



P70 [Part 1] Ask Me Anything: Podcast Questions 🙋

Hello premium listeners,

Welcome to the first of a series of **Ask Me Anything** episodes in which I will be responding to various questions sent in by premium listeners.

Ask Me Anything, or (AMA for short) is a specific function on Supercast which allows and encourages listeners to send in their questions.

On a regular basis I will open up an AMA, which will appear on your Supercast subscriber page at the top of the list of episodes log in at www.teacherluke.co.uk/premium

You can add questions there that you would like me to answer. When I have gathered enough questions, I will make episodes in which I answer them. Quite simple really.

Feel free to ask me any questions you like, but I think it would be best to ask questions you think everyone might like to know about - probably ones about English, or maybe ones about how I do the podcast, life in the UK, or anything you think I might know about.

Personal questions are ok because this is a personal podcast, but of course I reserve the right to skip anything I think is a bit *too* personal.

When I've finished this, I will open up a new AMA and you will be able to post questions there for the next AMA series.

The questions I received for this one can be put into 5 main categories, which I will divide over 3 parts in this P70 series.

Part 1: Podcast Questions

1. Questions about how I do the podcast, how you can use it and listener experiences
2. Episode Content Requests
3. Cultural Questions including things about life in the UK, and some other miscellaneous questions and comments

Part 2: Questions of English

4. Specific English Language and Grammar Queries

Part 3: AI and English

5. Questions on the Impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the English Language and Teaching. I got several of these, so I have put them together into one episode about AI & English.

 PDF

There is a PDF for this as usual, but since this is an AMA episode, the PDF is a bit more simple.

It contains the questions and the notes I created for my answers, and if there are any short exercises you will find them in there too, but it's not the usual full vocabulary list, with memory quizzes, vocabulary exercises and discussion questions. That's just because it's an AMA episode.

So let's get started here in part 1 with some questions about the podcast itself.

By the way, I will correct any errors I notice in the questions, so there will be mini grammar or vocabulary lessons in here too.

Part 1 - Podcast Questions

Where to start with LEP Premium

Antonino Cuccia •

Hi Luke. I'm Antonino from Palermo (Sicily) I have subscribed as premium user today. There are at least 1000 episodes, what do you recommend me to start with?

My answer

Hi Antonio,

It is important to make a distinction between premium episodes and free episodes.

Free episodes are supposed to be listened to, and that's it. They rarely have accompanying worksheets with specific exercises or activities. They are often monologues or conversations on certain topics and are presented to give you listening practice, with some teaching thrown in there, if for example I am doing a vocabulary topic or some other bit of teaching in a free episode. But usually, you just have to listen to them.

Premium ones focus on teaching you things, and are accompanied by worksheet PDFs full of exercises and activities.

They are more specifically designed to help you develop your English. Often they are language reviews for episodes of the free podcast, where I go back through one of the old episodes and pull out vocabulary or grammar to teach you, and there are pronunciation practice episodes each time as well.

All the episodes with P are premium ones (there are about 250).

The other ones are what I call the free episodes but as a premium subscriber you get no advertising on those episodes - no automatic ads at the start, in the middle and at the end of episodes.

As I mentioned before, a lot of the premium episodes explain language which was used in episodes of the free podcast.

So, as a premium subscriber you could focus on the premium episodes, and use them as a way of navigating the free podcast. Generally speaking, you should be able to listen to episodes of the free podcast in any order, so if you pick the ones which I review in premium episodes, you could listen to them, and then listen to the

relevant premium series after that, and do the exercises I present on the PDFs.

P01 (the first premium episode) is a language review of episode 521.

So, why not start with episode 521, then listen to P01.

Then follow the other premium episodes in order, and listen to any of the free episodes which are connected to them.

P02 deals with vocabulary from episode 522, so listen to 522 and then P02 after that.

How about that?

While you are doing that, you could also listen to free episodes starting with number 1 from 2009 and work your way up, or listen to new episodes as they arrive, or peruse the episode archive and listen to whatever takes your fancy.

There isn't really a perfect way to do it - whatever works for you is best. But I would recommend beginning with P01 and following premium episodes, listening to any free ones which they relate to.

By the way, when you log into Supercast, you can see playlists of the premium episodes, so it's easier to find older episodes that way.

If you are using a podcast app, why not spend a bit of time going back into the episode list and marking premium episodes then adding them to a playlist called LEP Premium.

This can help you find the older premium episodes more easily.

I understand that there are a lot of episodes and it might seem a bit overwhelming, but my advice is just to listen to whatever takes your fancy and not worry too much about getting everything in exactly the right order, but as a premium listener you should prioritise the premium episodes.

One thing to remember: I have developed LEP Premium a lot since I started in 2018. I think I have steadily improved it in that time.

Encouraging feedback about LEP Premium

Ave Rosenthal-Juhkam • (not technically a question, but worth sharing)

Hello Luke. I have just joined the LEP premium club from Sweden and have to say that I absolutely love it. Have been your listener for about 3-4 months. You often ask which techniques we use to learn English and I'd say that surprisingly, listening (to your podcast) + reading does miracles. I cannot understand, logically, how this works but I feel that my vocabulary broadens every day when I listen 1-2 hours per day. I am able to use words and expressions that I haven't used before, just so... Amazing! Thank you!!

Podcast question: Dividing premium and free episodes into different feeds

Ben Xia •

Dear Luke, have you ever considered to split the free episode list and the premium episode list in this supercast portal? it would be easier for us to find the episode which we want to learn from. But if it would take a lot of effort for you or you aren't able to make it due

to something, it is fine to use the search function as well. Thanks.

My answer

Luke Thompson •

Hi Ben, unfortunately I can't do that, but if you go to the home page here in Supercast and scroll down you will find playlists of all the premium episodes.

That should make it easier to find the episodes you want.

Also, if you've added LEPP to a podcast app like Pocket Casts you should be able to make a playlist of all the premium episodes, and when new premium episodes arrive, add them to the list too. That way you have a separate list of all the premium content on your phone.

