

Chatterbox #97 – Interviewing Erin

Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone. This is Maura. And I have a special guest with me today.

Erin: Hi.

Maura: And we're here with your Culips English Learning Podcast. Now, don't forget to visit 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 member, you help support us at Culips. And in addition to supporting us at Culips, you also have access to our Learning Materials. And the Learning Materials include more detailed explanations of the expressions we use in our episodes, transcripts, and quizzes. If you're on Facebook or Twitter, you can also come on over and say hi to us there. Now, today we are going to do a Chatterbox episode, and that is where we chat about all different kinds of topics. In our Chatterbox episodes we also interview people, and that is what I'm going to do today. So today I'm going to interview my sister Erin. She is visiting so I thought "Why not interview her?" She's actually been to so many countries and travelled around and just visited so many places. She can share some of her insights with us today. Since she's my sister, her story starts off quite like mine. She was born and raised in Kitchener, Ontario, in Canada, and she still lives there. So Erin, why don't you tell us what you're doing in Kitchener right now?

Erin: I work at a local university as a project manager for health-based research.

Maura: OK. Cool. And how do you like that?

Erin: It's good. I went to school for public health so it's related to my interests and my education.

Maura: So I started off by saying how much you've travelled. Now I want to ask you a tough question. Can you name every country that you've visited?

Erin: Let's see. I think I can. Well I've lived in Canada. I've been to the United States. I've visited Belize, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Grenada, Antigua, Ireland, Uganda, Tanzania, Fiji, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos. Did I say Thailand?

Maura: I don't know.

Erin: Oh, I just remembered another country. I've been to Costa Rica.

Maura: That's a lot. I can see that you kind of went around the world and it was a map in your head.

- Erin: Yes it was.
- Maura: I guess that's the only way to really remember them.
- Erin: Yes. It's not the first time I've been asked that question. The other way I could probably think about it is the timeline. So the first country I went to, going through to the last country I've visited.
- Maura: OK. So what was the first country that you visited?
- Erin: So the first country I've been to was probably the United States.
- Maura: Yeah. I think most Canadians, especially the ones who live near the border, have been to the United States at some point. And it's not too different from Canada. The culture's very similar and of course we can still speak English everywhere. But what's the first country that you went to where it was actually quite different from Canada?
- Erin: I would say that would be Costa Rica. The type of trip I went on was exploring the country and it was a volunteer and travel experience. So we stayed up in the mountains and we did some work on landscaping and we were working with animals and then we actually travelled around a little bit more. And that was a group trip.
- Maura: So, since that was really one of your first trips, what inspired you to travel? What made you want to go and go somewhere different?
- Erin: I just wanted to experience different cultures and see what different parts of the world looked like and what the people were like and talk to them and learn more about them.
- Maura: So, I guess you had a good experience because after that first trip, you decided to do a lot more travelling.
- Erin: Yes. It was a good experience and I really enjoyed visiting other countries and seeing what other places had to offer.
- Maura: OK. So you've been to so many countries, obviously, and unfortunately we don't have time to talk about them all **or we'd be here all day**. So what is one of your favourite places that you've been?

- Erin: It's difficult for me to choose one country that's my favourite. I generally find something I really like about each country I've been too, whether that's the landscape, the people, the food. I've really enjoyed every country I've been too. But one that really stands out in my mind was my first trip to Tanzania. It was maybe I could say life changing. It really had an impact on, I think, who I've become and what I believe and how I live my life. So that would probably be my favourite trip.
- Maura: OK. So now of course you have to tell us why it was your favourite. What was so life changing in your experience?
- Erin: I think it made me appreciate more what I have and appreciate... I don't want to say living with less, but not requiring as much as people think you do. And I found when I went to Tanzania that they really appreciated the people in their lives and less the things they had. So I think I've taken that and incorporated that into my life.
- Maura: Well that's pretty cool. That's a pretty good lesson to learn from travelling.
- Erin: I think so.
- Maura: Yeah. So, let's see if I can get some information about some of your other favourites or best places. Which country was very memorable for tasty, tasty food?
- Erin: When I think of food, I think my mind goes to Thailand. Mainly because the food is everywhere and it's relatively cheap and it also tastes really good.
- Maura: You know, I have **to second you** on that, because I've also been to Thailand and the food was so good, and, you're right, even food on the street. I remember getting pad thai on the street and it's better than any pad thai that I've had in any fancy Thai restaurant in Canada.
- Erin: So good!
- Maura: Another thing that I really, really love when I travel is to meet people and be in a place where you just feel that the people are **friendly** and open. Because even though Canadians are known to be **friendly**, I think we're more polite than **friendly** sometimes. So I'm wondering: Where do you think you met the **friendliest, warmest people**?

