [one's] own horn" are more common in the US.

If someone blows their own trumpet, they boast about their achievements or skills. This expression is often used in a negative way, suggesting that a person is being arrogant or annoying. For example, if a colleague constantly talks about how successful and smart she is, you might say, "She's always blowing her own trumpet."

This expression is often used in phrases such as "I don't mean to blow my own trumpet" or "I don't want to blow my own trumpet too much", as a way to talk about one's achievements without sounding too boastful.

"To blow [one's] own trumpet" originates from an old practice where trumpets were used to announce the arrival of important individuals, such as kings, nobles, or military commanders. These days the expression is used metaphorically, but essentially conveys the same meaning.

This expression is casual, and it's typically used in informal contexts among friends. In formal situations, it's better to use more appropriate alternatives, such as "to boast about [oneself]."

Here are a couple more examples with **to blow [one's] own trumpet**:

Grace: I heard Henry got promoted.

Michael: Yeah, he **won't stop blowing his own trumpet about it**. It's kind of annoying, to be honest.

Lily: Hey, Logan. How did your exam go?

Logan: Well, I **don't mean to blow my own horn**, but I'm sure I aced it. The questions were so easy!

Quiz

1. **When you ask your friend to choose their favorite between two very good movies, and they respond with "That's a tough one," what are they indicating?**
 - a) They haven't seen the movies.
 - b) They like both movies a lot.
 - c) They don't like movies.
 - d) They prefer another movie.

2. **Which of the following does NOT mean to process or calculate numerical data?**
 - a) To run the numbers
 - b) To do the math
 - c) To crunch the numbers
 - d) To crush the numbers

3. **True or false? If you take a leap of faith, it means you're uncertain of the outcome of your actions.**
 - a) True.
 - b) False

4. **If someone mentions they have it all figured out, it suggests that _____.**
 - a) They have discovered a new interest.
 - b) They are confused or uncertain.
 - c) They have a clear plan or solution for their life or problems.
 - d) They excel in mathematics.

5. **Which of the following is a good example of blowing [one's] own trumpet?**
 - a) Keith plays in an orchestra.
 - b) Diane passed her exam.
 - c) James only sees positive sides of things.
 - d) Sarah brags about winning a sports competition.

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of a time where you needed to crunch the numbers to make a decision?
2. Are you the type of person that tends to view situations through rose-colored glasses? Does anyone you know do that? Do you think it's a good or a bad thing?
3. Have you ever taken a leap of faith in your life, and if so, what was the outcome?
4. Do you feel like you have it all figured out in terms of your future plans?
5. Can you think of a recent accomplishment that you're proud of but don't talk about much because you don't want to blow your own trumpet? Please share.

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

Host: Andrew Bates

Guest: Matthew Skidmore

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke for Free

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Andrew

Transcriptionist: Heather Bates

Study guide writer: Alina Morozova

English editor: Andrew Bates

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima