

# WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

## Qatar's World Cup: Gestures are not enough

World football's governing body should **heed** calls to compensate abused migrant workers.

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There are now less than 40 days to the World Cup in Qatar, which promoters have taken to describing as a tournament "like no other". For once the **hype** is justified, and not only because the matches will be played during the lead-up to Christmas rather than in summer. The decision to stage the planet's biggest sporting event in a country with a notoriously poor human rights record is provoking **unprecedented** discomfort among competing nations.

Last week, in conjunction with the **kit** manufacturer Hummel, the Danish football federation **unveiled** a plain all-black third kit for the tournament. It was designed, said Hummel, in memory of the many migrant workers who died during construction work in the years leading up to the finals. The captains of some European teams aim to wear rainbow "One Love" armbands, symbolising opposition to discrimination in a country where homosexual acts are illegal.

High-profile gestures by companies such as Hummel are far better than nothing at all. But time is running out for the kind of action that could leave a lasting positive legacy from a World Cup that should never have been awarded to these **hosts**. Football is a global

game and a tournament in the Middle East is desirable in principle, but this is not the way.

Qatari authorities claim they have responded to pressure to reform brutally exploitative conditions for migrant workers. Attempts have been made to compensate for unpaid wages and introduce minimum pay. But the latest in a series of investigations, published last month, found that, despite initiatives and reassurances, abusive practices were still **rife** on the ground. Migrant workers at the Al Bayt stadium had been obliged to pay huge illegal recruitment fees and lived for months in unfit, overcrowded accommodation, earning €1 an hour. Elsewhere, labourers spoke of 12-hour **shifts**, six days a week, without proper overtime pay. A climate of fear inhibited many from speaking out about conditions. Migrant workers who have returned home ahead of the World Cup say they were sent back before finishing their contracts or without receiving all they **claim** they were owed.

A recent poll, commissioned by Amnesty International, found huge support for a compensation fund for migrant workers who have been mistreated, and for the relatives of those who have died. Amnesty, along with other human rights groups, are campaigning for Fifa, world football's governing body, to set up such a fund. The amount proposed is \$440m - equivalent to World Cup prize money on offer. After prolonged **hesitation**, the English FA has now backed the principle of a fund, as have high-profile figures in football such as the Dutch national team manager, Louis van Gaal, and the Brazil coach, Tite. Fifa has said it is thinking about it. It's time to stop thinking and act.



Adapted from [this article](#)

by ECP coach

**Kez Kurien**

## Word list

**to heed s.t.:** to pay attention to / take notice of s.t.

**hype:** intensive publicity or promotion

**unprecedented:** never done or known before

**kit:** the clothes used for an activity such as a sport

**to unveil s.t.:** to announce s.t. publicly for the first time

**host(s):** a person, place or organisation that holds an event to which other people are invited

**to be rife:** something (bad) that is quite common

**shift:** one of two or more recurring periods in which different workers do the same job

**to claim (context):** to say that something is true (perhaps without evidence)

**hesitation:** the action of pausing before doing s.t.

## Let's chat about that!

1. Do you like football/sport? Why (not)?
2. How can we prevent countries with bad human rights records hosting (holding/having) world events?
3. Do you think that wearing a rainbow armband will change a nation's discrimination against homosexuality? How? / Why (not)?
4. How would you feel if you earned €1 an hour at your workplace?
5. What do you think about proposals to work 4 days a week on 100% salary? Talk about the pros & cons.
6. Do you work to live or live to work? Discuss.

## Pronunciation: tips for improving

Any English language learner knows that often **spelling** isn't very helpful if we want to know how to correctly say a word. English spelling hasn't evolved much over time, but how we pronounce words has. This makes pronunciation a real challenge for language learners. But good pronunciation is not just 'how words and letters sound'; there are other equally important features to consider, like:

- **intonation** - how the tone of voice changes during a sentence, going up or down
- **stress** - which words and syllables have more 'weight' when we are speaking
- **connected speech** - how words can sound different when they are joined together in natural speech.



All of these features contribute to good pronunciation - but don't confuse them with accent. In the UK, the USA and other English-speaking countries, there are many, many different types of accents, but people with those different accents can all be considered to have correct pronunciation. When you're learning English, you don't have to sound British or American. **Good pronunciation means being**

**understood**; not necessarily sounding like you were born in New York or London. In fact, many native speakers love hearing English spoken with a Spanish, Italian or French accent!

So, how can you work on your pronunciation so that people from all over the world can understand you easily, even if you retain your native accent? Here is this week's tip:

### Pronunciation tip 1

**Listen!** - Listening to examples of **authentic speech** is the most obvious way to improve your own pronunciation. There are lots of ways to do this - watch a film in its original version, listen to podcasts about a topic that interests you in English, even listening to music can help. Try to notice the intonation that people use. You can add to this by 'shadowing', which means listening to a short sentence or phrase, then repeating it, trying to **imitate the sounds, intonation and word stress** and noticing how your mouth and tongue move when you speak.

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