- Erin: The place I visited where people approached me the most, and I think that's how I'm going to define **friendliest**, is probably in Tanzania as well. They were very eager to talk to you. There didn't seem to be any shame or embarrassment in coming up and speaking to you. When I think back, most notably this would be on Zanzibar when I visited. In the evenings, they'd just **come up** and talk to you and want to learn English and practice their English. So it was a good opportunity to get to know them and to be able to ask them questions, to learn more about their lives and what they want out of life. So they would be the **friendliest**, I think.
- Maura: So when you're in all of these different countries—and if you were listening earlier, you know that a lot of those countries are not English-speaking countries—how do you communicate with people most of the time?
- Erin: Fortunately for me, most places I've visited, the people usually speak some English, so my main form of communication is English. The one country where this was not really possible would be Nicaragua, where they speak Spanish. And unfortunately I don't speak Spanish, so I learned a few **key words and phrases**, which I actually try to do regardless of what country I go to, but in Nicaragua I was really forced to work with what I had and not rely on the English language.
- Maura: OK. Another question now for you: Which country was the easiest to travel in? Because I know oftentimes it's one of the biggest challenges when you arrive in a new place. You don't know how the transportation system works, you don't know where to buy tickets. So which is one of the countries that you've been to where you found it relatively easy to get around?
- Erin: I spent about a year in Australia, so I would say that I found it the easiest there, probably because the infrastructure is fairly similar to what it is in Canada, so it was easy for me to figure it out. Also, they speak English as their first language, so it was easy to ask people what I needed to do or where I needed to go. Southeast Asia was also fairly easy as well, mainly because so many people go to Southeast Asia so there's a lot of buses and a lot of information about how to get where you need to go, who to talk to... And getting visas to get into the other countries is also fairly straightforward and everyone's willing to help you.
- Maura: OK. Cool. What about the best kind of natural setting that you've seen? Which could include beaches, or mountains, or some kind of beautiful landscape. What are some of the best you've seen?

- Erin: Well, I do love my beaches, and I've been to quite a few so there are definitely a few on the top of my list for beaches. But probably the setting that stands out the most would be when I went on safari in Tanzania, so that would be in the Serengeti, Ngorongoro crater. The landscape was beautiful and the animals are breathtaking. I don't think I'll ever forget that.
- Maura: So, were you scared? I think when people who've never been on a safari think of going on a safari, they think about the wild animals that could attack you at any moment. Is it really like that? Do you feel in danger?
- Erin: You don't really feel in danger, and the safari guides **put you at ease**. The last safari I was on, our guide made it quite clear that the animals had no interest in humans **whatsoever**. However, we were a little frightened when we were told on our camping safari that if we got up to use the washroom in the middle of the night, there may be hyenas wandering around trying to get into the kitchen. So the message we received from that was "Don't leave your tent in the middle of the night."
- Maura: Yeah. That sounds like a safe way **to play it**. OK, and now, if you've travelled a lot, there are mix-ups, there are missed trains or sold-out hotels. What is one of your craziest travel stories?
- Erin: Well, I've had a few, but I do think that's what makes travelling worthwhile. The most recent is probably a couple years ago when I was headed to Uganda and Tanzania **via** London, England, and there was some snow, because we were travelling in December. So our flight was delayed out of Toronto, in Canada, and we thought we were going to London but we were told shortly before we were landing that we were diverted to Ireland, where we spent two nights in a hotel with very little information from the airline, at which point we finally got to London, but then had to sleep one night in the airport. It was a bit of a mix-up. We got on our flight **standby** and at the time it felt horrible, but looking back it was an experience I don't think I would trade.
- Maura: One thing I remember about that time when you got stuck in Ireland was that you didn't have the proper clothes, because you were packing to go to Uganda, which is warm. And so you didn't bring any winter clothing with you and then you ended up in Ireland, which is quite a bit colder than Uganda.

