

A Dutch doctor is being interviewed about his experience of learning and using English.

**Interviewer :** When did you begin learning English?

**Doctor:** I studied medicine in the Netherlands for eight and a half years and I started learning English in middle school with German and French. In my work I travel all over the world - well, now I'm in China only for a few weeks but I have travelled with the Red Cross to most countries in the world.

**Interviewer :** What is the Dutch approach to teaching English in medical school?

**Doctor:** When I was at university all of our teaching was in Dutch but all the textbooks were in English. At that time, there was a movement going on in Holland to make all the teaching in English. I followed this movement very strongly because in my profession it's important to communicate in English. Most of the research done in the world is in English too so I need to be able to understand it to evolve.

**Interviewer :** What was your initial reaction to dealing with medical journals in English?

**Doctor:** It was difficult to read all the time in English and I certainly had a lot to do. I still do today. I think it was difficult also because I didn't know the terms in Dutch either. I was learning the profession. Although, because of the volume of reading I had to do, I soon improved my reading skills. I had to find information quickly but be sure not to miss anything important. This helps me now when I have to do research on the Internet and separate relevant from irrelevant documents.

**Interviewer :** What do you do when confronted with a document that you find difficult to understand?

**Doctor:** I've been a doctor for twenty-five years and a surgeon for ten years so I very rarely have problems with medical documents. However, when I have to read political documents about the country I'm in, which is often the case as I travel to many war zones, I try to understand the gist. So, to do this I look quickly over the articles and take a few notes as I read.

**Interviewer :** Do you sometimes wish you could read English better for your work or is your level sufficient to get by?

**Doctor:** I'm never really happy with my level but it's enough for my work. I think I have to accept it. I have application forms to read and fill out in English and these are a little more complicated as they don't use medical terms.

**Interviewer :** How do you actively improve your English? If you don't is there a reason? Is your current level sufficient for your professional needs?

**Doctor:** At the moment I'm working a lot with Chinese and French people so I am reading a lot in French but soon I am going to Scotland and there I will read more in English. I find the more I read in a foreign language the easier it becomes because you start recognising more words. Basically I can manage in English but I never stop reading so I'm always learning.