

# 6 World Languages

## 1 Synopsis

This is a video about people who are learning English at a language center in Harvard Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts. People from all over the world come to study here, and, in order to communicate effectively, they use English as a "lingua franca." At the Cambridge Center for Adult Education, students are taking part in an intermediate conversation class. Many of them are at the "intermediate plateau," where they have learned the basics of the language, but are finding it hard to progress further. The teacher selects interesting topics, and the students are soon having real English conversations together.

**Length of video:** 4:15min

## 2 Target Language

**Grammar:** modals of obligation: *have to, must, should*

**Vocabulary:** learning languages

**Language points:** *basic skills, intermediate plateau, lingua franca, melting pot, native tongues*

## 3 Procedural Notes

### A Before you watch

**In pairs.** Have students read the statements and check the ones that are true for them. Then, encourage them to write any other reasons for learning English. Have them compare their answers in pairs. Discuss the reasons in open class. Which is the most popular one?

### B While you watch

**1 Individuals.** Play the whole video first while students just listen, without taking notes. If possible, use a map to show students where Cambridge, Massachusetts is (north-east U.S.). Then, play the first part of the video up to [01:37] and have students complete the chart about the three women. Pause the video in the relevant places if necessary. Check answers.

**Answer key:**

**1 Maria** is from (South) Brazil. She wants to learn English to communicate, because not enough people speak her language.

**2 Marilou** is from Haiti (the U.S.) She needs to learn English because she lives and works in an English-speaking country.

**3 Ariela** is from Mexico City. She says English is important for life in general.

**2 Individuals.** Have students read the questions and check comprehension. Elicit the meaning of "plateau" and check pronunciation. If necessary, explain that in geography this is a large flat area of land that is higher than the land around it. In this context, however, it refers to a period of time when something stops increasing or improving. Play the video from the beginning and have students circle the correct answers. Have students read aloud the complete correct sentences to check answers.

**Answer key:**

1 a 2 c 3 b 4 b 5 a

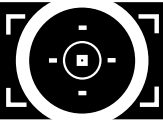
## C After you watch

**Individuals.** Read aloud the task and have students make notes. If they find this difficult, brainstorm ideas for "challenges" and "rewards" on the board. (*Challenges: keep making the same mistakes; hard to make progress; pronunciation is difficult.* *Rewards: communicate with more people; understand English movies, TV, and Internet pages; get a good job.*)

**In groups.** Have students work in small groups and tell them to take turns explaining their ideas. Encourage them to listen to each other's lists and add any ideas to their original lists. Now ask the groups to look again at what they wrote for "challenges" and to try to suggest advice or solutions to the problems/difficulties that they listed. Encourage the students to use modals of obligation for this. Model an example, e.g., *I can't remember vocabulary – You should rewrite any new vocabulary in your book when you get home, or Try to use the vocabulary in a conversation.* Circulate while they are talking and note down any common errors with respect to modals of obligation. Discuss the errors with the whole class.

## D Language points

**Individuals.** Read aloud the expressions in the box and check that students understand them. If necessary, explain that "a melting pot" is an expression used to describe a situation in which there are many different types of people, ideas, religions, etc., all existing together in one place. Emphasize that we can use "tongue" to refer to the native language someone speaks, e.g., mother tongue/native tongue. Discuss the meaning of the term "lingua franca" and explain that it is Latin and means "the language people use



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to communicate when they have different mother tongues." You can elicit that English has become the world's "lingua franca." Have students complete the text with the correct expressions. Check answers as a class.

### Answer key:

1 melting pot 2 native tongues 3 lingua franca  
4 basic skills 5 intermediate plateau

sentences using modals of obligation, for example, *In the U.S., you **mustn't** walk under ladders. To bring good luck, you **have to** knock on wood. In Japan, you **should** always avoid the number four.* It may be useful here to remind the students of the difference between *mustn't* and *don't have to*.

**In groups.** Have students work in small groups and discuss the questions, reminding them to use modals of obligation. While groups are working, circulate and help with grammar and vocabulary. Finish off with a class discussion.