- Erin: Yes. That is true. We had shorts and T-shirts and sandals, but we did not bring a jacket with us, so it was difficult to leave the hotel. We did manage to go and explore one day. I put on lots of layers. I had a scarf, which I wrapped around my body. I wore socks that I got from the airline on my hands. I managed to stay warm and we got out and we saw a little bit of Limerick, actually. There were also lots of other people wandering around who also looked equally cold, because there were a lot of people that got diverted to Shannon Airport.
- Maura: All right, cool. Now, is there anywhere in the world that you haven't been to yet that you would still like to visit?
- Erin: I don't know if there are any countries that I would not visit. I think they all have something to offer and they'd all be really interesting to visit. But one place I will likely visit is Dubai. My boyfriend has worked on landscape design projects that they will be building there, and he would like to go and see them once they are completed. So maybe in the next few years we'll be visiting there.
- Maura: Cool. That would be definitely another kind of place, since you've never been to the Middle East, so it would be a new experience.
- Erin: Right. I've only been to an airport.
- Maura: Now, I asked you about travelling, cultural experiences. You've also, fairly recently, in the past couple years, started to learn French. Well, I shouldn't say *started*, because, of course, in Canada, in English Canada, if you are an Anglophone, if you speak English, you take French in school. So you did know a little bit of French, but now you're actually taking courses on your own and trying to really learn it. So I'm wondering what you find the most difficult about learning a language, especially as an adult.
- Erin: What I find the most difficult about learning a language is actually speaking the language. I've found reading and understanding what is written much easier, but getting over the barrier or embarrassment of trying to speak it is what I find the most difficult. I think I'm more aware and less willing **to make a fool of myself**.
- Maura: That's something that's definitely hard, and I'm sure that a lot of people who are listening can relate to that experience. Some of the best advice I ever heard was: You just have to accept that you're going to look stupid. You just have to accept that when you speak a language, especially at the beginning, you're not going to sound intelligent. And that is actually really hard to do, but if you keep working at it, you'll get to a level where you at least feel fairly comfortable and maybe it'll get easier.

- Erin: Yes. I find that I get comfortable with my teacher, but getting comfortable or taking a chance at speaking with other people that I'm not used to speaking with is really difficult.
- Maura: Hey, that's a good plan. You should travel to a French-speaking country, and then you're forced to. That's a good opportunity to practice.
- Erin: I agree.
- Maura: Now, if you're learning a language, you must also find something enjoyable about it. What do you find enjoyable about learning French?
- Erin: Well, having travelled quite a bit, I think it is important, or it's worthwhile, to learn another language. So having a sister who lives in Montreal—and I also have a friend who lives in Montreal—I visit fairly regularly and it would be nice to be able to communicate in French and not force people to speak to me in English, just out of respect for people who are not English as a first language.
- Maura: Sounds good. All right, well, I think we've talked about travel enough today, because you know what? Now **I'm just dying to travel** myself. Now I wanna go somewhere.
- Erin: Do you have any trips planned?
- Maura: I do have a little trip planned, and I'll share some pictures with you listening on Facebook and Twitter soon. Now, thank you very much for talking about your travel experiences. Hopefully the listeners out there found it interesting and maybe they're interested in travelling to one of the places you talked about now.
- Erin: I hope so.
- Maura: All right. Now, don't forget to visit our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And you can say hi to us on Facebook and Twitter too. If you become a member, you help support us, which enables us to keep making these episodes for you. I will talk to you again soon. Goodbye everyone!

Detailed Explanation

Or we'd be here all day

Or we'd be here all day is an expression used to emphasize the size or amount of something. It's an exaggeration, meaning that it's an intentional overestimation meant to emphasize something. **Or we'd be here all day** is a way to say that it would take all day to do something. But because it's an exaggeration, it doesn't really mean that something would actually take all day to do, just that it would take a long time.

In this episode, Maura says that she can't ask Erin about everywhere she's been, **or they'd be there all day** talking about it. What Maura means is that Erin has been to a lot of places, so talking about them all would take a very long time.

