

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Know your English

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“Congratulations! I hear you’ve been promoted. Were there many applicants for the job?”

“Yes, but most of the candidates who turned up for the interview weren’t as qualified as me.”

“That was to be expected, I guess. But tell me, shouldn’t it be ‘as qualified as I am’ and not ‘me’? One normally says, Vimal is not as tall as I am.”

“But it’s perfectly acceptable to say, Vimal is not as tall as me. In fact, in everyday conversation, people prefer to use ‘me’ rather than ‘I’. It sounds less formal.”

“I see. Jhansi is not as good looking as me.”

“That’s a good example. But that’s all it is. Everyone knows she is much better looking than you! Tell me, how was your trip to Kolkata?”

“It was great. Did a lot of shopping. What do you think of this new shirt?”

“Of late, you’ve become a clotheshorse!”

“Clotheshorse? What do you mean?”

“Well, when you call someone a clotheshorse, you are suggesting that the individual is obsessed about his clothes. He wants to be seen wearing fashionable clothes, and as a result, spends a lot of money on them.”

“I don’t think I’m a clotheshorse, but my friend Gayathri is.”

“And like her, you too are likely to become a real clotheshorse soon. Anyway, other than shopping, what else did you do in Kolkata?”

“My uncle has a wonderful DVD collection, so I ended up watching a lot of old movies. Saw two of the Goldie Hawn films you had always wanted me to.”

“Didn’t they make you double up with laughter?”

“They made me laugh all right. But what do you mean by ‘double up’ with laughter?”

“Sometimes when we laugh really hard, we bend over. This act of bending over is called ‘double up.’”

“We laugh so much that it begins to hurt. So we are forced to bend over.”

“Exactly!”

“How about this example? One of the clowns was absolutely brilliant. I doubled up every time he came on stage.”

“Sounds good. One can use ‘double up’ in the case of pain as well.”

“When Padma punched me in the stomach, I doubled up in agony.”

“I hope that was only an example!”

“Of course, it was. Poor Padma wouldn’t hurt a fly. Before I forget, thanks for returning the magazines to the library.”

“It was no big deal. Did you ...”

“No big deal? Shouldn’t you have said ‘mention not’?”

“Not really. The standard response to ‘thank you’ is usually ‘my pleasure’ or ‘you’re welcome’. There are other expressions but ...”

“I know. In India, many people tend to say, ‘mention not’, and some ...”

“That’s true. But native speakers of English don’t say ‘mention not’. Not as a response to thank you, anyway.”

“Really? You said ‘no big deal’. What’s the difference between ‘you’re welcome’ and ‘no big deal’?”

“Expressions like ‘no big deal’, ‘no sweat’, ‘no problem’ and ‘any time’ are all considered informal. They suggest that what you did for the person wasn’t very difficult at all.”

“So, when someone says ‘thank you’, can I say, ‘no sweat’ or ‘no big deal’?”

“You can, provided you know the person fairly well. They are used in informal contexts.”

“Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face.” – Victor Hugo

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