

Chatterbox #108 – An interview with Alexandre

Informal Contractions in this Episode

Informal contractions are unofficial short forms of other words, and they're usually only used in casual conversation. For example, when a native English speaker talks casually, they might say *gonna* instead of *going to*, or *whaddya* instead of *what do you*. Even though informal contractions are usually only used in spoken English, we include them in the Culips written transcripts to help you get used to how they're used and what they sound like.

These are the informal contractions used in today's episode, along with their meanings:

- **gonna**: going to
- **wanna**: want to

Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone. It's Maura. And we're here with another Culips English episode for you. Now, don't forget to go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, because there, you can become a member. And when you're a Culips member, you have access to transcripts, more explanations of the expressions we use, and quizzes. So, check that out. There are examples on our website too, if you wanna have a look. You can also head on over to our Facebook page or say hi to us on Twitter. And if you have any questions or suggestions for episodes, don't be afraid to mention them to us.

Now today, we're going to do a Chatterbox episode, and that is where we get to chat about all different kinds of topics. And, as you know, we also like to interview people. Today that's what we're going to do. We're going to interview our friend Alexandre.

All right. So, why don't we start with you telling us a little bit about yourself?

Alexandre: All right. My name is Alexandre Bergeron from Nova Scotia, Canada. And, yeah, I'm here in Montreal, now but I've only been here for a few years. I came here to teach, to teach English as a second language and, yeah, I was teaching conversational English classes.

And, uh, yeah. In terms of what brought me here, I moved here with my girlfriend, who goes to McGill. Montreal's just a glorious city and often a lot of people where I'm from try and move here, just because of the culture, overall. And it's the appeal of the city. It has a very interesting reputation. So that's definitely one of the reasons I came here.

Maura: Yeah. There're a lot of people in Montreal from all over. Actually, most of my friends are not from Montreal, but are from other places and provinces, too. But at the same time, I've heard really great things about Nova Scotia, and I actually haven't been there. So can you tell us a little bit about Nova Scotia and what it's like?

Alexandre: Absolutely. Nova Scotia is a seaside province. It's one of the Maritime Provinces of Canada, so it's basically entirely surrounded by water. It's almost an island.

It's in the shape of a **lobster** claw, which is part of its touristic appeal, because **lobster** is a really big food commodity there. People come from all over the world to taste the famous **Maritime lobsters**.

So Nova Scotia is an interesting province, especially for people trying to learn a second language, because it has an interesting bilingual culture that some people may not know about. Even people from within Canada are maybe not aware there's **the Acadian culture**, which exists in Nova Scotia.

And that's quite an interesting story. It's the original settlers from France, when they originally landed in Canada, it was in the Maritimes. Actually, Nova Scotia was one of the main landing points. Over the course of history, these original French settlers were expelled by the English, who gained control, and were exported. It's the great *déportation*, it's called, so...

But some still remain or have moved back since, but a lot of the dispersed **Acadian culture** actually landed in Louisiana, which then became the French culture that exists there, the Cajuns, which is... The word *Cajun* actually comes from *Acadien*, like kind of an Anglicized version of *Acadien*: *Cajun*. It's kind of like a **Southern twang** on the word.

And Nova Scotia is beautiful. Its tourism is its main resource, because all the fisheries have kind of suffered from over-fishing but, it's a very beautiful place so people come from all over the world to visit. It has a very vibrant cultural scene as well. A lot of Celtic culture kind of translated over from Ireland and Scotland.

It's called Nova Scotia, which in Latin means New Scotland so, as a world traveller, I've visited Scotland, and it amazed me how similar the terrain actually is; a lot of highlands, misty hills, those kinds of things. So, Nova Scotia, be there. It's beautiful.

Maura: Yeah. It is a place that I've always wanted to visit. I have been to the East Coast, and I'm sad to say that I've actually never had **lobster**, which I feel is just really sad, because when you go out there, that's something that you should eat.

Alexandre: Absolutely, yeah. And, actually, living here, that's one of the things I miss most, though it's quite a rich dish, I must say, you know, so not all the time. But on special occasions I get to go home and enjoy it, which is really lovely. Yeah, you should have tried it. You know, you really missed out.