Here's another example with **or we'd be here all day**:

Randy: Did you hear that Imran won the contest for best painting in his art class?

Julio: Wow, that's awesome, although I'm not surprised. Imran wins a lot of awards.

Randy: Oh, really? What other awards has he won?

Julio: If I try to list them, **we'll be here all day!**

Randy: Wow. I guess he must be good at almost everything!

To second something

To second something means to agree with someone else about a belief, idea, or opinion. This comes from an expression used when people vote for things in a group setting such as a committee or organization. If someone makes a suggestion, and another person agrees with it, the person who agrees **seconds** the suggestion. The group then votes whether or not to accept this suggestion. Some organizations will not vote on a suggestion unless it has been **seconded** by someone.

So when someone says, "I **second** that," they are expressing their agreement with what has just been said by someone else.

In this episode, Erin tells Maura that the food she ate in Thailand was the tastiest food she has encountered in her travels. Maura says that she **seconds** Erin on that. This means that Maura agrees with what Erin has just said about Thai food being the tastiest.

Here's another example with **to second something**:

Meike: I'm hungry. Should we make dinner, or order something?

Alejandro: I'm exhausted. Let's order something. Pizza?

Alfredo: Pizza, yes! I'll **second** that idea.

Meike: All right, pizza it is. I'll get the phone book and we'll find a good pizza place.

A warm person

Describing a person as **warm** is another way of saying that the person is friendly and welcoming. The origin of relating friendliness to warmth comes from affectionate acts like hugging. Hugging makes people warm up when they are cold. A warm temperature is a nice, comfortable temperature, and **a warm person** makes people feel nice and comfortable too.

In this episode, Maura asks Erin where she encountered the **warmest**, friendliest people in her travels. Maura is asking Erin in which part of the world Erin felt like the people were the friendliest and kindest.

Here's another example with **a warm person**:

Hudson: Are you going anywhere for Spring Break?

Tati: I was thinking of going to Florida. I was also considering Mississippi.

Hudson: Florida's a popular place to go for Spring Break, but Mississippi? Why there?

Tati: I have some cousins there. And I just love the South. The people are so **warm** and inviting. I always make new friends whenever I visit.

Hudson: That sounds great!

Friendliest

Friendliest is another way of saying *most friendly*. **Friendlier** is a comparative adjective, meaning that it describes someone or some people as being more **friendly** than another person or people. **Friendliest** is a superlative adjective, meaning that it describes the highest possible degree of friendliness. In English, words that end in *ier* (like **friendlier**) are usually the same as saying *more* of the root word, and most words ending in *iest* are the same as saying *most* of the root word. For example, *lonelier* means *more lonely*, and *loneliest* means *most lonely*.

In this episode, Maura asks Erin where in her travels she met the **friendliest** people. Maura is asking which place, in all Erin's travels, would Erin rank as being the most **friendly**.

Here's another example with **friendliest**:

Yan: How's your horseback riding class going?

Zachary: Well, the horses themselves are great, but the people aren't the **friendliest**.

Yan: Oh no, that's too bad. But if you like the sport itself, maybe you can find another place to ride.

Zachary: Yeah, I'm going to make some phone calls today to see whether anyone has room for a new student.

To come up to someone

To come up to someone is a causal phrase that means to approach someone, or to walk over to someone and ask, do, or say something. When someone approaches you, you could say that they **come up to you**. When you approach someone else, you could say that you go up to them.

In this episode, Erin describes how friendly the people of Tanzania are. She defines this friendliness by the fact that Tanzanians were always coming up to her, meaning that Tanzanians were always approaching her and were not afraid to talk with her and say hello.

Here's another example with **to come up to someone**:

Alfredo: My teachers are all so friendly this semester!

Tati: Oh, that's great! How so?

Alfredo: They all took the time to tell us about themselves, and told us **to come up to them** outside of class any time if we see them around campus.

Tati: It's always nice when teachers like to get to know each student personally. That's really great. Sounds like you're going to have a good semester!

A key word/phrase

Key words and phrases are important and commonly used words and expressions in a language. For example, a **key phrase** in English is "What's your name?" Another one is "Where is the bathroom?"

