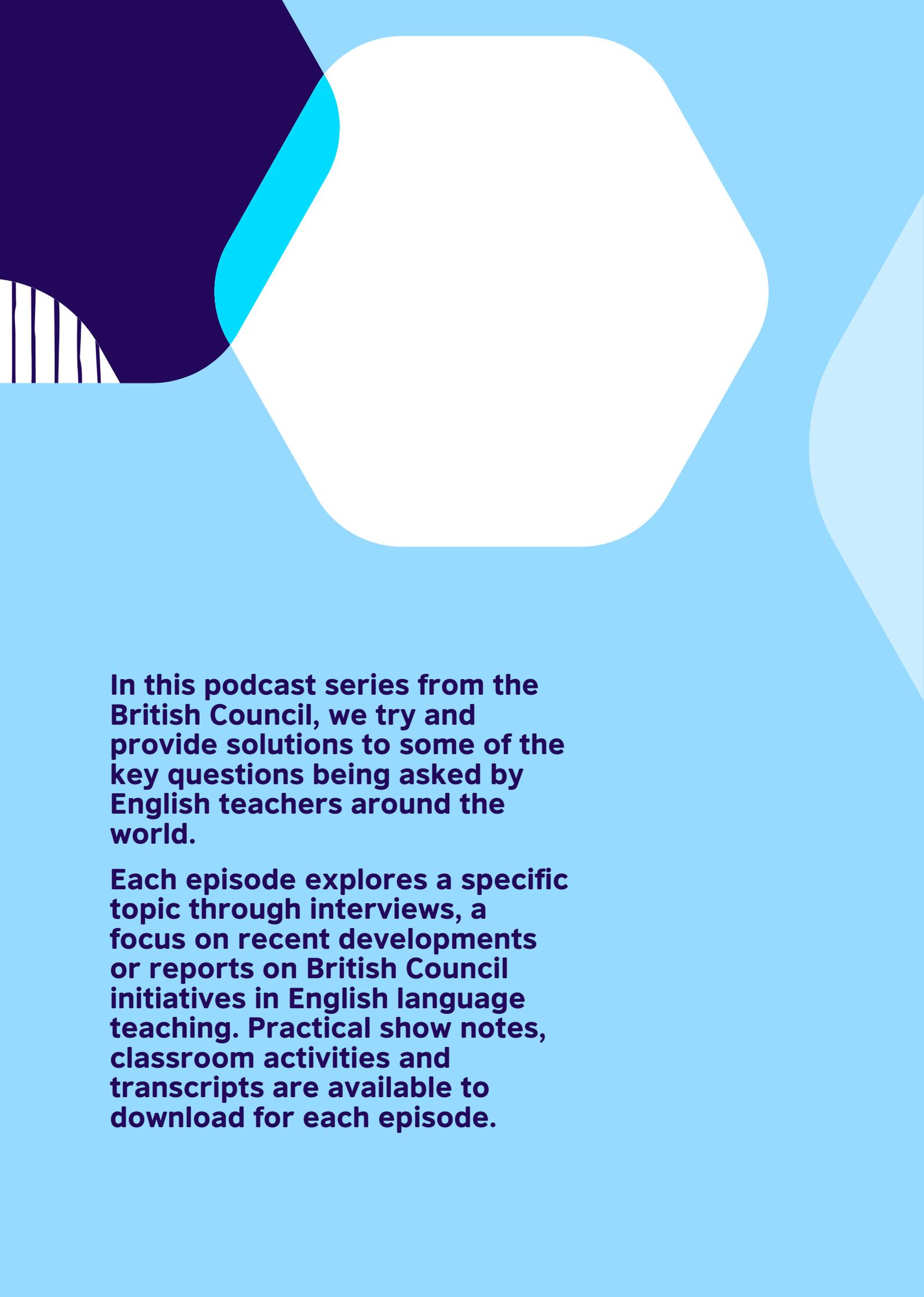


# What is English for Specific Purposes, and how is it different to General English?

Show notes





**In this podcast series from the British Council, we try and provide solutions to some of the key questions being asked by English teachers around the world.**

