Elementary Podcasts
Series 4 Episode 1

Jo and Adam – Welcome back!

Adam: Hello! I'm Adam and I'm happy to say 'Welcome' to Episode 1 of the new series of LearnEnglish Elementary Podcasts. Yes, that's right – we're back! With all your favourites, too – Tess and Ravi, Carolina and her friends – and, of course, more of your comments to share. But first, let me introduce you to someone. This is Jo.

Jo: Hello everyone!

Adam: Jo's going to be helping me with this series of Elementary Podcasts. She's an English teacher, like me, and together we're going to talk to you about some of the language that you hear in the podcasts.

Jo: That's right. And I'm quite excited about it! I've been reading all your comments from the last series, and I think I'm going to enjoy working with you all.

Adam: Great to have you here, Jo. Now, if you remember the last episode of Series 3, Carolina, Emily and Jamie visited a city farm and had fun making animal noises. And Emily told them that she's going on a first date with Jamie's friend Cameron. So we asked you what noises animals make in your country and, also, where you think Emily and Cameron should go for a first date. Let's start with a few animal noises! And I hope I get the pronunciation of these right!

Tanya Klimova from Russia said 'A dog barks "gaf-gaf", the sheep bleats "beeee", a pig says "hru-hru".'

Jo: (laughs) That's a funny one!

Adam: Chihirochan89 from Vietnam says 'In my country, dogs usually say "go go", goats say "be be", cows say "muz muz".' And in Turkey, according to M Nur, 'dogs say "hav hav", donkeys say "ai ai", and sheep say "meee meee" '.

Jo: So dogs can say 'woof woof' or 'gaf gaf' or 'hav hav' – they're all quite similar. But then in Vietnam they say 'go go' – that's completely different. In Spain, where I live, they go 'guau guau'.

Adam: 'Guau, guau'! And where to go for a first date? Most of you said a restaurant or the cinema. Hassan from Egypt would choose a restaurant because you can't talk in the cinema, but if you are shy you can always talk about the food in a restaurant. Fred09 from Brazil thinks a restaurant is 'too fancy for a first date' and would choose the cinema. Yenson from Venezuela went to the cinema for his first date with his wife, but unfortunately it was a horror film and she was so scared that she dropped her popcorn! But she married you, Yenson, so it wasn't a complete disaster!

Jo: That's a good story!

Adam: And a lot of you left comments about how much you like the podcasts and how much they help you with your English and how much you wanted to hear Series 4. It's important for us to hear that you like what we're doing, so thank you very much to everyone.

Now it's time to hear from Tess and Ravi. If you're new to Elementary Podcasts, let me explain that Tess and Ravi always talk about something that people think is typically British – like the Royal Family or drinking tea, or even the Loch Ness Monster. Let's hear what it is this time.

Tess and Ravi

Tess: Hello again, everyone. My name's Tess.

Ravi: And I'm Ravi.

Tess: And, as usual, we're here to talk about Britain. The things that you know about it …

Ravi: … and the things you think you know. We've already talked about a lot of different topics – things that you think are typically British. And today we've got something nice. Tess, how's Oscar?

Tess: He's fine, thanks. Why?

Ravi: I'm introducing the topic, Tess. Pets.

Tess: Ahh. Very clever.

Ravi: Oscar is Tess's cat.

Tess: And a member of the family.

Ravi: Hmm ... A lot of people believe that the British are crazy about animals. We're often called 'a nation of pet lovers'. But is it true? To begin with – do we have more pets than anyone else? So I did a bit of research. And yes, a lot of people in Britain have pets – 49 per cent of British homes – that's nearly half – have an animal.

Tess: Is that a lot?

Ravi: That's nearly 30 million pets – cats, dogs, rabbits, hamsters, parrots – but not including fish! That's a lot of pets. But there are a lot of other places with as many pets as Britain, or even more ... the USA, New Zealand, some countries in Europe – 62 million homes in Europe have pets. Britain isn't that unusual.

