

Bastian Sick

Der berühmte Zwiebfischkolumnist und Autor des neuen Werkes „*Wir braten Sie gerne!*“ erzählt von seinen Begegnungen mit der englischen Sprache. easy

What makes English important to you?

English certainly is the language with the biggest impact on German politics, the economy, science and culture. It now has the role that French had until the middle of the 20th century. More and more French words are disappearing from the German language, and English words are taking their place. Today, we say “sorry” and no longer *pardon*, “model” instead of *mannequin*, and very few people still say *mon Dieu*. Most prefer: “Oh, my God!”

When was your first English lesson, and what can you remember about it?

It was at school when I was ten years old. The teacher was a very talented painter, and whenever we didn't understand a new word, he would draw it on the blackboard. We loved him. He asked us to call him Mr Griebel, but we insisted on addressing him as Sir Griebel.

Who is your favourite English-language author, actor or musician?

Authors: the screenwriters of *Desperate Housewives*, *Frasier* and *30 Rock*. Actress: Meryl Streep. Singer: if we put the focus on British English, it's Petula Clark.

Which song could you sing a few lines of in English?

Several hundred! Almost every song by Petula Clark, followed by Frank Sinatra,

Matt Monro, Anne Murray and Helen Reddy — and don't forget ABBA, of course. It was actually Agnetha Fältskog from ABBA who taught me my first English words. Later, I learned that in the beginning, she didn't speak English at all. She sang “Waterloo” phonetically.

Which person from the English-speaking world (living or dead) would you most like to meet and why?

Len Berger, a friend of mine from New York City who died several years ago. He was a smart Jewish guy born in Germany before the Second World War. His mother fled with him to London where, after the outbreak of the war, they were imprisoned in a camp because they were German. He spent seven years in detention camps in England and Canada, where he learned to play the piano. After the war, he emigrated to the United States and became a musician.

Which English word was the hardest for you to learn to pronounce?

Liza Minnelli sang a song called “It's the Strangest Thing”. You can't pronounce that without spitting like a llama and snapping your tongue in two.

Do you practise English, and if so, how?

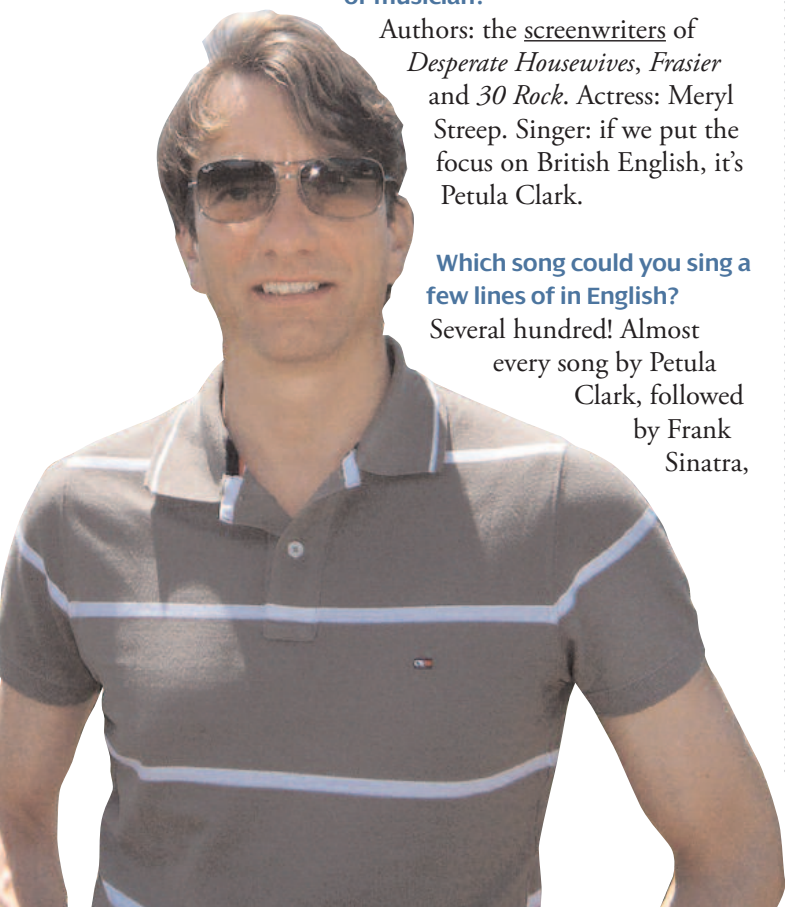
I sing English songs and watch American TV series or movies. By switching between the German and the English original, you can learn a lot about translating humour and puns. And I love the spectacular BBC *Planet Earth* documentaries narrated by David Attenborough.

Is there anything in your home from the English-speaking world?

A tea caddy from the Windsor Castle souvenir shop, a photo taken at the top of the Empire State Building, many CDs bought in the United States and Canada, a sweater from Yellowstone National Park, a toy manatee from SeaWorld in San Diego and a photo of me among the monoliths of Stonehenge. Another photo shows me standing next to the queen, but that's a montage.

What would be your motto in English?

English is the Volkswagen among the universal languages; German is the Rolls-Royce. ■



blackboard [ˈblækbo:d]	Schultafel
detention camp [di'tenʃən ,kæmp]	Gefangenenlager
impact on sth. [ˈɪmpækt ɒn]	Auswirkungen auf etw.
manatee [ˌmænə'ti:]	Manati, Seekuh
narrate [nə'reɪt]	erzählen, kommentieren
pun [pʌn]	Wortspiel
screenwriter [ˈskri:n,raɪtə]	Drehbuchautor(in)
spit [spɪt]	spucken
tea caddy [ˈti: ,kædi]	Teedose