

How can I use football to teach English?

Transcript



Episode transcript

The transcript highlights words that are classified under different CEFR levels

CEFR B2 words are highlighted in **yellow**.

CEFR C1 words are highlighted in **green**.

CEFR C2 words are highlighted in **blue**.

Further information about the underlined words can be found in the show notes.

Transcript

Introduction and discussion

We'am: Hello and welcome to Teaching English with the British Council – Series Two

Chris: A podcast where we try and provide solutions to some of the key questions being asked to English teachers around the world.

We'am: We are your **hosts** – We'am Hamdan

Chris: and Chris Sowton

In the first part of each episode we hear from a British Council project programme or **publication** about something which is being done to address this issue.

We'am: Across the ten episodes of Series Two we'll hear from Teachers, Trainers and Researchers in a wide range of **contexts**.... including.... Ukraine, Romania, Egypt and the **United Kingdom**.

Chris: In the second part a leading English expert and **practitioner** will provide **practical** solutions which you can immediately **try out** wherever you work.

We'am: Each episode of Teaching English is accompanied by a full transcript and show notes. These show notes provide **additional** information, a glossary of keywords and links to **relevant** websites.

Sting: Episode One: How can we use Football to Teach English

Chris: Hello and welcome back to Teaching English with the British Council. I'm your **host** from Series 1, Chris Sowton, but for Series 2, I'm delighted to say that I am the **co-host**, as sitting **alongside** me is We'am Hamdan, and we'll be **presenting** this series together. Welcome We'am.

We'am: Thank you, Chris. It's great to be here and to be **co-hosting** this podcast

Chris: We'am perhaps you could say a few words about yourself for our **listeners** by means of **introduction**.

We'am: I'm a Palestinian **researcher** at the moment I'm studying at the University of Cambridge for my PhD in Education. And previously I've done a **masters** in comparative and international education at the University of Oxford. And I **worked at** the British Council as a teacher and teacher educator for seven to eight years.

Chris: Fantastic. So lots of experience to **draw on** for this series. And I also know that you're an avid **listener** to Series 1 of teaching English with the British Council. So what can our **listeners** in Series 2 expect?

We'am: So in Series 2, we're going to cover lots of different topics that might be of benefit for educators and English teachers who are working in different contexts. We tried to cover different topics from football, to taboo issues, and hopefully our **listeners** will enjoy it

Chris: Fantastic, and if you did miss any of Series 1, you can access it via your usual podcast **provider** or from the British Council website, www.teachingenglish.org.

Chris: So given that it is the World Cup The Men's World Cup, we thought it would be good that our first **episode** is focused on football, and in particular, how it can be used **positively** to teach English and languages more generally,

We'am: And in our first field report of this series we are going to hear about the British Council's premier skills programme, which you can discover more about at premierkillsenglish.britishcouncil.org.

Chris: That's right, and our thanks to Jack, Taher, Renan and Muhammed, who have kindly shared their experiences of creating – and using – all the materials on the Premier Skills website.

From the Field

Jack: Premier Skills is a **collaboration** between the British Council and the Premier League that trains coaches and **referees** around the world. The **focus** is on grass roots and **community coaching** and on developing coaches and **referees** so they can become trainers themselves. The programme's been running for fifteen years since 2007 and in 2008 thanks to a very **passionate** football loving English Teacher and manager at the British Council, Premier Skills English was **launched**, and that's the part of the project that I **work on**.

Premier Skills English is a website with football themed **resources** for teachers and **learners** of English. Some of the **resources** are designed around football English, the language that people use when they're playing or watching football. And the rest of the **resources** are more general English language learning materials that use football, and stories and ideas from the world of football. Football's a good vehicle because it's high **motivating** for football fans, the premier league in particular is really powerful as there are so many clubs with international supporters. Also, I think that footballers can be good role models for **learners**, partly because they have to learn English when they **come to** the UK and also more generally as they work so hard to get where they are. We have an amazing **community** on the Premier Skills English website, some of our **learners** are really **passionate** and complete every activity on the website. The **community** is quite small but they're from all over the world and they give us really lovely **feedback** and really seem to enjoy the materials on the website.