Podcast Episode Requests

There were 3 episode requests (actually 4 because there's another one I will answer later).

- **Cheng Lin** asked if I could do an episode about medical and caregiving vocabulary, as she works in this field and finds it difficult sometimes to explain what service she provides.
- **She Ben** asked for an episode about astronomy (not astrology).
- **Patricia Schmidt** asked for an episode about AI English speaking apps. Perhaps a review of the different apps available.

Your requests are always welcome! I have episodes in the pipeline about these things. I think it's really important to do episodes on a

wide variety of topics. This is how you end up discovering new English.

I am open to requests and if I think it's possible, I will prepare something, but you might need to wait a little while for me to get round to it!

Podcast questions: How I Make LEP

These next two comments include questions about how I do the podcast, so I have put them together.

Ben Xia •

Dear Luke, thank you for all the things you've done for us, sincerely, and I've learnt a lot. Your podcast helped me a lot. During the journey, I have always been thinking:

- What new topics or formats are you planning to explore in the following episodes?
- How do you decide what topic to do next?
- Do you have an entire plan or are you already struggling to choose a new topic?

Luke

With free episodes my decision making for new episodes is a combination of different factors:

- What I think people will be interested in
- What I am interested in talking about
- What I think might be new for people - I like to talk about things people didn't know about before

- What could be fruitful from a language learning perspective (e.g. if it is a topic, article or story - is there a lot of vocab or grammar to explore)
- Overall this means: What will be engaging, entertaining and educational?
- But also, what do I just feel enthusiastic about at the moment? Enthusiasm often translates into something interesting to listen to.
- Feedback from listeners - I get a sense of what people like based on audience numbers, comments, responses etc
- Sometimes people get in touch to request specific things or to give me ideas
- Sometimes people get in touch because they want to be on the show and I am happy to let it happen (e.g. Matt Abrahams who had a book to promote and who thought his area of expertise would be a good fit, or David Crystal who has been on to promote books)
- Sometimes I get a certain vision of an episode that might be funny and I decide to follow it
- Some episodes appeal to me as an experiment, and I get a certain excited feeling when I think about making it (e.g. The ASMR Zen School of English, or the Workplace Role Plays)
- But really it is a sort of swirling mix of different motivations, reasons and feelings that combine to give me inspiration for new episodes.
- I never struggle to find new topics. Somehow I am lucky with this.
- For premium episodes it is different because I have to be more thorough and I have to make sure there is definitely something substantial that I can teach and I tend to focus on language teaching, and therefore the content is dictated more

by the practicalities of how I can help you pick up certain vocabulary or something like that, and there are pedagogical steps I feel I have to take, and therefore they become more structured and educational. Sometimes I have to think harder about premium episodes, or kind of problem solve them a bit more, because it's not just a case of talking about a subject or rambling, but doing specific teaching, and there's more research (into a grammar point for example) and careful planning is involved.

So, I am always scratching my head and trying to find the best way to teach English on my podcast, which is a challenge sometimes - to elevate this beyond just me talking.

I hope that answers your questions, Ben.

MC •

Hello from Spain!

You and your podcast are absolutely top-notch; thank you for all the work you put into it.

I was wondering if you could share a bit about what goes on behind the scenes.

[Luke: I am going to improvise my answers to the following questions]

- How do you come up with ideas for new episodes?
- Do you need to do research and prepare a script beforehand?
- How long does it take you to prepare a single episode? Do you record it in one fell swoop, or does it take several days?
- Have you ever considered making podcasting your full-time occupation?
- By the way, do podcasters have to pay taxes on their

income?

- And just out of curiosity, how many premium subscribers do you currently have? Who's the oldest one?

It's admirable how you manage to make English both educational and fun.

Thank you again and my best wishes.

Culture: Board games

Paola from Milan • (I'll correct some errors in this one)

Hi Luke, thanks for your precious time that you give us every week. I'd like to listen (to) a lesson about table (board) games that are common in UK. If there's one similar in Italy, I'd like to play it with my family using english language. With my children i use to (I often) play Hotel (similar (to) Monopoly), Brivido (which Witch). I don't get if it's a weird request... but i try. Thanks, bye. Paola from Milano

I did an episode about Monopoly not long ago. You can hear it here 🙌

<https://teacherluke.co.uk/2023/08/30/841-a-conversation-about-monopoly-%f0%9f%8e%b2%f0%9f%8f%a0%f0%9f%92%b0-with-anna-tyrie/>

I also did an episode on Anna's channel about board games in general. You can find it here 🙌

<https://youtu.be/GGta74Wb92A?si=YTvLfTASg3Stk3ur>

An episode request about phonemes

Sergio •

Hello Luke! First of all I'd like to thank you for all your work, I love it. And secondly I know it is tough but could you please make a series about every phoneme of English? or at least the most difficult ones... I'd really appreciate it. Cheers!

P.S. Could you mention how many listeners do you have from Mexico?

Luke

This is a good idea, but yes - it would require many episodes with quite a narrow focus, and honestly I think some phonemes are generally not a problem for most people. I have done episodes that focus on specific ones, including the TH sounds, and also a lot of work on various vowel sounds in minimal pairs. Check them out here.

- I did a lot of vowel sounds in P51 Part 3 - Comma Gets a Cure. Check that out.
- I did more in P58 Part 2 - Red Riding Hood.

Language/podcast question: How to improve speaking skills with story episodes**@EnglishwithMorta**

I have just subscribed to LEP premium (10 days ago).

I will immediately renew my subscription once it ends and I'll stick with LEP premium episodes for good because i didn't know there was a treasure hidden in your lessons.

Teacher Luke , I have a quick question for you if you don't mind .
How can i improve my speaking skills and my ability to speak spontaneously using short stories.

Because whenever I tend to read a story I read it like it's just a message from a friend on WhatsApp and that sucks.

Many thanks

My first thought

It's always worth reading out stories and trying to interpret them with your voice. This is a good exercise on its own.

Don't just read like a robot, add expression, drama, pausing with your voice. Premium episodes help with this (pronunciation episodes).