Tess: And it depends what you count as a pet.

Ravi: Well, yes, that's true.

Tess: Cats and dogs are the most common pets in Britain, right?

Ravi: Well, actually, they now think that the most popular pets in Britain are ...?

Tess: Well, if it isn't dogs or cats … um … I don't know. Rabbits?

Ravi: Nope ... Give up? ... Reptiles. Snakes and lizards and iguanas and things. And insects – spiders are really popular now.

Tess: Yeuk. I'm not sure I could love a spider.

Ravi: Nor me.

Tess: Do you want to know something interesting?

Ravi: Erm, yes.

Tess: Well, Britain was the first country to have an organisation to look after animals. The RSPCA. That's the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. It was started in the nineteenth century when things were bad for animals in Britain – for horses, dogs, all of them. So some people started the RSPCA. But – and this is the important thing – there were no organisations or charities at that time to protect children or babies or people at all.

And life was really hard in the nineteenth century.

Ravi: Wow.

Tess: So people started to say that the British care about animals more than people.

Ravi: But don't you sometimes think it's true? That the British like animals more than people? We give more money to animal charities, like the RSPCA, than to charities for people. That's a fact. And there are lots of programmes about animals on television and stories in the newspapers.

Tess: I know. It's true. And do you know, people who ask for money on the street, well, if they have a dog with them, then they get more money.

Ravi: Ha! Is that true? Money for the dog, but not for the person?

Tess: Yep.

Ravi: So we are crazy about animals. It's true. You'll have to go home and tell Oscar.

Tess: I think he already knows.

Jo and Adam

Adam: Do you have any pets, Jo?

Jo: We've just got some goldfish. Have you got any pets, Adam?

Adam: No, I don't. We had dogs when I was living with my parents, but not any more. I'd like to in the future, but I think it's a lot of work to care for a dog properly.

Jo: Yeah, I live in the country now, so it's fine to have some dogs around. But when I lived in a big city, the dogs used to annoy

me a bit. I don't think that big cities are good places for dogs to live.

Adam: What about where you live? Are people kind to animals? Do people keep pets? Write and tell us. The address is www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish. And now it's time to talk about some of the language that you heard in the podcast.

Jo: That's right. Today we're talking about ways of saying how things are the same or different. Listen to Ravi. What does he want to know?

Ravi: A lot of people believe that the British are crazy about animals. We're often called 'a nation of pet lovers'. But is it true? To begin with – do we have more pets than anyone else?

Jo: He's asking about the number of pets the British have compared to other countries. Listen again. What's the question?

Ravi: A lot of people believe that the British are crazy about animals. We're often called 'a nation of pet lovers'. But is it true? To begin with – do we have more pets than anyone else?

Jo: He said 'Do we have more pets than anyone else?' 'More than'.

Adam: You can say 'He's got more money than me', or 'I like London more than New York'.

Jo: Now listen to the next comparison. British people have a lot of pets ...

Ravi: But there are a lot of other places with as many pets as Britain.

Jo: 'There are other places with as many pets as Britain'. 'As many as'. Britain has a

lot of pets – but other countries have the same number. We use 'as many as' when the thing we're comparing is countable – pets. But we use 'as much as' when we're comparing something uncountable.

Adam: For example 'I want to have as much money as Bill Gates' – I want the same money!

Jo: Now listen to the last way of comparing things.

Tess: Cats and dogs are the most common pets in Britain, right?

Ravi: Well, actually, they now think that the most popular pets in Britain are ...?

Jo: Yes – 'the most common', 'the most popular', 'the most'. Cats are popular, dogs are popular, but reptiles are more popular than cats and dogs – so reptiles are the most popular pets in Britain.

Adam: There are exercises on the website to give you practice with this, and other things, too. And please send us your comments about animals in your country.

Jo: And about your pets.

Adam: We'll read some of them out on the next podcast. See you then! Goodbye!

Jo: Bye!