Maura: I know. The next time I go there, it's definitely **on the top of my list** to do.

Alexandre: That's great.

Maura: All right. Cool. So, you talked about Nova Scotia being a bilingual place as well, so do most people speak English and French? Or what is it like?

Alexandre: No, it's actually quite a division between the two. The majority of the population are Anglophone in Nova Scotia, but there're small **pockets**, especially on the western coast of... which is called the French Coast, actually. It's where most of the **Acadians** live. And they have...

You know, it is kind of unfortunate that there is a divide there, but it is a very separate thing. You drive there, they have their own flag. So you see their flags painted on the sides of barns. They are a very proud culture because, maybe, because it's so, kind of, segregated, unfortunately. Or at least, maybe, no. It's maybe not segregated, but there is a division, so... But the majority, yes, are Anglophone, sadly, but, you know. But I'm bilingual, so that must count for something, right?

Maura: Yeah. But that's it—because you can speak English and French, you have a very unique perspective. And speaking both languages very well, you're able to be part of both cultures, in a way.

Alexandre: Yeah. And that's... That was a huge advantage growing up. I actually went to a Francophone school growing up, which was... You know, it really helped me gain that other side of... of, you know, the other side of the the Nova Scotian perspective.

I went to an **Acadian** school called L'Ecole de la Rive-Sud, and it was... It was not in an **Acadian** area, but it was begun in the middle of an Anglophone area and all the students in the area who had these Francophone roots were invited to come and go to this school.

In that way we were able to meet, and travel to all these, kind of, small **pockets of Francophonie** that exist within Nova Scotia. And I was able to see a lot of those areas, which a lot of people take for granted in our province. So I was definitely fortunate in that way.

Maura: And so, after spending your life there, growing up in Nova Scotia, you finally decided to leave, and you came to Montreal, which kind of fits with the rest of your life, because it's a very bilingual city. So, again, you have English and French. So what **drew** you to Montreal? How did you choose this city?

Alexandre: Well that was a huge **draw**, actually, the bilingual aspect. I was raised bilingually. My dad is from Quebec. He's from Quebec City, actually. I have a lot of family who lives throughout the province of Quebec. And the other side of my family is from Newfoundland, which is another very interesting part of our country.

Yeah. But that was one of the main **draws**, was actually the bilingual aspect. Also, as I mentioned, the culture, just the amazing culture that exists here. I'm... Me, as a musician, and many other things, but I'd say primarily I'm a musician, so that was a huge **draw** for me to come here, because, you know, there're so many great bands. You know, there's so much publicity surrounding Montreal in terms of artists innovating and making something interesting, so you know, that was a big reason I came here, absolutely.

Maura: And, so how's it been going for you since you got here? I know that Montreal has a well-known music scene. Did they **welcome you with open arms**?

Alexandre: Actually, you know, it was amazingly accommodating thus far. It's funny because I was playing music in the capital of Nova Scotia, called Halifax, the city of Halifax, for some time. And it was really good, but I've actually found Montreal to be more accommodating, even though I'm not from here, I didn't know anyone here. Originally I moved here and started playing on my own, solo acoustic, acoustic guitar, just singing and playing on my own and people responded really well.

And I have since kind of had a bit of a band form around me, just from people seeing me play live, and they've been extremely encouraging. So now I play with a band here, and I've kind of become a little entrenched in the scene. People are starting to, kind of, know the name a little bit and that's really exciting.

We're playing some of the cool festivals that are happening throughout the summer here. The Fringe Festival that is put on by Saint Ambroise, Pop Montreal, which is kind of more in the fall, and a few others. So yeah, it's been really encouraging and amazing. It's really everything I could have hoped for.

Maura: Well that's great. When did you start playing music? And how did you become so interested in it?

Alexandre: I've been playing music for a long time, since I was quite young. I started playing violin, kind of like a Celtic-style violin when I was very young, 7 years old, I believe. Played that until I was in my late teens and kind of gave it up for guitar, which is the cooler instrument. Now I'm not sure if I agree, but back then I thought so.

I still **play a little violin**, but guitar's my main thing. I also played trumpet all throughout my high school years.