In this episode, Erin says that when she went to Nicaragua, it was difficult because she didn't speak Spanish. She says that she learned some **key words and phrases** in Spanish so that she could get by easier.

Here's another example with **key words and phrases**:

Igor: I can't believe how quickly our trip is coming up! It's only two weeks away!

Suzanne: That reminds me. I bought a book of English-to-Spanish translations.

Igor: Oh, great! But we'll only be in Peru for a week. Maybe we should just focus on learning a few **key words and phrases** so that we can get by.

Suzanne: The book has some good ones. It's got all we need.

Igor: Perfect! I'm so excited!

To put someone at ease

To put someone at ease means to comfort or assure someone. If you **put someone at ease**, you cause them to relax by saying or doing something that comforts them.

In this episode, Erin says that she was **put at ease** by her safari guides, who explained that the animals they would see on the safari were not interested in attacking humans, which made Erin feel a lot safer and more comfortable.

Here's another example with **to put someone at ease**:

Bonnie: I'm really nervous about my interview tomorrow.

Pik: That's normal. Everyone gets nervous before a job interview. Just be yourself.

Bonnie: But what if I'm too nervous and I forget everything I want to say?

Pik: Try to remember that the person doing the interview is often just as nervous as the person being interviewed. People are always nervous when they meet somebody new.

Bonnie: Hey, that's great advice! That will help **put me at ease**. Thanks Pik!

Whatsoever

Whatsoever is another way of saying *at all*. It is a way to emphasize nothing or a lack of something. It is usually used after a word that means *none*, such as *nothing*, *nowhere*, or *nobody*. It's often used as emphasis to persuade or assure someone about the lack of something.

In this episode, Erin talks about going on safari, and Maura asks her whether she was afraid of the wild animals. Erin said that her safari guide assured them that the animals had no interest in humans **whatsoever**. Erin's safari guide used the term **whatsoever** to emphasize the fact that the animals would not harm the people on the safari.

Here's another example with **whatsoever**:

Khalid: Hey, who ate all the chips? I bought three new bags last night and they're all gone!

Adam: Not me. I wasn't home all evening.

Khalid: Well I don't think anyone else was home either. You were the only one here when I brought the groceries in.

Adam: I promise. I ate none of your chips **whatsoever**. I was still full from lunch when you brought them home.

To play it

When we talk about playing something, we're usually talking about something like a game or an instrument. For example, *to play the guitar* or *to play a game of checkers*.

But we can also use this expression in a different way, to talk about how we act in a certain situation, in which case, the object of the phrase is almost always *it*, as in **play it safe**.

In this episode, Maura tells Erin that staying in her tent at night was a safe way **to play it** while on safari in Africa. What Maura means is that staying in the tent was a safe action to take in that situation.

Here's another example with **to play it** used in this way:

Tabitha: We should tell Henry that we can't go to his party.

Sandra: I know. But he's already having a bad day. He just told me he failed his test.

Tabitha: Oh no. Well, how do you want **to play it** then?

Sandra: We should wait until tomorrow. Maybe he'll be feeling better by then.

Via

Via means *by way of* or *through*. This word is usually used when talking about travelling or modes of transportation. It's often used when talking about flights having stopovers instead of going somewhere directly. It can also be to describe how you travel somewhere. For example, if you go to your grandmother's house by train, you could say you go there **via** train.

The first syllable of the word **via** can be pronounced two ways. It can be pronounced with a long *i* sound (rhyming with *try*, *bye*, or *high*), or it can be pronounced with a long *e* sound (rhyming with *me*, *three*, or *see*). Both pronunciations are correct.

In this episode, Erin talks about going to Uganda and Tanzania **via** London. What Erin means is that she didn't travel straight from Canada to Africa without stopping, but instead she went through London on the way there.

Here's another example with **via**:

Trent: We should go soon. We have to be at the doctor's office in 20 minutes.

Samara: We can take my car. It'll only take 5 minutes.

Trent: Yeah, but if we go **via** subway, we don't have to worry about parking.

Samara: Oh, that's a good point. OK, let's go.

