

An American in London

F: What were things in Britain that you find most strange when you first arrived?

M: Well, the first thing is driving on the wrong side of the road ... that was very strange because you have this automatic reflex when you go out into the street to look one way and a couple times I did that and I almost got hit by cars and bikes and all, you know. It's dangerous. It really is dangerous. And you have to teach yourself to look the other way.

F: Someone said that Britain and the United States are divided by a common language. Have you had any difficulties with the language here?

M: Oh, yeah -- tremendous amount of difficulty but I'm starting to pick it up now -- all the lingo and slang and all those -- but there's definitely a difference.

F: Can you give me any examples?

M: Well, I'd say some of the biggest ones would be the word "queue" which means in America "line". I never heard the word "queue" before. What you call "chips", I call "French fries". I never heard them called "chip". There's so many words that are different. Ah, "crisps" which mean "potato chips". Yeah, we call them "potato chips" or "chips" in America. You call them "crisps" here. So when I heard the word "chips", I was thinking of "crisps" and not French fries, it's very confusing but just some of the expressions like "mate" you know and "love". They're funny. You don't hear them. You don't hear them in America.

F: What about with young people, with people your own age, I mean, do you notice differences there?

M: I do notice some differences, I think the younger people in Britain are -- they seem to be much more radical than the younger people in the United States. I noticed that. Ah, the dress is different. I see a lot of males here with earrings in one of their ears. You don't see that in America that much. Some, maybe here and there, but not, not like you see it here. So many of the young people wear black clothing. You don't see the other colors. At home you see all different types of bright colors, and in England you see so much black. Especially on the women.

F: You don't like that?

M: Not really, It's just my own preference. I'd rather see different colors here and there, not all one color. Everyone looks like Madonna.

F: When you say "radical", are you just thinking of clothes or of anything else?

M: No, I think radical as in going against the norms, not only in clothing but I think in politics too whereas in America you don't find that as much. Oh, also, another difference is the younger people are, they're more politically aware on a larger level. See a lot of the Americans, they're aware of government of the United States and maybe a few other countries but not as many countries in Europe or they just have a vague understanding of how those other countries are run — not as widespread. Whereas here, I think that they, the kids, get to know about how different countries are run at a much younger level and they know all about the United States and how it's run.

F: What do you think the reasons are for that?

M: That's a good question. I think that the reasons are -- just because of the Press. You hear so much about America here that people are into it, they want to know what it's about and how it's run. And so many of our policies in America affect Britain that they want to understand how policies are made and all that. Britain's policies can affect us, but not to as great an extent and therefore you don't hear as much about Britain and people don't know as much about it

Questions:

1. Which of the following things in Britain did the man find most strange when he first arrived?
2. Which of the following expressions are NOT heard in America according to the interviewee?
3. What does the interviewee find about young people in Britain?
4. What can we learn from the interview about the British young people's knowledge of other countries?
5. Which of the following statements best sums up the interviewee's attitude towards Britain?

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