My main reply

Hello! Glad to have you on board.

In LEP Premium I have a series called "StoryTime" which is all about helping you improve your speaking with stories.

Check out this first part, which explains my method. [P35](#)

[StoryTime: Learn English with Stories \(free LEP Premium Sample\)](#)
[THE BEAR STORY](#)

Then listen to premium series: P37, P38, P44, P45, P46, P47, P48, P50, P51, P58.

It's about how you can do these things with my stories:

- Expand your vocabulary
- Practise your pronunciation
- Practise your spoken fluency

A question about where to find transcripts

ABDULRAHMAN ALGHAMDI •

Hi luke, where can i find transcripts for all episodes from introduction to the latest episode?

Luke

Not every episode has a transcript.

All premium episodes have transcripts - you can find them on the PDF for each episode and the links for them are in the episode description - either in Supercast or in your podcast app of choice.

Free episodes - some have transcripts, others don't. The latest ones do, so do the earliest ones. The ones in the middle - it's pot luck. The best way to check if an episode has a transcript is to visit the episode pages on my website.

Go go my archive at www.teacherluke.co.uk/episodes and find the episode in the list, then click the link to see the episode page.

There might be a script there. Otherwise, click the link in the show notes to take you to the episode page directly.

Podcast request: A map of LEPland

Michael

Design a user map where the listeners are located

Hi Luke,

so it is possible to find LEPsters in the same location so we can connect to each other.

That will (would) be amazing.

Luke

I'm afraid I have no idea how to do that, but it does sound amazing. A sort of Tinder for LEPland. Linder? LEPder?

*That *would* be amazing.

Culture: British education and English teaching in schools

Gyeong-il •

Such a great chance to ask anything!!

Q. I'm curious about how English is taught in British primary schools. In South Korea, we usually start learning English around age 10, after we've developed a good foundation in Korean. The focus is mostly on reading, phonics, and basic grammar, often through Korean explanations or translated materials. Subjects like maths and science are also taught in Korean, so we don't need to use English to learn them. How is English education different in British primary schools?

Best regards,

Gyeong-il

Luke

I am not a primary school teacher so I don't have direct experience of this, and of course I don't remember my primary school days.

But yes, kids do a lot of reading and writing, but there is a big emphasis these days on phonics. It looks like you know what this means, but for those who don't - phonics is a way to teach children literacy and it's how we connect spelling patterns to pronunciation.

Of course in English spelling and pronunciation are different, so children are introduced to typical combinations of letters which sound a certain way, and they are grouped together and then learned through various exercises to help the kids remember how certain words are pronounced and also written.

This is done through quizzes, recognition exercises, games, writing and reading. We don't actually learn our own grammar directly though, and this is also true in secondary school.

I remember in my English language classes doing things about how to write different types of text, and various literary devices (similes vs metaphors) but no specific studying of grammar.

Culture/Lifestyle Question

Alex T • This one needs a full premium episode of its own.

What would you advise to Vinay Hiremath following his story?

<https://vinay.sh/i-am-rich-and-have-no-idea-what-to-do-with-my-life/>

Part 2: Questions about English

Language question: Pronouncing *want* and *won't*

Bobo (sent by email)

What is the difference (pronunciation) between “won’t” and “want”?

The first one is an enormous problem for me: listening difference between “won’t” and “want”.

Luke

Yes, these do sound very similar and this is a common question.

Let me try and help you recognise the difference, and also practise pronouncing these two words with a clear difference.

What makes this a bit trickier is the variety of accents in the world of English. Let me try to keep it simple and focus on my own British accent, but I will refer to a General American accent too.

Also, there is the issue of fluent speech, in which words get a bit squashed as they are pronounced quickly and also they connect with other words too, changing the way they sound.

The main issue between *want* and *won’t* is of course the vowel sound in the middle. Everything else is the same (except of course the grammar of the other words around them).

Want

In UK English it’s like this **/wɒnt/** - the /b/ is the same as the sound in “on”, “hot”, “not”, “got”, “font”, “gone”, “John”.

This is a single sound.

In US English this is more like an /ɑ:/ sound. It’s a bit longer and seems to be placed further back in the mouth, and is perhaps more nasal.

Compare the difference

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/want>

Because it is often followed by an infinitive with to, it becomes “wanna”. So you will hear it as either /wɒnə/ (UK) or /wa:nə/ (US).

But in any case, that vowel sound is a single sound, which is crucial,

Won't

Of course this is the contraction of *will not* which becomes *won't*.

I suppose the pronunciation is a bit illogical or unexpected, because it has nothing to do with the words *will* or *not*.

In UK English it is pronounced /wəʊnt/

In US English it is very similar, but to my ears sounds like it is placed further back in the mouth, and is perhaps more nasal.
/wɔʊnt/

Again, compare UK and US accents:

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/won-t?q=won%27t>

I want you to notice that the vowel sound in the middle of *won't* is a diphthong, which means a double vowel sound. /əʊ/

Because of that double sound, there is movement in your mouth, as you go from /ə/ to /ʊ/.

The mouth moves (chin moves up) as you say it.

Practise saying it and notice how you move your mouth as you make this sound.

This is the crucial point and the crucial difference. Try to spot that single sound in *want* /wɒnt/,
and that double (or rounder) sound in *won't* /wəʊnt/.

Quiz: Am I saying *want* or *won't*?

Listen to Luke saying the words and identify which one.

Repeat

Just repeat after me as I say each word and slow it down. Focus on the single sound of *want* and the rounded sound of *won't*.

Quiz 2: (easier)

Now in sentences, can you identify if it is *want* or *won't*. This is easier because of the grammatical clues.

Repeat 2

Now repeat the sentences I just said.



Minimal Pair Sentences – *Want* vs *Won't*

1.

- I **want** to go out tonight.
- I **won't** go out tonight.

2.

- She **won't** get a new phone unless she saves up.