Taher: I hope all is well with you, I'm Taher and I live in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia. Well, when you are teaching English through football, you are not only teaching English but you are also teaching geography, culture and social **interaction**. And nowadays, most young

men and women are interested in sports, so they believe football brings them together as a family, it promotes good behaviour for a better society. Therefore, they can easily learn English while they are still following their hobbies.

Renan: I'm Renan, I'm 26 years old and I work with Business **Intelligence** and I live in São Paulo, Brazil. I think football is good for teaching English because almost everybody in the world likes it as well as being something fun and interesting to talk about. In the materials I like the exercises that are **proposed** and the way it makes us think and exercise our skills in English.

Muhammed: This is Muhammed, I am **originally** from Egypt but I've been teaching in Turkey for seven and a half years. Well I do think football is good for teaching English for the kids because you know, everybody nowadays they do have a favourite team and favourite players in the Premier League. So whenever this subject pops up in our lessons, they always talk about the likes of Ronaldo, Marcus Rashford, Mo Salah, Harry Kane and all those famous players. So I do think it's really good and it's important for you to take advantage of this love for the game and you can use it during your lessons if we have the football club as well so it helps a lot to improve their levels in English. So mostly I like to use the vocabulary section like the football phrases section, I do like the series of Angry Albert and the kids, they like it as well. On the other hand, I like to use the, some of the **expressions** and **idioms** that are used by people from different cities in the UK. It's really interesting for the kids to know the difference between **dialects**, how they pronounce words and phrases, how they are using these kinds of things differently. Like one of the most interesting words, that you use when you speak with a scouser accent, and you say how are you? And they say, I'm sound. And when I told them that 'sound' here means I'm fine, or I'm alright, that was really surprising for them.

Jack: There are loads of really interesting **resources** on the website, but if I had to pick a couple of favourites, I'd have to go for the Premier Skills English Podcast and the web comics. The Premier Skills English Podcast has been going since 2015, now there are over 700 **episodes**! So you can find a Premier Skills English Podcast on most English grammar topics. Rich left the project about a year ago so I'm making them on my own now which is not quite as much fun but we've had almost 10 million listens so I'm not giving up! The other materials I really like are the webcomics, I wrote to the Premier Skills managers and asked them to talk to the coaches they worked with to ask them about challenges that their coaches had faced and what solutions they'd **come up with**. I collected their stories together and where possible, copied them onto a 12 page story **outline** about a local football club and their coach. I then shared these stories with **illustrators** in Indonesia and Brazil and they **interpreted** them and turned them into comics. I wanted the experiences of the Premier Skills coaches **illustrated** in a way that would **make sense** in Indonesia and Brazil and I don't think that the stories would have worked if I'd asked artists in the UK. So now on the website there are two **versions** of the same webcomic. The main stories are quite similar but the different **interpretations** are really interesting. I think they're really cool.



Discussion

We'am: This is an interesting piece. I personally used English Premier when I was a teacher, an English teacher. And what I found really beautiful about English Premier, and now the comics, is that it provides this space to contextualise language, which is very important for English language teachers. You can also do a holistic lesson from listening maybe sometimes speaking different skills and also the chance to practice vocabulary and practice also grammar in a contextualised **manner**.

Chris: How did your students find it when you used the materials with them?

We'am: I think they're more attentive because they liked the topic so they don't feel that I'm **purely** teaching grammar or **purely** teaching vocabulary so they feel that this is **integrated** and it also gives them this chance to compare between cultures. So it provides a **comparison element** to it, which is very nice for students.

Chris: Right, We'am, given this is our first **episode** I have created a short vocabulary quiz for you, but I'm going to test you **specifically** on your football vocabulary. Okay, so question one. Whenabouts in a game would a last **gasp** goal be scored?

We'am: On my god, I have to **Google** this Chris. I need some help!

Chris: What do you think **gasp** is? The word **gasp**?

We'am: **Gasp**...

Chris: And when do you take your last **gasp**?

We'am: When you die?

Chris: Yeah. Yes. So using that knowledge? When do you think a last **gasp** goal would be scored?