**Each episode explores a specific topic through interviews, a focus on recent developments or reports on British Council initiatives in English language teaching. Practical show notes, classroom activities and transcripts are available to download for each episode.**

## Episode overview

Building on what we discussed in episode 4 about 'Academic English', we take a step back and look at the wider context within which it sits – *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP). At first, who better than Viviana Cortes – the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of English for Specific Purposes* – to share with us an overview of ESP, discussing its history, present and its future. In our field report, we investigate some of the particular areas in more detail, with practitioners of Medical English, Aviation English, and English for Islamic Studies telling us about their specialities. We learn about some of the specific lexical, grammatical and stylistic features of each of these specialisms.

## In this episode



**ESP centres on the language and skills necessary to meet the needs of the learners.**

**When a learner has a very specific need for their English, that is when the ESP has to come into play.**

**There's a real need for accurate grammar when you're working in healthcare.**

**One feature of aviation English is that you don't say three, five or nine for the numbers. You say tree, fife and niner so that it's actually distinguishable.**

**When students get to a certain level, they might think, well, why am I just learning more and more English and they want to be more what am I actually going to do with this English?**



## Detailed notes

Additional information about particularly interesting, relevant, or challenging terms are given in the table below.

Phrase used	Explanation and further information
<b>Interview with Viviana Cortes</b>	
Viviana Cortes	You can find out more about Viviana at <a href="https://cas.gsu.edu/profile/viviana-cortes/">https://cas.gsu.edu/profile/viviana-cortes/</a>
English for Specific Purposes journal	The journal can be accessed at <a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/english-for-specific-purposes">https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/english-for-specific-purposes</a> . It describes itself as: “An international peer-reviewed journal that welcomes submissions from across the world, and its main focus areas are: the teaching and learning of discourse for specific communities: academic, occupational, or otherwise specialized. Topics such as the following may be treated from the perspective of English for specific purposes: second language acquisition in specialized contexts, needs assessment, curriculum development and evaluation, materials preparation, discourse analysis, descriptions of specialized varieties of English, teaching and testing techniques, the effectiveness of various approaches to language learning and language teaching, and the training or retraining of teachers for the teaching of ESP. In addition, the journal welcomes articles and discussions that identify aspects of ESP needing development, areas into which the practice of ESP may be expanded, possible means of cooperation between ESP programs and learners' professional or vocational interests, and implications that findings from related disciplines can have for the profession of ESP.”
Service encounters	Meetings that you have in a ‘service’ situation – i.e. the direct contact a consumer has with someone providing / selling them a service. This includes face-to-face interaction and experience.
English as a lingua franca	According to Alessia Cogo, ( <a href="https://www.gold.ac.uk/glits-e/back-issues/english-as-a-lingua-franca/">https://www.gold.ac.uk/glits-e/back-issues/english-as-a-lingua-franca/</a> ): “‘English’, as a language, has for some time been seen as a global phenomenon and, therefore, as no longer defined by fixed territorial, cultural and social functions. At the same time, people using English around the world have been shaping it and adapting it to their contexts of use and have made it relevant to their socio-cultural settings. English as a Lingua Franca, or ELF for short, is a field of research interest that was born out of this tension between the

