

1.3 Have you got what it takes?

READING

1 Read the article below. Choose the correct option to complete the sentences.

- 1 *More / Fewer* people in the world speak English as a first language than as a second language.
- 2 According to the article, the way English is used / pronounced has changed a lot in the past thirty years.
- 3 The article says that the culture we come from can affect the way we *study and learn / use words*.
- 4 The article recommends that speakers of English as a second language try to *remember that culture affects communication / learn more about other cultures*.

2 Change one fact or number in each sentence to make them correct.

- 1 About two and a half billion people speak English as a second language. _____
- 2 About 45% of conversations in English include someone whose first language is English. _____
- 3 English learners must be able to speak to people from a few countries. _____
- 4 A person from a very direct culture may not completely understand a person who uses few polite expressions. _____

3  1 6 Listen. Choose the correct answers.

- 1 What makes the speaker feel upset?
 - a His boss asks him to give a presentation.
 - b He is lost in a foreign city.
 - c A colleague laughs at him.
- 2 How does he deal with the difficulty?
 - a He continues what he is doing and takes control of the situation.
 - b He asks the people around him for help.
 - c He gives up and refuses to continue.
- 3 How does the speaker feel after the presentation?
 - a He feels that it is funny.
 - b He's a bit angry.
 - c He never thinks about it.
- 4 Choose the sentence which best explains the situation in Exercise 3.
 - a In most countries, business meetings are very relaxed and making a joke during a meeting isn't rude.
 - b In some cultures, smiling or laughing is a way of showing that you are sharing another person's problem.
 - c In most parts of the world, when you're giving a presentation, making a joke can help the audience to relax.

The changing world of English

About 375 to 450 million people speak English as their native (first) language, but there are 900 million to 1.5 billion non-native English speakers. Experts say that only about 25 per cent of conversations in English involve a native speaker. That means that three quarters of the world's English language communication takes place among speakers of English as a second (or third or fourth) language.

These days, in many areas of work, English is a basic skill, like maths, that everyone needs in order to do their job. This wasn't true twenty or thirty years ago. At that time, English language education in many places prepared students for travel to North America, the UK or Australia. But that's changing. Now that English is a world language, learners need to prepare themselves to communicate with people from all over the world – people who have different accents, and may come from a wide variety of different cultures.

Words, of course, are very important to communication. But many people don't realize that culture also has an

effect on how we communicate. One example is cultural differences regarding politeness. In some languages and cultures, people use polite expressions that have the same meaning as 'please' and 'thank you' far more often than people in many other cultures think is necessary. If someone from a culture that uses a lot of polite expressions (Culture A) speaks English on the phone or attends a meeting with someone from a more direct culture (Culture B), the Culture A speaker may see the Culture B speaker as rude, while the Culture B speaker may feel that the Culture A speaker is, perhaps, not direct enough or maybe even not completely honest.

This doesn't mean that students of English need to learn all about the cultures of the people who they speak English with. However, it does mean that they should try to keep an open mind when using English. They should also try to notice situations where, even though the words are clear, there may be communication problems because of cultural differences.