We'am: At the **verge**, you know and you just want to win and you win and then you gasp maybe?

Chris: Yes. So it says at the very end of the game. Yeah. The last gasp goal is at the very end of the game. Okay, we'll give you **generously** half a point for that. Question two: what is the minimum effort that you are expected to make in a game of football in **percentage** terms?

We'am: A minimum effort? That should be maximum effort, no?

Chris: No, minimum effort. So as a **percentage** managers, Football Manager will often say you've **got to** give X number of percent in the game of football

We'am: 90?

Chris: Higher

We'am: 100%

Chris: Higher

We'am: A hundred and one!

Chris: No, 110.

We'am: 110?

Chris: Yeah, which doesn't really **make sense**. They'd say you're expected like make 110%. More than is actually possible, yeah.

We'am: It is a lot! Now I sympathise with football players more.

Chris: Exactly, yeah. Okay, question three. You've got half a point so far We'am, come on... So, complete this football phrase with the correct animal. I am so upset we lost, I feel sick as a: is it a: dog, b: monkey, c: parrot or d: hippo.

We'am: I feel sick as a dog I would say dog.

Chris: Ok, you'd be wrong. Another guess maybe?

We'am: Mmmm, maybe a hippo?

Chris: You'd be wrong, do you want another guess?

We'am: Parrot!

Chris: Yes! I think we'll give you another half a point there. So sick as a parrot. You get this one right, We'am and you can get half marks. So when I used to play football, honestly...

We'am: You used to play football?

Chris: I used to play football, yes. My **nickname** when I was Captain of my university team was **chop** or chopper. Why?

We'am: Chop our chopper, mmmm, you used to chop someone, cut them into pieces? Yes, you were a winner?

Chris: Yeah or some people call me a dirty footballer he used to **tackle** people and not always very **successfully** and sort of hurt their legs so I got the **nickname** chop or chopper so I will give you that point. So we'll say you've got two out of four

We'am: Which is that's not bad.

Chris: I mean, it's yes, it's not that bad...

We'am: Thank you, Chris. But I think we should **move on** to the interview now. Our interview this week is with Damian Fitzpatrick, who is the **founder** of Languagecaster, a website which helps students interested in football improve their English language skills. You can visit languagecaster.com (language c – a – s – t – e – r) to practise your English using lots of free language **resources**, including football-language podcasts and our huge football-language glossary.

Interview

We'am: Welcome, Damian. We're so happy to have you today.

Damian: Thank you for inviting us onto the show, it's great.

Chris: What's been the reception **initially** by your students in Japan and **subsequently**? Why do people like using football as a way of learning English?

Damian: I think the students in Japan they actually, at the time it was the first World Cup after the Japanese World Cup of 2002, so there was a real interest about Japan performing in another World Cup. And so the students were really interested in this kind of **global** event.

And then at the same time, when they were actually asked to **participate**, they were like, so we can go out and ask questions to people, we can find out about this, they realised that they could use their own kind of football knowledge of football or language, Japanese language to kind of describe it. So I think the fact that it's, I mean, it's **massive**, even if you don't like football, you're **aware** of football, you know it's there, you can access it on **multiple** platforms. I mean, back in 2006, you know, we couldn't access it so well, but now it's on everybody's phone all the time. It's there so you have some kind of an opinion on it. And I think, I think one thing that's quite interesting, as well as this idea of, kind of, we **focus** on English, of course, but really, other students can kind of use their own languages as a **resource** to kind of discuss language, sorry, to discuss football, and I think that's something that we started to tap into a little bit more, which has been really, really useful, really good actually.

We'am: So how can teachers use these **resources** from languagecaster in the classroom?