- She **wants** a new phone for her birthday.
- 3.
- We **won't** see that film – it looks boring.
 - We **want** to see that film.
- 4.
- He **wants** to speak to the manager.
 - He **won't** speak to the manager unless he has to.
- 5.
- They **won't** decide today.
 - They **want** more time to decide.
- 6.
- I **want** to help you.
 - I **won't** help you if you're rude.
- 7.
- Do you **want** some tea?
 - No, thanks. I **won't** have any.
- 8.
- The kids **want** ice cream.
 - The kids **won't** eat their vegetables.
- 9.
- We **won't** give up.
 - We **want** to win the game.
- 10.

- You **want** me to apologise?
- I **won't** apologise. I did nothing wrong.

Further study

Use [YouGlish.com](https://www.youglisch.com)

Just type in want or won't and listen to the results. You can choose between different accents there.

Language question: Pronouncing /'ll

To Be Or Not To Be

“Hi, Luke. Thank you as always for your wonderful content. I have a question. I find the pronunciation of ‘I’ll’ difficult, so could you please help me? Thanks again.”

Luke's Answer

I'll answer that as well as I can.

Of course /'ll/ is a contraction of I will.

There are three pronunciations of this.

- I will /aɪ wɪl/

This one is the full pronunciation of the two words, but of course we don't pronounce it like that. It gets contracted in speech as well as writing. It gets squashed into one syllable.

- I'll /aɪjəl/

This is how it sometimes sounds in fluent speech. Not completely “contracted”. By the way this sounds like the word *aisle* - that walkway between rows of seats on a plane or in a cinema or something.

- I'll /ɑ:l/

This is how it sounds in normal fluent speech.

Practice

Here are 10 sentences using *I'll*. Repeat them after me, pronouncing it as /aɪjəl/ first, and then /ɑ:l/.

1. I'll **call** you as soon as I get **home**.
2. I'll **meet** you at the **cafe** around **noon**.
3. **Don't** worry, I'll take **care** of **everything**.
4. If it **rains**, I'll **bring** an **umbrella**.
5. I'll **probably** be a few minutes **late**.
6. **I'll** help you with that heavy **box**.
7. I'll have the **pasta**, **please**.
8. I **promise**, I'll **never** do that **again**.
9. I'll **send** you an **email** with all the **details**.
10. I'll be **there** for you, no matter **what**.

Language question: As...as

Bobo in Italy (sent to me by email)

How do we use "as ... as"?

As...as... what a mystery!

OK, this is pretty straightforward actually, so I will aim to deal with it pretty quickly before we move on to some more advanced questions in a moment!

The structure “**as...as**” is used in English to compare two things that are equal in some way. It means that one thing has the same quality or amount as another. SAME - SAME!

Watch out. When we use it in a negative form, it means two things are different.

Basic Structure → **as + adjective/adverb + as**

Examples

1. With adjectives (describing people or things)

- He's as tall as his brother.
= *They are the same height.*
- This book is as interesting as the last one.
(= *Both books are equally interesting.*)

2. With adverbs (describing how something is done)

- She speaks as clearly as a teacher.
(= *She and the teacher speak with the same clarity.*)
- He runs as fast as a professional athlete.
(= *His speed is equal to that of a professional athlete.*)

Pretty simple so far.

Negative form → not as/so + adjective/adverb + as

Here the use is different because it tells us that two things are different.

This is similar to using a *comparative adjective + than*.

- **I'm not as good at maths as my sister.**
= *My sister is better than me at maths.*
- **This hotel isn't as expensive as the other one.**
= *This hotel is cheaper than the other one.*
The other hotel is more expensive than this one.
- **She didn't run as quickly as usual.**
= *She was slower than usual.*

✓ You can also use:

- **"the same...as"**
 - *We are the same age as them.*
- **"as much/many...as" (with nouns)**
 - *She has as much money as he does.*
 - *He has as many books as his father.*

Common Mistake

- ❌ *He is as taller as me.*
- ✅ *He is as tall as me.*
(Don't use the comparative form — “taller” — in this structure.)

Practice Makes Perfect

Rewrite each sentence below using the words in brackets, without changing the meaning. You must use the structure "**as...as**".

Examples

1. **This sofa is cheaper than that one.**
(Use: *not as...as*)
→ *That sofa is not as cheap as this one.*
2. **She works harder than me.**
(Use: *not as...as*)
→ *I don't work as hard as she does.*

Now You Try

1. **He's taller than his father.**
(Use: *not as...as*)
→ _____
2. **This film is more exciting than the one we watched last week.**
(Use: *not as...as*)
→ _____

3. **My house is the same size as yours.**

(Use: *as...as*)

→ _____

4. **Today is hotter than yesterday.**

(Use: *not as...as*)

→ _____

5. **Sarah is a faster runner than Ben.**

(Use: *not as...as*)

→ _____

6. **We arrived at the same time.**

(Use: *as...as*)

→ You _____ me.

7. **His explanation was clearer than mine.**

(Use: *not as...as*)

→ _____

8. **This task is difficult and so was the last one (same difficulty level).**

(Use: *as...as*)

→ _____

Language question: using *that* in relative clauses

Using "that" in relative clauses

A third question from Bobo in Italy, sent by email.

" I don't understand when I have to use "that" in the relative clause; in Italian we can't live without "that" in every period!"

Luke

Actually, I am planning an episode about relative clauses and I will answer this particular question there. So, onto the next question!

Language question: Participle clauses, and passive participle clauses

soemoeignite • (no longer a PLEPster?)

Hi Luke, I have a grammar question. This might seem to come out of nowhere because I don't think you've ever covered this topic before, but I am currently learning participial phrases, and there's one thing that's confusing me.

Look at this sentence: "If it is consumed in moderation, red wine can be good for health."

We can easily turn this into a participial phrase: "Consumed in moderation, red wine can be good for health."

The teacher who gave this lesson warned the audience that this kind of conditional-to-participial transition can only happen when the conditional is written in the passive voice.

My question is: why can't we convert conditional sentences in the active voice to participial clauses? Is it because, if we attempt it, the conditional meaning of the sentence is lost? Or is it because the structure is not grammatically sound?