Maura: Were you in the band in school?

Alexandre: Yeah. I really was. I was actually **a band geek**. I was really into it. We went on many trips and... Yeah, I played trumpet and I was pretty into it. I still do, but guitar has definitely **taken the centre stage** these days. But I try... I do what I can, you know, **to keep up with it**.

Maura: And what kind of music do you normally play?

Alexandre: Um... It's rock and roll, I suppose. It has a little bit of an experimental side, so it's a little strange, maybe, nothing you would hear on the radio, maybe. You know, kind of moving in a weirder direction, I think. So potentially you might be able to hear us on the radio at some point. But yeah, it's rock music. I'm not really sure what that means anymore, but it's interesting. I'll say that.

Maura: It does seem that nowadays, music gets broken down into smaller and smaller categories, and sometimes it's hard to know what it all means. Or a certain kind of music has, like, three or four names attached to it.

Alexandre: I know. And that is kind of alienating for me. I find it a little strange how the culture has moved in that direction, where we have to be so specific. But people like to know about what they're hearing, what the product that they're receiving is.

People want information and the more and more we've moved, in the digital era, towards a lot of information, you know, people are just, you know, they're wanting it more and more, you know, just progressively so. Yeah, the genre thing has become a little convoluted, but I think it can be interesting, as long as you don't take it too seriously.

Maura: Yeah, for sure. Tell us a little bit more about your band. Are you the singer? Who's in your band? How many people are there?

Alexandre: There're four of us and I am the singer, one of two singers, but I'm what they call the lead singer, I guess. I write the majority of the songs, so it's kind of my responsibility to sing them, I suppose. Yeah, but we're called Year of Glad, which is a strange name, for a strange band. But it's a reference to one of my favourite novels, which is *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace. It's a very long and long-winded book, but it's very beautiful and I recommend it. But, yeah, we're called Year of Glad. And we're on the Internet everywhere, I assume, so you can probably look into us if you're interested.

Maura: Cool. I'm sure some people will.

Alexandre: Yes.

Maura: Yeah. Well, see, you grew up speaking two languages, and so you were able to do it naturally. So I'm not sure, do you have any tips for learning languages? Because you were able to do it without having to study so hard and learn all this grammar later in life.

Alexandre: Mmhmm. Yeah, well for me, learning, you know, I had to kind of get back into French because when I was going to school growing up, like, though I went to an **Acadian** school for elementary school, I kind of moved away from that in later years. So I kind of lost some of my French. And then I moved to France later on, and just being immersed in the culture was really what brought it back.

And that's the main thing I could recommend to anyone, is just being deeply immersed in a culture. Even more than just living somewhere, you have to go out and meet people and interact with people and really, you know, try and **pick up on** the cultural aspects, because that's what's really interesting about language, in my opinion. It's not so much the grammar and the lexicon, but it's really, like, the little subtleties and idiosyncrasies that the culture provides.

So just get out there, you know. If you're living in an area where it isn't centred around the language you're trying to learn, that's not very helpful, but if you do live within a culture where you can go and just meet people and make friends who can only speak that language, then you're forced to learn. And I think that that's really the thing that helped me the most.

Maura: Have you ever tried to learn a third language?