Damian: We really thought that okay, here's some listening. We tried to **make it** as **authentic** as possible, people **talking about** the game. It wasn't **structured**, it wasn't written out. We kind of follow a rough plan, but we don't **read out** a transcript that's been tailor-made for **learners**. We thought, okay, there's going to be teachers out there or **learners** out there, who will be able to **look at** this transcript which we provide each week, listen to it, and then do different things that they can with it. So different students will **look at** this and say I'll just

focus on this part or different parts they can actually **look at**. **Initially**, we decided to do worksheets. We have no time to do that anymore. But what we were **looking at** is, for example, listen to this particular part of the podcast, look for the main ideas of like top-down listening style, and then also **focus** on the more bottom-up **aspects** of it as well: listen to this **grammatical**, lexical, phonological kind of item or **structure**. But we try to do work worksheets now, but we just don't have the time. But they're all there on the website that people can go along and have a look. We also have a forum which is great. So people are starting to come onto the forum to ask questions about language, how it's used, what it means, which is really nice. And it's starting to actually happen where students again are asking and comparing football **expressions** in English with their **expressions** in their own language, which I think is great.

Chris: That's so interesting. Can you give an example of the equivalences of an English phrase and a phrase from a different language?

Damian: Yeah, absolutely. Well, we encourage **listeners** to the podcast to send in kind of any interesting football **expressions** that they know in their own languages or any other languages that they have. So recently, we did a piece on the top corner, the ball went right into the top corner. And so in England, some people use the phrase top bins, and then from there, **listeners** from different parts of the world have sent in their own kind of **expressions** and we have one from a Czech fan who – and I apologise for my poor Czech pronunciation – which was šibenice, which is 'the gallows'. Which is quite dark! While an Italian fan wrote in and said there were two there was one called The Seven because it looks like a seven, but the other one was, again, apologies for my Italian, sotto la croce, which means below the cross. But I also know in Brazil, they call it the place where the owl sleeps. The **owl** is on a branch at the top of the thing. So there's so many different ways of doing it. And these kinds of things I think, are really interesting and people kind of **respond** well to this. And so they'll ask a question, okay, I've seen this phrase in English, what does it mean? And that will then kick start a conversation where other languages have come in as well, which I think is great.

Chris: But it is very interesting, and it's something else that that you do on the website as well. You move more into **looking at** how football can be used to teach non-English languages as well and how it can be used more from a multilingual **perspective** as well.

Damian: Yeah, I mean, why wouldn't we **draw on** the **linguistic** repertoires of the students, our **listeners** that people are interested? So they've got something to say if they're **coming to** our site, they've got different things to say whether that be through English or through their own languages as well. Yeah, I think it's a great way of doing it. And as I said, when you see someone using one particular language on our site, and you see someone else joining in with that discussion, either **adding to** it or asking more questions about it, it's great. We had one recently where I, we had people asking us about a Spanish phrase, and my Spanish is okay, but not great. And I **didn't** really know this particular phrase. So I contacted a Spanish friend of mine. And then we also contacted people at Multilingua FC and they came back with something and then more people joined in with it giving more examples. And so just for one particular question, we have lots of different **perspectives** on it, which I thought was great.

Chris: It's interesting from a pedagogical perspective as well that, because historically, certainly the world of English language teaching is very much seen that you should teach the target language in the target language but what you're, the model you've got here, for example, is very much about drawing on those different repertoires using first language as scaffolding to access the target language. I'm just wondering, do you see that some of your users and people who study elsewhere, there's some some conflict between the way in which they're learning with you guys, and how they're learning in their own environments?

Damian: I think it's really interesting. One of the reasons why we put this thing together as well was that we didn't want to say today we're going to be looking at this particular target, or

this particular aspect of language because we thought, well, there's going to be people, we were hoping it was going to be so many people listening, with various levels, various kinds of knowledge of football, various contexts, whatever. So we thought, well look, what we're going to do is we're going to put out there a listening text, a listening piece where people can kind of do with it what they want to do with it. So for example, here's - we want to make it as authentic as possible. So it's two people or sometimes more people who come on, we don't mind if they're using any kind of language at all to describe the world of football. And then it's really can learners take something from this and there's sometimes I think I wonder, would learners like to have that kind of target language focus, but we think, no, they can get that elsewhere. And I think here is, you know, in a more natural, more authentic way, people can kind of work through it in different ways I think. That's really what we wanted to do. So it's not

very structured at all. Tension you mentioned between the way they may be receiving instruction is I think that's a really important factor. So maybe we would look at it as almost like, well look, you have this already. Here's another way that you might want to look at it. And then when we talk about things like motivation, which is a massive impact on language learning, if people are interested in football, they may well spend a little bit more time asking: well what does that phrase mean? How is that construction we put together? What did they say in that last answer to the question, for example.

