# Learning English with CBC

**Listening Lessons for Intermediate Students  
Based on CBC Manitoba Radio Broadcasts**

**Language Tasks:**

* + - * Answer questions aboutattitudes toward elders across cultures
      * Listen for main ideas in a radio interview with Professor Karl Pillemer about what can be learned from our elders
      * Use vocabulary in context as a strategy
      * Read a text about blogs and complete a cloze exercise
      * Scan the Winnipeg Foundation blog for information
      * Write a comment in response to an entry on a blog
      * Discuss and plan a blog for newcomers about life in Manitoba
      * Write and prepare interview questions for contributors to your blog

**Manitoba Memo**

When people tell their life stories, they offer us a window into their world. We learn about their work, their families, their culture and their communities. Often, we can identify with what they’ve been through. Their experiences may help us make better or different choices in our own lives.

In today’s industrialized world, we have information and advice at our fingertips. We type “how to…” or “advice on…” into our internet search engine and we can find out just about anything. We can find advice on relationships or parenting. We can find out how to cook something or fix or renovate something. We can find out how to look for a job. If someone asks us how we learned to do something we’re apt to say, “I Googled it.”

Sometimes we forget just how much things have changed. At one time, all the information in the world was passed on orally. People’s experiences were told and re-told, from one generation to the next. Cultures and traditions were maintained solely through the spoken word. Historical accounts, when they were finally written down, were based on people’s oral account of what had happened.

A mere one hundred years ago, if you wanted advice on something, you asked your elders. You talked to your parents or grandparents. You sought advice and insights from the older and wiser members of your community. They taught you what they knew. They shared their experiences so that you could learn from them.

Some cultures around the world consider their elders a major asset to their communities. They see them as wise and worthy of respect. They expect children to care for their aging parents and intergenerational living arrangements remain common.

But in other cultures, respect for the life lessons of older people has been lost to some degree. Technology drives our society and sometimes it leaves older people behind. Most elders don’t live with their extended family. In some cases, they may not even live near their extended family. Urban, industrialized society tends to segregate people by age. Seniors often live in housing arrangements with other seniors.

We sometimes forget how much older adults have to offer. We forget how valuable intergenerational advice can be. Our elders have lived through good times and bad times. They have great advice to give based on those experiences.

So how can we bridge the generation gap? Perhaps we can meet each generation half-way by using websites and blogs, the technology of the younger generation, to share the experiences and advice of the older generation. It’s an idea with promise!

**Background**

**1. Think about the following questions**

* How do family members express respect for older people in your culture?
* Have attitudes toward older people/the elderly in your culture changed over time? How?
* What tasks do grandparents perform in the family unit?
* What kinds of homes do the elderly live in? Do aging parents live with other family members?
* What kind of advice/wisdom/ information do older members of your community provide to younger members? How is it provided (e.g. in person, in writing, handed down through generations etc.)

**2. Vocabulary definitions**

Here are some words you need to know to understand the CBC interview.

**Vocabulary**

**elders** The word elders is used to describe people who are older and who deserve respect.

**a generation** A generation is all of the people in the world who are about the same age. For example: There was no TV in my grandparent’s generation.

**wisdom** Someone who is wise or has wisdom has experienced a lot in life and has learned from their experiences. They give good advice and have good judgement.

**an insight into something** An insight is when you experience a sudden or clearer understanding of a topic, an idea, a process etc. For example: During the interview, she gained insight into how difficult life was for him during the war.

**a philosophy of life** Your philosophy of life consists of the attitudes and ideas that guide how you think, behave and act.

**a blog** The word *blog* is an abbreviation for We**b Log**. A blog is similar to a journal. It is a website consisting of a series of posts or writings that are arranged in reverse chronological order. The most recent posts are usually on the home page of the website and older posts are archived.

**a technologically-driven society** A technologically-driven society is one that depends on technology to make it work.

**to hit the nail on the head** This idiom is used when someone understands perfectly or completely what another person has said.

**to lose to some degree** This expression means that you have a little less of something than you had before or you have lost a part of it. For example: Everyone uses a computer these days. The art of handwriting has been lost to some degree because people type almost everything they write.

**to be stratified** When something is stratified, it has layers. When there are different layers or different social classes in a society, that society can be described as stratified.

**to be segregated** Segregation happens when a group of people in society is separated from another by race, age, gender or other factors. For example: Today seniors are sometimes segregated in nursing home, away from the rest of society.

**tried and true advice** If you give someone tried and true advice, you are giving them good, proven advice.

**to struggle with something** When you struggle with something, you try extra hard to achieve a result, even though it is difficult.

**a label** A label is a word or phrase that identifies something or someone. For example: Please be sure to put a label on each box as you pack it. That way we’ll know what’s inside.

**to be credible** A person who is credible is someone who deserves to be trusted and believed. For example: My son’s pediatrician has been a doctor for 20 years. I think he’s a credible source of information on childhood vaccinations.