- Alexandre: Uh... yeah, very... To a very small degree, though. I've just travelled in, like, various Spanish-speaking countries, Cuba and Spain. So I definitely made an effort and because there's somewhat of a **crossover** between French—all the Romantic languages have similar traits—I tried **to pick up on it**. But I was really kind of unsuccessful, overall. It was a bit of an embarrassment. But, you know, I tried, at least, right?
- Maura: I think that's part of the process of learning a language is feeling very embarrassed. So it sounds normal.
- Alexandre: Definitely. Yeah, you know, it's all you can do. You have to put yourself out there.
- Maura: Yeah, that is it. No matter how difficult it is, you just gotta keep trying. So you mentioned you went to Cuba and Spain. How long did you spend in Cuba?
- Alexandre: Um... Some time. You know, I was there for about a few weeks. I went with my mom, who was teaching English there. I also helped out a bit in that regard. But I'd been there on vacation previously. So, you know, we just both fell in love with the country. The culture is so interesting there, especially coming from a capitalist country like we do. That's all we see. To see communism from the inside was pretty remarkable. The people were also so nice and so accommodating.
- So, yeah, Cuba is just incredible. It's one of my favourite places I've visited. Other places I've visited, if you're interested. I've been all over Europe because I lived there. I was lucky to have a home base in France. I travelled all around there. Let's see... Croatia, Greece, Spain, Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands, Italy.
- Maura: OK. Croatia. That's not a place that most people visit when they go to Europe.
- Alexandre: No. That's true.
- Maura: How was it there?
- Alexandre: It was unbelievably beautiful. You know, it's close to Greece, so similar kind of geography, but an interesting aspect, because of the war in Yugoslavia, there were some interesting political things that we, kind of, encountered along the way, remnants of the war, which is sad. But it's stunningly beautiful there, unbelievable beautiful. So we mostly went for the beach, but got some culture as well, I guess.
- Maura: Nice. I've never heard that. You go to Croatia for the beach. Nice.
- Alexandre: I'm just too cool.

Maura: All right. Good. Well, thanks a lot for letting me ask you questions, and telling us about yourself.

Alexandre: It was my pleasure.

Maura: I'm sure some people's interest has been piqued and maybe your music will get some extra listens on the Internet.

Alexandre: I can only hope so.

Maura: So, we hope you enjoyed our interview with Alexandre and learning about his interesting life, what he's been doing, and a little bit more about the East Coast of Canada, too.

Now, I'm gonna remind you one more time to go to our website, Culips.com, and become a member, because two things happen when you become a member: one, you get even more out of our episodes, and you also help support us at Culips. Your money goes to helping us pay for our website and to continue making these podcasts. And we appreciate everyone who becomes a member. If you're online and you're on Facebook, say hi and we'll be sure to get back to you. That's it for this week. We will talk to you again soon. Bye everyone.

Detailed Explanation

Maritime lobster

Lobsters are a kind of seafood that is expensive and generally viewed as fancy. **Lobsters** have two large claws and red bodies.

You can get **lobster** in restaurants, where it is often served with a lot of butter. You may even be given a bib so that you don't get your shirt dirty while eating. To eat **lobster**, you need to crack open the hard shell to get to the meat inside.

Some people also eat **lobster** at home. This is usually a rare occasion, because lobster is considered a fancy food, and **lobsters** are expensive. **Lobsters** can be bought live, and killed as they are cooked on the stove in boiling water.

Lobsters are particularly good in the Maritime Provinces of Canada because this is where they are caught. The Maritime Provinces cover the East Coast of Canada, and fishing is a major industry there, so the **lobsters** served there are especially fresh! Many tourists who come to this area like to enjoy a **lobster** dinner.

Acadian culture

The Acadians originally came from France, but they have a separate history from the people of Quebec, who are also French-speaking Canadians. At different times in history, the English-speaking people in Canada have tried to deport French-speakers or otherwise try to stop them from speaking French. Even today, there is still sometimes a tension between the French and English speakers in Canada.

Acadians speak a specific dialect of French that is similar in many ways to an older form of French that was once spoken in France. In areas of New Brunswick, people also speak Chiac, which is **Acadian** French strongly influenced by English. **Acadian** communities exist in the eastern provinces of Canada, most notably in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

There are also **Acadians** in the United States. As we say in this episode, Cajuns are a group of people living mainly in Louisiana. The word *Cajun* is a deformation of **Acadian**. Most Cajuns speak English, but there are still those who speak Cajun French, which is different from **Acadian** French.

A Southern twang

A twang is a certain kind of American English accent, usually heard in the South. The word **twang** is also used to describe a strong nasal sound or when air passes through the nose when speaking.

Twang is not a technical term for describing language, so the definition is very open and often means something different to different people. One person might think someone speaks with **a twang** but another person might disagree. The word **twang** has also been used to describe when a person makes words longer by adding syllables when they speak.

Another term that is used like **twang** is *drawl*. A drawl is a way of speaking that is usually slower, often making the vowel sounds longer. *Drawl* is also often used to describe the speech of Americans from the Southern United States.