We'am: I personally think that football has this universal tone so you can always use it with students with different like from different contexts. So what would you say to teachers, maybe headteachers and inspectors if they say that football is not an appropriate subject for English Language classrooms?

Damian: This is a really interesting question. My first thought was, well what is an appropriate subject? And I think this idea of language and content sometimes seeing it as being separate when really language makes content. So they're actually looking at language. You just kind of take this idea of football away and say, here's an, here's an example of how language operates, how you can learn more language, how you can become interested in language, by going through football or music or fashion or whatever you think is appropriate for them. We talked about, I spoke about motivation before those who are really into football they are interested or they are aware of, can find out something

there as well. So I think that's interesting. I think, as I said, like football, it's not just football, but that thing, you know, does language, it uses language to do all different kinds of things. It creates: we have to explain, describe, we get very **emotional**, it tells us stories. I mean, football is a **massive narrative**, its telling stories all the time there's a beginning of a game, an end of a game, there's a beginning of a season, an end of a season is the beginning of a tournament, and so you can actually follow the good, the bad, the ugly, the heartache, you know, there's all kinds of things. We've also on the site, we've covered lots of other issues connected to football. So social issues, like **racism** in football, I mean, **basically**, every week, we were almost covering this from different parts of the world. And that kind of promotes a good discussion about you know, what do we, why is this happening? What does it look like? How can we stop it? You know, those kinds of things have been, you know, it's not just top bins, a game of two halves, it's just football. There's other things all around it as well, which I think is really important.

Chris: And I guess **potentially** the Qatar World Cup presents further opportunities for **talking about** some of those difficult issues or taboo issues. Certainly in the UK there's a big **movement** against watching a lot of that or even supporting the England team because of Qatar's position towards things like women's **rights** and **sexuality** and these sorts of things. So, again, it's **looking at** this as an opportunity to talk about issues which are difficult sometimes to talk about in the classroom, but you're almost sort of protected in a way because you're doing it through the medium of football.

Damian: Yeah, exactly. Right. Yeah. And it's gonna be interesting to see. Well, it's interesting already to see how the press reports on it. It's yeah, it's gonna be it's a great opportunity I think, to discuss all of those issues surrounding the game. Yeah, I think it's gonna be great.

Chris: Is there any other sort of favourite footballing vocabulary that you've got that you think would be useful to share with our **listeners** around the world?

Damian: Well people laugh at the idea of a football **cliché**, you know, these expressions or **sayings** that they're so overused, that they lose their original **impact** or they're tired or whatever. But I think they're used in football quite a lot because it's almost part of the, because of the language of it, the discourse of football, we expect it be there, it's also quite an **emotional** game. But I remember I was working in Spain at the time, and I was watching a game live and there was a TV commentator from Ireland called Michael Robinson, who was wonderful, wonderful. And he, his Spanish language when he started, wasn't very good but he really, really tried to get his ideas across and at one stage - he became wonderfully **fluid** later on of course - once they asked Michael Robinson and said '**penalty**? Was that a **penalty**?' and he said in Spanish: Mmm seis de uno, media docena del otro. And myself and my friend who was like in English they were like: did he just translate 'six of one and half a dozen of the other' **literally** into Spanish? And there were people in the bar watching with us going *qué? What has he just said?* And this phrase is now part of Spanish football and to me it's just fantastic. So I love those kinds of things that kind of cross

languages and become part of the football discourse as well. So six of one and half a dozen of the other.

Chris: That's brilliant. And it's one in the eye for language prescriptivists who say language should never change and it stays the same. Here is a case in point where someone who's creating new forms and then enters into the **mainstream** discourse.

Damian: Fantastic.

Chris: Brilliant. Damian, thank you so much for your time today.

Damian: Thank you





**This episode was produced
for the British Council by:
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