For example:

“If we drink red wine in moderation, we can have good health.” →
“Consuming red wine in moderation, we can have good health.”

Why is this wrong? Is the conditional meaning lost? Or is the structure simply nonstandard? (Thank you as always)

There is a difference between these two types of participle clause:

Passive participle clause

Present participle clause

The first one expresses a passive verb relationship between the verb in the clause and the subject.

The second one expresses time.

✓ *Consumed in moderation, red wine can be good for health* — works because the subject (red wine) matches the passive participial phrase.

✗ *Consuming red wine in moderation, we can have good health* — doesn't work for a conditional meaning because it sounds like the two things happen at the same time, not one depending on the other.

- The original sentence “*If it is consumed in moderation, red wine can be good for health*” uses the **passive voice**.
- In the participial version, “*Consumed in moderation...*” is a **past participial phrase**, and the subject of the main clause (*red wine*) is also the **understood subject** of the participial phrase.

✓ It works because **red wine is being consumed** — the participle logically and grammatically connects to the subject of the sentence.

✗ Why is “*Consuming red wine in moderation, we can have good health*” problematic?

- The sentence structure **implies simultaneity**, not conditionality.

It sounds like: *While we are consuming red wine in moderation, we can have good health* — not *If we consume red wine, then we can be healthy*.

- In other words, **the conditional meaning is lost**. The participial phrase expresses background context, not a condition.

Passive participle clauses in sentences can have a conditional meaning (replacing an *if* clause)

But present participle clauses don't express a condition.

More examples

Passive Participle Clauses

Formed with past participles, often used to replace passive clauses — usually showing condition, cause, or time

These often express:

- **Condition** (*If it is done...*)
- **Cause** (*Because it was done...*)

- **Time** (*When it was done...*)

Examples:

1. **Given more time**, we could have completed the project.
→ (= *If we were given more time...*)
2. **Left unattended**, the soup boiled over.
→ (= *Because it was left unattended...*)
3. **Surprised by the news**, she didn't know what to say.
→ (= *Because she was surprised...*)
4. **Located in the city centre**, the hotel is ideal for tourists.
→ (= *Because it is located...*)
5. **Told to wait outside**, the students sat quietly on the steps.
→ (= *Because they had been told...*)
6. **Exposed to sunlight**, the chemicals became unstable.
→ (= *When they were exposed...*)

✅ **Present Participle Clauses**

(*Formed with -ing verbs, showing an active meaning. Usually expresses cause, time, or result. Sometimes used for simultaneous actions.*)

These often express:

- **Cause** (*Because...*)

- **Time** (*While / When...*)
- **Result / Consequence*
- **Background information**

Examples:

1. **Knowing the answer**, she raised her hand.
→ (= *Because she knew the answer...*)
2. **Walking through the park**, I saw some foxes.
→ (= *While I was walking...*)
3. **Hoping to impress her**, he arrived early with flowers.
→ (= *Because he hoped to impress her...*)
4. **Driving too fast**, he lost control of the car.
→ (= *Because he was driving too fast...*)
5. **Thinking he was alone**, he started singing.
→ (= *Because he thought he was alone...*)
6. **Feeling tired**, she went straight to bed.
→ (= *Because she felt tired...*)
7. **Running down the stairs**, I tripped and fell.
→ (= *While I was running...*)

Practice

Instructions: Rewrite each sentence by starting it with a participle clause.

Decide whether to use a **passive participle clause** (e.g. *Given the chance...*) or a **present participle clause** (e.g. *Knowing the risks...*).

1. If they are guided by an expert, beginners can learn to climb safely.

→ _____

2. She opened the letter and started crying immediately.

→ _____

3. He was walking along the beach when he found a strange shell.

→ _____

4. If it is stored in a cool, dry place, the medicine will last longer.

→ _____

5. She wanted to make a good impression, so she arrived early.

→ _____

6. If they are treated with respect, employees tend to perform better.

→ _____

7. I didn't hear the announcement because I was listening to music.

→ _____

8. If it is handled with care, the glass ornament won't break.

→ _____

9. They knew the risks, so they proceeded cautiously.

→ _____

10. If the rules are followed correctly, the experiment should succeed.

→ _____

Language question about the word *worth*

Raquel from Spain •

Hello Luke and other LEPSTERS 😊

I have a grammar question, well mixing grammar and vocabulary...

I'm not sure about how to use the word 'worth'.

When do I have to use a verb ending -ing or a pronoun after 'worth', or the word while...?

Sometimes it works as an adjective like in : I am worth it....

My brain is kind of a mess related with this issue....

Could you be so kind to help me? 😊

Cheers,

Raquel from Spain

Luke's response

The word “worth” in English is a versatile term that can function as a preposition, noun, or adjective-like structure (though technically it's a preposition, it behaves a bit unusually).

Below is a comprehensive list of its main uses, including the surrounding grammar, examples, and notes where relevant.

Basically, there are a few different patterns to remember, which can seem a bit messy in your head. There's a practice exercise at the end of this, which is really the important part.

1. "Worth" followed by a gerund (-ing form)

Structure: be worth + gerund

Function: Used to express that an activity or action is valuable or advisable.

Examples:

- This book is **worth reading**.
- It's **not worth worrying about**.
- Is it **worth going** to the museum in this weather?

2. "Worth" followed by a noun phrase

Structure: be worth + amount/value/item

Function: Used to describe the monetary or general value of something.

Examples:

- This painting is **worth £1 million**.
- He's **worth a fortune**.
- That necklace must be **worth something**.

3. Phrases: "Worth it" / "Worth the effort" / "Worth the risk" etc.

Structure: be worth + noun phrase with a determiner

("it", "the effort", "the risk", "the wait", etc.)

Function: Used to evaluate whether something deserves the effort, time, or risk.

Examples:

- The hike was tough, but it was **worth it**.
- This project is **worth the effort**.
- Is it **worth the risk**?

4. "Worth of" followed by a quantity

Structure: [quantity] + **worth of** + [noun]

Function: Used to describe the amount of something in terms of its value or duration.