In this episode, Alexandre talks about a Southern **twang** when he describes how the word *Acadian* became *Cajun*. Because **a twang** is like a mispronunciation, this helps explain how *Acadian* turned into *Cajun*. **Twang** is not a technical term though, and Alexandre is simply saying that it was a southern accent that caused the word to change pronunciations.

To be on the top of my list

If something is **on the top of your list**, it is important to you. In most cases, this is just an expression and the person doesn't actually have a real list.

In this episode, Maura says that having lobster in the Maritimes is **on the top of her list** of things to do. This means that eating lobster is one of the most important things for her to do when she visits the Maritimes next.

A person could also be **on the top of your list**. For example, someone could be **on the top of your list** of people to call. There can be all kinds of lists, but depending on the context, it should be clear what the list is.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be on the top of my list**.

Kevin: When I go to Spain this summer, checking out the beaches is **on the top of my list**.

Maggie: Yeah, you should definitely do that!

Jack: I think Brian was the best candidate we interviewed today. He has a lot of good experience. What do you think?

Hanna: He's **on the top of my list too**.

You might also hear **at the top of my list**, and this has the same meaning as **on the top of my list**.

Pockets

When most think of **a pocket**, they think of the small pouches for carrying things that we have in our clothing and in bags. But in this episode, the word **pocket** is used differently. The word **pockets** in this episode is used to talk about small isolated areas that are different from the surrounding area.

Alexandre talks about **pockets** of French-speaking people in Nova Scotia. This means that there are small groups of people who speak French or who are Acadian. They are different from the people in the surrounding area, because most people speak English.

Here are a couple more examples with **a pocket** used in this way:

Hank: Is the city dangerous?

Julie: There are some **pockets** that are less safe, but it's generally a pretty safe city to travel in.

Sandra: A lot of people our age don't know much about what's going on in the government, but there are still **pockets** of people who are very involved in politics.

Eugene: Oh really? That's good to know.

Francophonie

The first thing to know about **Francophonie** is that it's not a real word. In all languages, people sometimes make up words, and because they are connected to other known words, they can be understood.

Francophonie is really made up of two parts: *Francophone* and *-ie*. *Francophone* means French-speaking, and is an adjective that can be used to describe a person who speaks French or a place where people do. The suffix *-ie* is related to words like *dystopia* and *utopia*. A *dystopia* is an imaginary place where everything is horrible and a *utopia* is an imaginary place where everything is perfect. These terms are often used to describe fictional places in literature.

So because we know the meaning of *francophone* and *-ie*, we can figure out that the meaning of **Francophonie** is a place where there is a lot of French spoken. This is exactly how Alexandre uses the word. He talks about places in Nova Scotia where French is spoken and calls them **Francophonie**.

A draw

Here's a little word that has many uses. Alexandre uses **a draw** a few times in this episode. Each time, he uses it the same way, to mean something that attracted him to a certain place.

First, Alexandre talks about why he came to Montreal. He says that Montreal's bilingualism was **a draw**. This means that he was attracted to Montreal because it is a bilingual city. He also uses **a draw** to talk about the music scene in Montreal. Another reason he wanted to move to Montreal was because of the vibrant music scene. He says that this was **a draw** for him, which means that this is a reason he was attracted to the city.

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

George: The benefits at my new company are great. They were such **a draw** for me.

Paul: It's important to have good benefits nowadays.

Carla: I really want to go to the concert tonight.

Lucy: Me too! The opening act is a real **draw**.

To draw can also be a verb. For example, we could say that Montreal's bilingualism **drew** Alexandre to it. And many musicians are **drawn** to Montreal by the vibrant music scene. In this case, the verb **to draw** means *to attract*.

To be welcomed with open arms

When someone is **welcomed with open arms**, they are easily and enthusiastically welcomed and made to feel comfortable. If you imagine a person welcoming someone into their home with their arms open, this means that the person wants to give the other a hug, which should make anyone feel very welcome.