	global and the local.”.
The role of English in Polish universities	According to the following page on the British Council website, <a href="https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/he-science/knowledge-centre/english-language-higher-education">https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/he-science/knowledge-centre/english-language-higher-education</a> , “English plays a significant role in how universities respond to the increasingly global context in which they operate. The growth in provision of English Medium Education (EME), the use of English to teach and learn academic subjects in countries where it is not the primary language of communication, has been rapid and substantial. As universities around the world seek to internationalise by introducing or expanding their EME offer, the need for change at the macro (policy) level, meso (institutional) level, and micro (classroom) level, is urgent to enable successful and sustainable language policy and implementation.” A number of reports are also available on this website, providing further information about the subject.
Francophone	An adjective meaning “French-speaking”.
Web 3.0	Web3 (also known as Web 3.0) is an idea for a new ‘version’ of the World Wide Web which incorporates concepts such as decentralisation and blockchain. Proponents argues that Web3 will increase data security, scalability and privacy for users, and that it will combat the influence of large technology companies.
Multimodal discourse analysis	Multimodal discourse analysis is an approach to discourse which focuses on how meaning is made through the use of multiple modes of communication as opposed to just language – e.g. images, visuals, graphics.
English for Digital Freelancers	You can read a report about this programme entitled “An investigation into how best to design an English course for digital freelancers in Palestine” at <a href="https://tiny.cc/englishdf">https://tiny.cc/englishdf</a> .
Needs analysis	The process of identifying someone’s knowledge, skill or ability in a particular area.
TOEFL	The TOEFL iBT® test measures the ability to use and understand academic English. More than 35 million people worldwide have attested to their English language proficiency by taking the TOEFL iBTtest. The test assesses written and oral comprehension and expression skills in an academic context from intermediate to advanced levels. You can find out more at <a href="https://www.ets.org/toefl">https://www.ets.org/toefl</a> .
IELTS	<u>Disclaimer: The British Council is a joint owner of IELTS</u> IELTS ( <a href="https://www.ielts.org/">https://www.ielts.org/</a> ) is an English language test for study, migration or work. Over three million people take our test every year. IELTS is accepted by more than 11,000 employers, universities, schools and immigration bodies around the world.
Standardised tests Podcast	A test that is administered and scored in a consistent, or

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	"standard", manner.
English for Academic Purposes (EAP)	According to EAP Foundation ( <a href="https://www.eapfoundation.com/about/whatisiap/">https://www.eapfoundation.com/about/whatisiap/</a> ), EAP is the English which is needed to study or conduct research using that language. It is most commonly associated with preparation for undergraduate study, via short (4-12 week) pre-session courses, i.e. ones which take place before the study begins, though many other EAP contexts exist, including courses to prepare students for post-graduate study, longer courses such as foundation year programmes, and courses which take place at the same time as the study, called in-session courses

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## Discussion

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Interfaith dialogue	As an example of this, the British Council have been working on a major interfaith dialogue programme in Egypt, at Al-Azhar University, for many years. The aim of the programme is to empower university students, scholars and staff to confidently engage in interfaith and intercultural dialogue with people from other backgrounds nationally and overseas through the medium of English. More information can be found at <a href="https://www.britishcouncil.org/al-azhar-partnership-programme">https://www.britishcouncil.org/al-azhar-partnership-programme</a> .
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## Field report

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Dominique Estival	You can find out more about Dominique, including links to some of her publications, at her website, <a href="http://www.dominique-estival.net/">http://www.dominique-estival.net/</a> .
Aviation English	Visit <a href="https://www.latitude-aes.aero/blog/what-is-aviation-english">https://www.latitude-aes.aero/blog/what-is-aviation-english</a> for an interesting blog about the origins and development of aviation English.
It's very codified	Codification is the process of selecting, developing, and laying down (prescribing) a model for standard language usage.
Specialist Language Courses	Chris' company can be found at <a href="https://specialistlanguagecourses.com/">https://specialistlanguagecourses.com/</a> "We teach English to healthcare professionals and students – doctors, nurses, pharmacists, carers – who travel to work and study in other countries, care for international patients in their home countries, and participate in international healthcare projects."
I also wrote a book on English for Islamic Studies	<i>English for Islamic Studies</i> has 15 units, each of which looks at a different aspect of Islam and its beliefs, culture and practices. You can find out more about the book at <a href="https://www.garneteducation.com/product/english-for-islamic-studies/">https://www.garneteducation.com/product/english-for-islamic-studies/</a> .

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Imams

An imam is a leader in the Islamic religion..

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Scripts

Scripts are the kind of language functions and language choices which are made in certain interactions, which can often be predicted – e.g. going to the doctor's, having a job interview, making a complaint.