**to experience hard times** Hard times is an expression which means difficult or trying times. For example: In this economy, people who don’t have a job are experiencing or going through hard times.

**a personal loss** A personal loss is when something bad happens that affects you personally. For example, you experience a personal loss when someone close to you dies.

**to dread something** To dread something is tofeel anxious or worried about something that is going to happen or may happen or to fear that the worst may happen. For example: I’m really dreading getting my English test results back. I don’t think I did very well.

**to figure something out** Figuring something out means solving a problem or trying to discover a way to do something.

**to live in the moment** If you live in the moment, you live each day as it comes and appreciate what it has to offer. You don’t spend too much time worrying about the past or thinking about the future.

**to savour something** If you savour something, you find it interesting or enjoyable. For example: As he listened to the symphony play, he closed his eyes and savoured every note.

**3. Predict what the podcast is about**

In this interview, Terry MacLeod interviews Professor Karl Pillemer. Professor Pillemer interviewed Americans seventy years of age and over to find out what wisdom and practical advice they’d like to offer the younger generation. Can you think of examples of the kind of advice or wisdom the people he interviewed might offer?

*One piece of advice could be*…that it’s important to find a job that you like.

*They could advise us to….*take good care of our health.

*They might suggest…*we try to get the most out of every day.

*They might offer advice* ...that would surprise us.

*They might offer advice*…that we could really take to heart.

**4. Get ready to listen**

In this podcast, you will hear three speakers. You will hear:

Marcy Markusa – host

Terry MacLeod – interviewer

Karl Pillemer – Professor, author and blogger

**5. Listen for spoken language strategies**

When you listen this time, listen for spoken language strategies. Professor Pillemer uses different strategies when he’s speaking, especially in lines 15-24. Here are some examples:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategy** | **Example** | **Line** |
| Gaining time to think by stalling by using fillers or hesitators | *y’know*  *ah…*  *um…* | throughout |
| Self-correction | *the only per people you could go to*  He began to say *per(son)* but changed it to people mid-sentence because he was actually talking about many people, not one person. | 17/18 |
| Reductions | *y’know:* you know  *whaddaya*: what do you | throughout  28 |
| Long, run-on sentences.  In written English, this passage might be two or three sentences. | *And it’s true in our technological society we’ve lost that to some degree and in addition, our society is so dramatically stratified and segregated by age, ah that really, outside of our own families we aren’t around older people so much.* | 15-24 |

**6. Listen for main ideas**

When you listen to the podcast this time, listen for main ideas. Read the statements below and decide if they are true or false. The first one is completed for you as an example.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | The author interviewed 150 Americans. | True | False |
| 2. | His book and blog share insights on life from younger Americans. | True | False |
| 3. | Terry MacLeod wants to know if older people have anything to teach a generation that is so dependent on technology. | True | False |
| 4. | Up until 100 years ago, everyone went to older adults for advice and assistance. | True | False |
| 5. | There’s very little stratification by age in today’s society. | True | False |
| 6. | The author thinks that Terry MacLeod asks very good questions. | True | False |
| 7. | The author had a difficult time deciding how to refer to older adults in his book. | True | False |
| 8. | Older adults know a lot about living through hard times. | True | False |
| 9. | They have survived personal losses, war and poverty and society can learn from their experiences. | True | False |
| 10. | Older adults wish younger people could learn lessons about life at an earlier age than they did. | True | False |
| 11. | Younger people who’ve read the author’s book don’t think it is relevant to their own lives or experiences. | True | False |

**After you Listen**

*a) Review your pre-listening predictions*

Were you able to predict able to predict the kind of advice older people might give the younger generation?

*b) Expressing regret about the past*

Some of the older people Professor Pillemer interviewed had regrets about their lives. There are things they wished they had done differently. Can you express regret about the past?

The following chart shows how we use the *past perfect* and the word *wish* to express regret about past events.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject** | **Wish** | **Subject** | **Past Perfect**  ***had/hadn’t + past participle*** | **Meaning** |
| I | wish | I | *had finished* high school. | (but I didn’t) |
| I | wish | I | *hadn’t dropped out of* high school. | (but I did) |

*Note: For regular verbs, the past participle is formed by adding “ed.” For irregular verbs there is no standard rule. They have to be memorized.*

Can you write sentences to express regret about the past in response to each of the following scenarios?

1. Ruth never finished high school because of the Depression in the 1930’s. She always regretted not completing high school. What does she say to express her regret?  
   I wish I had completed high school.
2. Olive always wanted to be a journalist. But there were few women journalists when she was young. She has always regretted giving up her dream to become a journalist. What does she say to express her regret?  
   I wish \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Herman always had difficulty telling his children how much he loved them. He regrets that he waited until his eighties to tell them how he feels. What does he say to express his regret?  
   I wish \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Ivann always wanted to go back to Russia, but he never did. Now he is in poor health and cannot go. What does he say to express his regret?  
   I wish \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Ilona never married after her finance was killed in World War II. She has always regretted not marrying and having children. What does she say to express her regret?  
   I wish \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_