### Superstitions mentioned in the video:

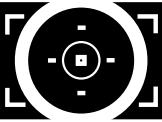
Breaking a mirror brings seven years of bad luck.  
Walking under ladders is unlucky.  
Opening an umbrella inside is unlucky.  
Knocking on wood is lucky.  
Black cats are unlucky.  
The number four means "death."

## E Your viewpoint

**As a class.** Read the questions aloud and check comprehension. Brainstorm words relating to superstitions on the board (*horoscopes, fortune telling, palm reading, tarot cards, etc.*) Then, brainstorm some different superstitions from your country and from around the world. Encourage students to produce whole

## 4 Video Script

<b>Presenter:</b>	This is Harvard Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts, home to students, teachers, and visitors from almost every country in the world. Hundreds of foreign languages are spoken here.	<b>Ariela:</b>	It's very important to know English, in general, in life.
<b>Maria:</b>	My name is Maria and I'm from South Brazil.	<b>Maria:</b>	If you speak a language like Portuguese and you want to communicate with people from any other country, you have to learn English.
<b>Marilou:</b>	My name is Marilou Nezili and I'm from Haiti.	<b>Marilou:</b>	I should know English, yeah? Because I have to live here, I have to talk to people, I have to work.
<b>Christine:</b>	I'm Christine and I'm French.	<b>AC:</b>	Do any of you read your horoscope?
<b>Ariela:</b>	My name is Ariela and I'm from Mexico City.	<b>Presenter:</b>	This is AC Kemp. She's a linguist who has been teaching English as a second language for ten years. Here she is teaching an intermediate conversation class. Students who reach this level often become frustrated. They reach what is called an intermediate plateau. An intermediate plateau is a common phenomenon when learning any new skill. For example, a child who is a talented athlete can master basic skills easily, but becomes frustrated at the intermediate level.
<b>Chen Ah-Wan:</b>	My name is Chen Ah-Wan, I came from Korea.		
<b>Presenter:</b>	These people are all speaking English, but what if they could only speak in their native tongues? ... Nobody could understand each other, and life would be very confusing. In order to communicate more effectively in a melting pot like Harvard, many people decide to improve their English. English here is the lingua franca, the language that everyone has in common. People who want to learn or improve their English come to the Cambridge Center for Adult Education right near Harvard Square.	<b>AC:</b>	Sometimes you learn to communicate a certain way and you start repeating a mistake and you don't realize that, so you have to become aware of how you're speaking.



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**Presenter:** AC keeps her students involved by selecting interesting topics for discussion.

**AC:** If you break a mirror, do you think it brings you seven years of bad luck?

**Presenter:** Today's topic is superstition.

**AC:** You have superstitions in Japan, don't you?

**Man 1:** Four is bad-luck number. Four means death.

**AC:** What about walking under ladders? That's a big one here.

**Man 2:** It's not a superstition, but maybe it's dangerous because they are painting or they are doing something, so ...

**AC:** Do you think it's bad luck to open an umbrella inside?

**Man 3:** It's weird to open an umbrella inside a house. I don't see the reason why.

**AC:** You've heard of the superstition of knocking on wood, haven't you? All black cats are unlucky, aren't they?

**Presenter:** AC also uses visual aids to help her students learn.

**AC:** You already have one of these, don't you? So, everybody on page 20

should have a picture of the palm. Now, first of all, can anyone tell me what this line is? My life line. OK. Can you tell me what your partner's life is going to be like?

**Christine:** A long life, but with a lot of sickness.  
**AC:** Can you tell me what kind of life he's going to have?

**Man 2:** You will have a regular kind of life.

**AC:** I think the most fun at this level is that you start to see that you actually can communicate, and when you try talking to people, you know, that first time that you have a real conversation with someone, not just one sentence, you know, not something that you practiced from a book, that's really exciting to realize, "Hey, I'm speaking English."

**Ariela:** Every time I speak English, I'm a different person. The fact that I can understand people, it's amazing, it makes me very happy.