Examples:

- I bought **£50 worth of books**.
- They lost **a week's worth of data**.
- We drank **two bottles' worth of wine**.

Note: You need a possessive (e.g. *a week's*, *two bottles'*) when using durations or units.

5. As a noun: "self-worth," "net worth," "someone's worth as a person"

Structure: **worth** as a **noun** in compound forms or abstract discussions

Function: Used to discuss the abstract value or merit of someone or something.

Examples:

- She has a strong sense of **self-worth**.
- His **net worth** is over \$10 million.
- They questioned his **worth** as a leader.

6. "To be worth someone's while"

Structure: be worth + (someone's) while

Function: Used to say that the time and effort spent will be beneficial for the person.

Examples:

- It's **worth your while** to apply early.
- I'll make it **worth your while** if you help me.

Note: Often used to **persuade** or **encourage** someone to do something.

7. Worthwhile (adjective)

If something is worthwhile, it is enjoyable or useful, and worth the time, money, or effort that is spent on it.

- *The President's trip to Washington this week seems to have been worthwhile.*
- *...a worthwhile movie that was compelling enough to watch again.*
- *It might be worthwhile to consider your attitude to an insurance policy.*

"Worth" is **never followed by an infinitive**:

 *It's worth to see that movie.* → **Incorrect**

 *It's worth seeing that movie.* → **Correct**

But worthwhile is followed by an infinitive.

- *It's **worthwhile to read** the instructions carefully.*
- *It may be **worthwhile to apply** for more than one position.*

Make some exercises here

Part 3: AI and English

Will AI change the English language?

Alissa Pfau •

Do you think AI is going to improve or change the English language? Do you think it also could create a new world language at any point? What would you improve on the English language to make it simpler or more constant? I'm excited to maybe hear your thoughts about it 🗣️

I watched a British Council interview with David Crystal recently, in which he talked about the future of English. In the video he does talk about AI quite a lot. Here's a summary of what he says in the video.

Will AI change the English language? (David Crystal)

Short answer: Yes, it already is — and it will continue to do so.

Key Points from David Crystal on AI and the Future of English

1. AI is shaping the *style* and *variety* of English online

- AI-generated content tends to reflect American English (in spelling, punctuation, vocabulary), because most major AI systems are built in the US.

- This results in a certain homogeneity, especially in online summaries and chatbot responses.

“There is a certain homogeneity of dialect that is up there... the main AI organisations are American.”

2. More variation will come as AI develops globally

- Crystal expects that as other countries build their own AI tools, we'll start to see greater representation of global English varieties in AI outputs.

“In ten years' time... you're going to get a better representation of the language variation... than we get at the moment.”

3. Chatbots and translation tools have become more sophisticated

- Early AI tools were primitive; users had to simplify language to be understood.
- Now, AI understands more natural language and produces good quality summaries and responses.

“Now I can talk to it pretty naturally and I'm getting fairly good responses.”

4. Speed and brevity in digital spaces are altering language norms

- Platforms like TikTok and Instagram encourage people to speak much faster and communicate in very short time frames (often under 1 minute).

- This creates a pressure on learners and contributes to a rapid evolution in spoken English norms online.

“Some of these one-minute reports... are now over 300 syllables a minute... sometimes approaching 350 or 400.”

5. The dominance of English in AI may reinforce English’s global status — for now

- AI may help sustain English’s role as a global lingua franca, especially as it becomes integrated into everyday tools like translation and voice assistants.

6. But AI also creates challenges for teaching & learning English

- The speed of change and the diversity of emerging Englishes online pose new challenges for classrooms.
- Crystal suggests we need new descriptions and new resources to keep up with the evolving linguistic landscape.

“It has become a much more difficult job to teach English... The sooner we can get descriptions around, like Adam's book [on Algospeak], the better.”

David Crystal believes AI is already influencing the English language, especially in terms of usage, variation, and speed. While AI currently promotes a somewhat standardised (mainly American) form of English, future developments — especially global contributions to AI — will likely diversify the language again.

In short:

AI will change English, and already is — not necessarily in its core grammar or structure (yet), but in how, where, and at what speed it's used and understood.

Will AI create a new language which could replace English?

Your other question was about whether AI might create a brand new international language, which I suppose would replace English? Kind of like AI esperanto, or Alsperanto or something.

I asked AI your question, and here is what it said. Take it or leave it.

AI could, in theory, create a new world language by designing a simple, logical system and distributing it instantly through global platforms, but in practice, this is highly unlikely. Language is deeply tied to identity, culture, and power, and people don't switch languages just because something new is more efficient. English already serves as the global lingua franca, and AI is more likely to reinforce its dominance by improving translation and communication tools than to replace it entirely. Rather than inventing a whole new language, AI is more likely to influence how existing languages—especially English—are used, speeding up change and spreading new forms of expression across digital platforms.

AI Topic: Will AI Replace Language Teachers?

Antonio •

Dear Luke, thank you very much for all the work you do for us! I'm a private English teacher in Italy and I find your lessons invaluable!

So, keep up the good work! I'd like to know your opinion about this:

Do you think AI will replace us language teachers in the next 10-15 years?

I guess there are at least some aspect of our job that AI will never be able to perform, and I'd like to specialize on those aspects before AI leaves me unemployed... at least until 2040 when I'm going to retire :-). Thank you so much! Antonio

Luke's Answer

The general opinion seems to be that AI probably won't replace us completely, but will change the profession.

To be honest, I think AI will cause a lot of English teachers to lose work.

But also, AI will (and already does) help teachers massively in a variety of ways.

At this point I would like to take a bit of time to talk about the various things that us English teachers do.

Can/will AI do these things independently, better than human teachers, worse than humans, or can it help human teachers do these things better?

Overall, it is a complex picture in which things will never be the same again, and teachers' lives might become easier and more

empowered, but also might just become unnecessary too (I mean the teachers will become unnecessary, not teachers' lives. Hopefully AI robots won't come and terminate us for some reason).

Here's a rundown of some of the various things a teacher does. Let's think about whether AI can do these things too, or whether it can help teachers do these things better.