To fly standby

The expression **to fly standby** refers to a type of airline ticket. When you **fly standby**, it means that you wait to see whether anyone else cancels their flight or doesn't show up, leaving an extra seat available. If this happens, then you get the extra seat. Otherwise, you have to wait for the next plane going to your destination to see if there are any seats available. You must keep waiting until you get a seat. Some people **fly standby** because they have to, for example because they've missed their original flight. Others choose to do it because it is very inexpensive.

In this episode, Erin talks about **flying standby** because of a delayed flight. She ended up getting on a plane that was going through a place where she didn't intend on going because it was a last-minute flight.

Here's another example with **to fly standby**:

Dylan: Do you want to check out that new restaurant tomorrow?

Lakisha: I can't. I'm flying to Italy tomorrow!

Dylan: Italy? Why didn't I know about this?

Lakisha: It was a last-minute decision. I have an aunt there who's quite sick, so I'm going to visit her.

Dylan: Oh, that's too bad. How did you get a flight so quickly?

Lakisha: I'm **flying standby**. The airline thinks I have a good chance of getting on a flight tomorrow afternoon, though.

Dylan: OK, well, good luck!

To make a fool of yourself

To make a fool of yourself means to be unintentionally silly or stupid in front of other people. If you **make a fool of yourself**, you usually embarrass or humiliate yourself in front of others.

A fool was a paid clown or entertainer in the late 14th century. Their job was to act silly and make people laugh. Today, the word **fool** is used to describe a person who is acting silly, but it usually also has a negative connotation. The word *silly* can be affectionate or friendly, but the words *foolish* and *fool* are insulting. When you **make a fool of yourself**, you are usually being funny unintentionally, meaning that others are laughing at you, but you aren't trying to be funny.

In this episode, Erin and Maura talk about the difficulties of learning a new language, and Erin says that she finds it difficult to get the courage to try out a new language because she's worried about **making a fool of herself**. Erin doesn't want to be embarrassed if she makes a mistake while trying to speak a new language.

Here's another example with ***to make a fool of yourself***:

Gerta: Are you excited about opening night tomorrow?

Heidi: I'm nervous! I have all of my lines memorized, and I know the play so well. But I still feel like I'm going to **make a fool of myself**.

Gerta: No you won't. You're going to be excellent. You're a great actor. It'll be great.

Heidi: Thanks Gerta.

To be dying to do something

To be dying to do something means to really want to do something. Obviously, this isn't a literal phrase. It doesn't mean that there is really any sort of dying or death involved. The *dying* part of the expression is used for emphasis, to show how badly or how much you want to do something.

In this episode, Maura closes the interview with Erin by saying that they've talked enough about travel for one day, and that it's making Maura want to travel because **she is dying to go on a trip** somewhere new. Don't worry! Maura doesn't actually want to end her life in order to go travelling; she's just emphasizing how much she wants to travel by exaggerating.

Here's another example with ***to be dying to do something***:

Jake: What are you up to this weekend?

Paul: My mom signed me up for cello lessons. I'm not looking forward to it.

Jake: What? You're so lucky!! **I'm dying to learn how to play an instrument.**

Paul: I guess you're right. I should at least give it a chance.

Jake: Yeah, just try it. I bet you'll end up enjoying it.

Quiz

1. What does it mean if someone seconds your idea?

- a) They want you to wait.
- b) They agree with your idea.
- c) They want to hear other ideas.
- d) They do not like your idea.

2. What are warm people like?

- a) mean
- b) impatient
- c) worried
- d) friendly

3. What are the three varying degrees of friendly?

- a) friendly, friendlier, friendliest
- b) fri, friend, friendliest
- c) mean, nice, friendliest
- d) OK, agreeable, friendliest

4. What are key words and phrases of a language?

- a) people's first and last names
- b) words about money and finances
- c) common words and expressions that help you get around
- d) common wildlife in the area

5. What does *to put someone at ease* mean?

- a) to make a new friend
- b) to teach someone a new language
- c) to unlock a door for someone
- d) to comfort and assure someone

6. What does the word *via* mean?

- a) by way of or through
- b) travel by air
- c) translation into a new language
- d) have a good trip

7. When you're travelling, what does *to fly standby* mean?

- a) to meet and talk with new people
- b) to stand up during a flight
- c) to wait for an empty seat on a plane
- d) to travel with a companion

Answers:

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