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Functions

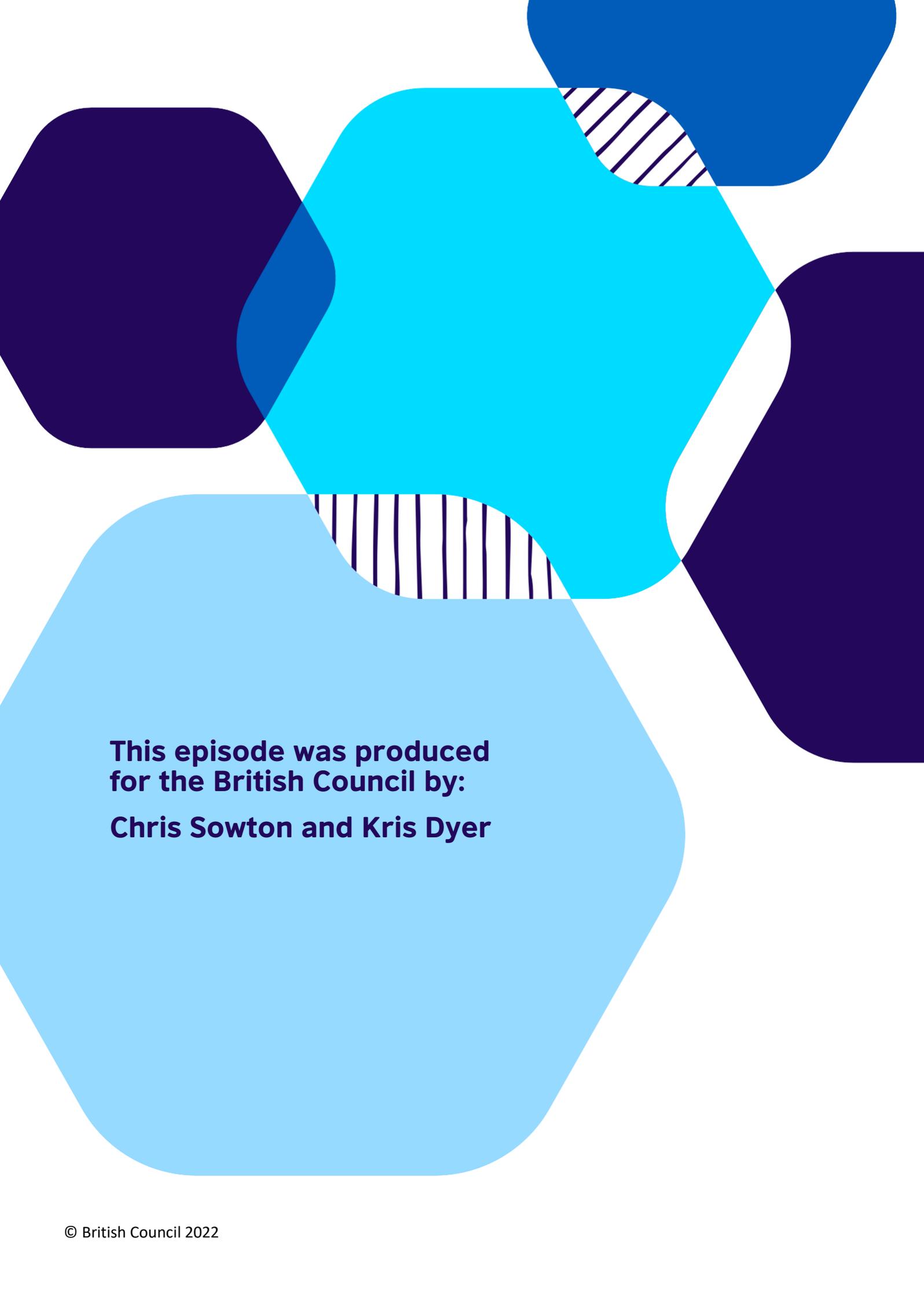
A language function explains why someone says something. Example include: giving instructions, expressing wishes, persuading, describing people, showing preferences, agreeing and disagreeing.

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## Using this podcast for lessons or training

- You can download a transcript of the episode from the podcast homepage. To help you and your learners with preparation and language analysis, all words at the B2, C1 and C2 CEFR level have been highlighted.
- The British Council have produced an 'activity pack' for this episode, which contains activities which you can use in your classroom. The activities focus on speaking, listening, grammar and language. They are available in both pdf and in editable PowerPoint format, in case you wish to edit them to make them more relevant for your specific classroom.





**This episode was produced  
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