A TEFL teacher's educational tasks and the services they offer to learners are at the heart of their profession. It's about much more than just standing at the front of a room and delivering information. Here's a breakdown.

I. Core Educational Tasks (What the Teacher Does)

- **Needs analysis, course planning and adaptation**
 - Analysing the needs of your students - understanding what they actually need to learn and then adapting everything for the students in your class, both in the planning stage but also in the teaching stage.

The thing is, the traditional way that teachers teach, is in a classroom setting with a group of students, but AI wouldn't operate within the same system. You wouldn't just open up a laptop in front of a group of students. Instead it would be a one-to-one situation. So maybe the traditional language classroom will be gone. But will humans crave that kind of group learning?

- **Lesson Design and Preparation**
 - **Setting Clear Objectives** based on learner needs, and then designing courses around that - picking materials, or creating materials that directly help that particular

group of learners. AI would struggle to do this in the same way as a teacher can, but then maybe they wouldn't need to. AI can certainly react and learn from the people using it, and it would be more learner driven, with the learner in the driving seat, and maybe that's for the better.

- **Sequencing Activities:** Structuring lessons logically with warm-ups, presentation of new language, controlled practice, freer practice, feedback, concept checking, tips and future work, and a wrap-up. A lot of this is done in the moment as you monitor the progress or demands of a particular group. I'm not sure AI could do this like a human, but then again maybe it wouldn't need to. To be honest, at the moment I feel like AI copies human problem solving in its responses. ChatGPT, if asked to design a course based around certain student needs and objectives, would probably present something based on what humans have been doing. But at some point, AI will think for itself and it might have a better way of helping you learn a language, and it might innovate a completely new system, which is more effective - some kind of AI version of the Callan method or something.

And another consideration is the fact that AI might make language learning completely unnecessary. AI will be so reactive and clever that it will be able to simultaneously translate one language into another, and all you need to do is put some headphones in, and essentially call the person you are talking to, and let the AI translate what

you are both saying to each other, so you hear it all in whatever language you want, and because AI is doing it, it would be an intelligent translation - meaning, one which listens like a human does - is able to infer meaning, fill gaps, understand what someone is going to say before they say it, etc. Perhaps we just won't need to learn English. BUT then again, people don't just learn English because they need to, but because they want to.

- **Creating Engaging Materials** - materials are vital, but they have to be interesting, funny, motivating. AI is certainly getting better at writing interesting things.
- **Anticipating Problems:** Foreseeing potential difficulties students might have with grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation, and preparing strategies to address them. I think AI could probably do this, based on lots of data - for example common errors made by certain L1 speakers, but when I plan a lesson, mostly it is my personal experience of what makes students happy or not which informs my decisions (topic, pacing, activities, discussion questions etc) If I left AI to do it all, without intervening at all, I think the class would probably fall apart. AI content often looks great on the surface (like an AI lesson plan or an AI generated worksheet - which ChatGPT is often very happy to make "Would you like me to prepare a worksheet for this?" it asks me. But when you actually use it, put it to the test, road test it, there's something hollow in it, and

it's clearly not made by a human.

- Responding to problems and adapting in real time. This includes behavioural problems you might encounter in class. Again, this probably isn't an issue if AI is not managing a group of people.

- **Language Instruction**

- **Presenting New Language:** Introducing new grammar structures, vocabulary, and pronunciation points clearly and concisely, often using concept checking questions to ensure understanding. Can AI judge whether someone has really understood something? I am always micro-testing my learners based on the way they respond to questions or deal with little tasks. I suppose AI could do that. You can imagine it always recording your responses (if you are chatting with it) and then analysing the way you have responded and constantly adapting itself to help you deal with the bits you're getting wrong. For example, if you keep mispronouncing certain vowel sounds, or you often slip into present tense, it could easily adapt to those things, I imagine.
- **Modeling Language:** Providing clear examples of correct English, both orally and in writing. Yes, AI can already do this well.
- **Drilling and Practice:** Leading controlled and freer practice activities to help students internalize new language and build fluency. This is extremely adaptive and requires a lot of problem solving in the moment,

especially when dealing with pronunciation. There are AI apps that claim to help you with pronunciation. That's another episode for another time.

- **Error Correction:** Deciding when, how, and what to correct, using a variety of techniques (e.g., rephrasing, gentle prompting, peer correction) to encourage self-correction rather than just providing answers. Giving learners feedback is a subtle and sensitive art which involves being a bit tough and straight sometimes and being gentle and encouraging at other times. Does it have the soft touch that is needed to be really effective? Not yet, but soon, probably. I think it will learn how to deal with our emotions, which is scary.
- **Teaching all Four Skills:** Explicitly teaching strategies and providing practice for improving listening, speaking, reading, and writing. I think it could do that, especially if it is loaded up with all the things we know about how to develop these skills.
- **Pronunciation Focus:** Highlighting and practicing specific sounds, intonation patterns, and stress to improve intelligibility. I will refer back to the point about being sensitive, empathetic and reactive not only to student errors, but to their emotions - because this is v important. You have to manage your students' feelings to keep them motivated.

It's hard to overstate how important it is to be reactive, creative and to think on your feet while teaching to a class of people.

Sometimes I have had to find ways to "carry" a class or to keep them interested when otherwise they all would have lost focus - for

example when it suddenly starts raining, or a wasp flies into the room, or when you need to use humour to deal with a potentially embarrassing moment or a misunderstanding. Sometimes you need to know when to switch between seriousness and discipline and light-heartedness and entertainment. A lot of it is about emotional intelligence.

I have a lot of other things I could say about what a teacher does, in the current “language classroom situation” but I think I have probably made my point. But briefly those things include:

- **Classroom Management**
 - Establishing Routines, Managing Group Dynamics, dealing with different personalities and how they combine in a group, Maintaining Discipline and classroom rules, Motivating Learners using praise, encouragement, and varied activities to keep students engaged and enthusiastic, Providing real world examples, personal stories, jokes.
- Assessment and Feedback (at the end of a course but also during classes with continuous assessment).