Maura uses this expression in this episode to talk about Alexandre's arrival in Montreal, although no one in Montreal was actually waiting to give Alexandre a hug when he arrived. Maura asks Andrew whether the music community **welcomed him with open arms**, and he says that they did. This means that when he first arrived in Montreal, the musicians were happy to meet him and include him. This might also mean that they helped him to learn about the Montreal music scene. Alexandre felt comfortable and accepted.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be welcomed with open arms**:

Justin: How was your trip to France this past summer?

Penny: Oh, it was great! Our extended family **welcomed us with open arms** and showed us around Paris. I loved it.

Jamal: When the new employees get here, make sure we all **welcome them with open arms**. I want everyone to feel comfortable here.

Lorna: That sounds like a good plan.

To play a little violin

Here's a phrase that might need a little clarification. **To play a little violin** might make you think that the violin is small. But Alexandre is not talking about the size of the violin when he says this.

When Alexandre says that he **plays a little violin**, he means that he can play the violin a little bit. This means that his ability to play is limited, but he does know how. This way of using **a little** can be used to talk about many different skills without confusion. But particularly with musical instruments, a phrase like this could be confusing.

Here's another example with **a little** used in this way:

Jon: Join our band. It's really fun.

Olivia: I do **play a little piano**. What kind of music do you play?

A band geek

A band geek is a high school student who is in the school band and really loves it. You can create a lot of expressions like this by putting different words in front of **geek**, for example, **a film geek** is a person who really loves film.

In this episode, Alexandre says that he was **a band geek** when he was in high school. He was really involved in the band, and as he says he also travelled with the school band putting on shows.

Here is another example with **a geek**:

Andy: I'm totally **a language geek**. I love grammar.

Owen: Not me! I hate it. It's so hard.

To take centre stage

To take centre stage means to take the focus. When someone is at the centre of a stage, most people are watching this person, and they get the most attention. If someone wants attention on stage, this is where they should go. Now this expression can be used to talk about anyone or anything that takes the attention and focus. There doesn't need to be an actual stage.

In this episode, Alexandre says that guitar has **taken centre stage** for him. He says that he can also play the violin, but uses this expression to explain that the guitar is now his focus. When Alexandre uses this expression, it could be confusing because he is talking about music, which is often performed on a stage. He's not talking about performing though; he is simply saying that guitar gets all his attention when he is playing music.

Here are a couple more examples with **to take centre stage**:

Nathan: Right now my family is **taking centre stage** in my life. I've been such a workaholic lately. I need to pay attention to them now.

Sylvia: Yeah, it's important to get your priorities straight.

Henry: Whenever we're giving a joint presentation, Brittany always **takes centre stage**, so it looks like I didn't do any work.

Victor: Yeah, that's a hard situation to deal with. Maybe you could try talking to her about it before it happens again.

To keep up with something

One meaning of the expression **to keep up with something** is to try to stay at a certain level of skill. When a person is trying **to keep up with something**, this means that they do not want to fall to a lower skill level.

In this episode, Alexandre talks about **keeping up with his violin**. He can play at a certain level and he needs to practice in order to maintain that level. If he doesn't practice, he might forget how to play and his level might decrease. So he practices in order **to keep up with the violin**.

You can also **keep up with a person or people**. This means that one person tries to stay at the same level or be equal with another person in some way.

There is an American expression, **keeping up with the Joneses**. The Joneses are not a real family, but they represent the average material wealth of people around you. This expression means that people try to have the same level of wealth as their neighbours. This can sometimes mean buying items you cannot afford or pretending you have more wealth than you do.

Here are a couple more examples with **to keep up with something or someone**:

Ben: I can't **keep up with Sheena**. She gets such good grades.

Alicia: Just go do your best. It's better not to compare yourself to other people anyway.

Shannon: I'm having trouble **keeping up with my swimming**. I'm getting so much homework these days that I don't have time to practice.

Julian: Maybe you could try going to the pool early in the morning, before class.

Infinite Jest by David Foster Wallace

Infinite Jest is a novel written by **David Foster Wallace** in 1996. The book is especially known for being very long—over 1000 pages—and having a complicated plot. Many critics have praised this book. Although **Wallace** died in 2008, he continues to have a strong fan base. Alexandre is such a big fan of this book that his band, Year of Glad, is named after an element in the novel **Infinite Jest**.