Variety of Services and Roles a TEFL Teacher Offers to Learners:

Beyond the direct teaching tasks, a TEFL teacher plays several crucial roles that support a learner's overall English language acquisition journey.

1. Language Instructor/Educator
2. Facilitator/Guide

3. Motivator/Encourager
4. Assessor/Evaluator
5. Model of English - someone who provides a standard of English (grammar, vocab, pronunciation but also communicative competence and cultural awareness)
6. Counselor/Mentor (especially for younger or vulnerable learners)
7. Cultural Ambassador

In essence, a TEFL teacher provides a holistic educational experience, extending far beyond simply teaching language points. They aim to empower learners to become confident, competent, and independent users of English. A lot of this depends on being reactive, empathetic, adaptable and creative.

How many of these things will be replaced by AI?

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is undoubtedly transforming many industries, and education, including TEFL, is no exception.

While AI will certainly automate and augment many tasks, it's widely believed that it won't entirely replace the human TEFL teacher, at least not in the foreseeable future. The key is to understand which tasks are more susceptible to AI and which will likely remain the domain of human educators.

Here's a breakdown of how AI might impact the various tasks of a TEFL teacher:

Tasks Most Likely to be Significantly Replaced/Automated by AI (or where AI will be the primary tool)

- **Routine Assessment and Grading:**

- Marking objective tests (multiple choice, fill-in-the-blanks). Quantitative data analysis.
- Providing basic grammar and spelling correction on written assignments.
- Analyzing simple speaking samples for pronunciation (or grammar/vocab) accuracy.
- Tracking student attendance and basic progress data.
- **Content Generation and Adaptation:**
 - Generating lesson plan drafts, activity ideas, and debate prompts. So far this is ok “on paper” but in reality (at the moment) I find lessons 100% designed by AI are not good enough.
 - Creating basic worksheets, quizzes, and exercises from scratch or adapting existing ones for different levels. The main advantage of AI here is that it cuts out a lot of boring and repetitive work such as formatting texts, creating lists, turning lists into quiz questions - all that word processing, or coming up with example sentences - the “leg work” of lesson writing. It’s very helpful for this. I can be way more productive as a materials developer with AI. On its own, I’m not sure if it could come up with something truly effective, so humans are needed. AI saves time here and makes us more efficient.
 - Translating simple phrases, providing dictionary definitions or example sentences.
 - Summarizing texts or creating different versions of a text for various reading levels.
 - Essentially a lot of this involves generating English texts and tasks, following precise prompting.

- **Repetitive Practice Drills**

- Providing endless opportunities for grammar drills, vocabulary memorization, and pronunciation practice through interactive apps and platforms. This is quite significant. A lot of learners want this kind of practice and it is very convenient to do it with AI.
- Simulating basic conversational scenarios for students to practice. This is becoming more and more effective and soon we will be able to have very good, simulated conversations with AI. This is also a significant demand from learners. A lot of people just want to talk with someone in English and AI can do this, and can provide pretty good error correction. Will it be satisfying long term? We'll see.

- **Information Delivery (for basic facts)**

- Answering factual questions about grammar rules or vocabulary meanings. AI is good at this.
- Delivering straightforward explanations of concepts. AI is good at this too, but needs careful prompting to get the best answers.

- **Administrative Tasks**

- Scheduling classes and managing student records.
- Automating some communication with parents/students for routine announcements. Not sure if AI can be trusted with this yet.

Tasks Least Likely to be Replaced by AI (requiring the "human touch")

- **Building Rapport and Connection:**

- Establishing a positive, trusting, and empathetic relationship with students.
- Understanding individual student personalities, struggles, and motivations.
- Creating a sense of community and belonging in the classroom. Except this isn't going to happen in a classroom.
- **Adapting to Unpredictable Classroom Dynamics:**
 - Responding spontaneously to unexpected questions, jokes, or emotional states.
 - Managing complex group work and resolving conflicts.
 - Adjusting lessons in real-time based on student engagement, energy levels, or sudden comprehension issues.
 - Not being a soulless product of a potentially evil trans-national corporation which enables the spread of neo-fascism through technocratic means.
- **Fostering Higher-Order Thinking and Creativity:**
 - Encouraging critical thinking, problem-solving, and creative expression.
 - Facilitating open-ended discussions, debates, and brainstorming sessions.
 - Guiding students through complex analysis and synthesis of information.
- **Providing Emotional Support and Motivation:**
 - Inspiring students, boosting their confidence, and helping them overcome anxieties.
 - Providing genuine encouragement and celebrating individual successes.
 - Understanding and addressing underlying emotional or psychological barriers to learning.

- **Cultural Nuance and Intercultural Communication:**
 - Explaining subtle cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and appropriate social language use.
 - Facilitating discussions that bridge cultural gaps and promote understanding.
 - Modeling authentic human communication, including body language, tone, and humor.
- **Complex Problem-Solving and Individualized Scaffolding:**
 - Diagnosing complex learning difficulties that go beyond simple rule-based errors.
 - Providing highly personalized and adaptive scaffolding that responds to a student's unique cognitive processes.
 - Mentoring students on their learning journey.
- **Crisis Intervention/Welfare:**
 - Recognizing signs of distress in students and providing appropriate support or referral.

Conclusion

AI is likely to **transform** the TEFL teacher's role rather than eliminate it. Teachers will become more like **facilitators, coaches, and designers of learning experiences** who leverage AI tools to automate mundane tasks and personalize learning. This shift will allow human teachers to focus on the truly irreplaceable aspects of their job: building relationships, fostering creativity and critical thinking, providing emotional support, and navigating the complexities of human communication and cultural understanding. The future TEFL teacher will be one who is **AI-literate** and skilled at integrating these powerful tools to enhance the learning experience. AI will help us before entirely replacing us.

Also, whenever I bring this up, my listeners say how they prefer human teachers over AI alternatives (*at the moment.*)

So, largely this is down to you as a kind of consumer. Will you choose AI over human teachers? What if it is cheaper and more convenient than using a human teacher?

In part 2 - questions about English.