To pick up on something

To pick up on something means to notice something that is not obvious. When a person **picks up on something**, they begin to understand or see something more clearly.

Alexandre uses this expression twice in this episode. The first time, he is talking about how to learn a language. He thinks that going to a place where the language is spoken is important, and will also help you **to pick up on** cultural aspects. When you are in a place where the language you are learning is spoken, you can notice parts of the culture too, and this can help you to learn the language and sound natural when you speak it.

Alexandre also talks about **picking up on** Spanish while travelling. He doesn't know how to speak Spanish, but because there are many similarities between French and Spanish, he tried to come to some understanding of Spanish. **To pick up on something** in this case means to begin to understand it. Unfortunately for Alexandre, he says he wasn't able **to pick up on** much of the language.

Here are a couple more examples with **to pick up on something**:

Dean: Did you enjoy analyzing the poem in class last night? It was interesting, but tough.
Monica: I couldn't **pick up on** any of the symbolism. It was tough, for sure.

Gina: Have you noticed the way that Marc is looking at Morgan?

Kate: Yeah. I've definitely **picked up on** some chemistry between them tonight.

A crossover

A crossover is when some parts of one thing are also part of another. Some parts of one thing cross into another category or element. For example, Alexandre says that there is a **crossover** between French and the other romantic languages. This means that some parts of French are the same as in the other romantic languages. You could also say that some parts of the romantic languages are also a part of French.

There are all different kinds of **crossovers**. For example, cars or music can be called **crossovers** when they combine parts from more than one type. **A crossover** could be a car that also includes features of a truck or another kind of vehicle.

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

Bernard: Have you heard this new song that's playing? It's kind of **a crossover** between folk and pop music.

Chris: Yeah, I've heard it before, but I've never thought of it like that. You're right, it does sound like folk.

Jasmine: Did you see the new plans for marketing strategies?

Pete: No, but I've heard they're like **a crossover** with how we used to do it 5 years ago.

Quiz

1. Where in Canada is the Acadian culture strongest?

- a) in the western provinces
- b) in the eastern provinces
- c) in Quebec
- d) in the mountains

2. What is a twang?

- a) a southern dance
- b) a country song
- c) an accent
- d) a kind of dog

3. Dawn: Going for a hike is at the top of my list this summer.

What does the above sentence mean?

- a) Dawn kind of wants to go for a hike.
- b) The most important thing that Dawn wants to do this summer is go for a hike.
- c) Dawn does not want to go for a hike this summer.
- d) Dawn has already gone for a hike this summer.

4. There are _____ of crime all around the city, but otherwise it's a safe place to live.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) zippers
- b) pockets
- c) cuffs
- d) collars

5. The Rolling Stones still sell out their shows. After all these years, their concerts are still a big draw.

Which of the following words is a synonym for *draw* in the example above?

- a) attraction
- b) colour
- c) sketch
- d) tie

6. When I arrived at my English class on the first day, my teacher _____.

Please fill in the blank with the expression that means that the teacher made the student feel comfortable.

- a) took me under her wing
- b) did the dance of joy
- c) gave me the cold shoulder
- d) welcomed me with open arms

7. John: Did you see that our local news story is _____ all across the country?

Heather: Yeah. I can't believe that everyone is paying so much attention to it.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) welcomed with open arms
- b) taking centre stage
- c) keeping up
- d) drawing

8. It is important for Daniel to keep up with his tennis over the summer.

What does the above sentence mean?

- a) Daniel needs to play tennis over the summer to stay at the level he's at now.
- b) Daniel should only play tennis occasionally during the summer months.
- c) Daniel should not continue to play tennis over the summer.
- d) Daniel should start to learn tennis over the summer.

9. **Coby: I tried to let my mom know what I wanted for my birthday when we were shopping on the weekend, but I don't know whether she picked up on my clues.**

What is Coby saying about his mom?

- a) She knows what he wants, since they went shopping together.
- b) He tried to let her know, but he's not sure she noticed what he wanted.
- c) She definitely does not know what he wants for his birthday.
- d) He doesn't want anything for his birthday this year.

Answers:

1.b 2.c 3.b 4.b 5.a 6.d 7.b 8.a 9.b