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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## 6 Minute English

### You think you're invisible?



*This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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**Neil**

Welcome to 6 Minute English, the programme where we explore an interesting topic and bring you six items of useful vocabulary. I'm Neil.

**Dan**

And I'm Dan.

**Neil**

Now, Dan, have you ever wanted to become **invisible**?

**Dan**

**Invisible** – impossible to see. Of course! Who hasn't?

**Neil**

Well how about this: most of us think we *are* in fact invisible, at least some of the time... We'll be looking at the '**invisibility cloak illusion**' in this programme.

**Dan**

Fascinating. And in that phrase we heard our first three words. **Invisibility** – the state of being **invisible**. A **cloak** is a long piece of material worn like a coat around the shoulders.

**Neil**

And the third word in that phrase – an **illusion** – is something that seems real but isn't.

**Dan**

OK, question time. Which of these stories features an **invisibility cloak**? Is it...

a) The Hobbit

b) Harry Potter

Or c) The Invisible Man

**Neil**

I know they are all connected to invisibility, but I'm gonna say... a) The Hobbit.

**Dan**

Ok – we'll reveal the answer later on. Now, let's hear more about this **invisibility cloak illusion**. What's the theory, Neil?

**Neil**

Right – imagine you're sitting in a crowded train. People are busy looking at phones and books, but they're also looking at each other.

**Dan**

They're 'people-watching', as we call it. Yes. Yes, I do that. I do it a lot, if I'm honest!

**Neil**

So – where does the **invisibility** part come in?

**Dan**

A team of scientists from Yale University did some experiments on this. Commenting on the research here is neuroscientist Dr Catherine Loveday from Westminster University. What did the Yale team find?

**INSERT**

**Dr Catherine Loveday, Neuroscientist, Westminster University**

So this study, they asked people that, first they did a survey and they asked people sat in a canteen how much they were watching somebody, and how much they thought those people were observing them. And there was always a **mismatch**. People always thought they were more observational than the people who were watching them.

**Dan**

So, people think they observe others more than others watch them. Everyone thinks they aren't observed very much - it's almost as if they're **invisible** to others – or wearing an **invisibility cloak**!

**Neil**

And the difference between how much they are actually being watched and *think* they're being watched is what she called a **mismatch**. It's the difference between two things – they're two things which don't 'match'.

**Dan**

In other words – it's not true that people aren't watching us – which is why the idea of having an **invisibility cloak** is just an **illusion**. This next bit is interesting. Two people were asked to wait in a room. Then they were each asked to make two lists: one, what they noticed about the other person; and two, what *they thought* the other person noticed about them.

**Neil**

So list one was always longer than list two. Not only that – but there was also an important difference in the content of the lists.

**Dan**

Let's hear again from neuroscientist Dr Catherine Loveday. What was the difference?

**INSERT**

**Dr Catherine Loveday, Neuroscientist, Westminster University**

When people are observing you they're doing it in a non-**judgemental**, fairly empathic way – and not actually noticing the things that you're **self-conscious** about. So if for example you feel **self-conscious** about a spot on your nose, or something that you're wearing, that won't be what they're noticing. It's a much less **judgemental** form of observation.

**Neil**

Right, so even if we're feeling **self-conscious** about something – that means feeling extra aware of an aspect of ourselves – maybe our appearance or our clothes – we needn't be.

**Dan**

Yes, you don't need to feel **self-conscious**. People aren't being **judgemental**.

**Neil**

And being **judgemental** means being critical.

**Dan**

That's good news. So even though all I'm thinking about is how badly I need a haircut, the other person is probably noticing something completely different. Back to the question about the **invisibility cloak**. Which story is it in?

**Neil**

I said The Hobbit.

**Dan**

And it was in fact – Harry Potter. Not only does the garment make you impossible to see, it also protects you against magic spells.

**Neil**

Wow – I need one of those!

**Dan**

In The Hobbit, it's a ring that makes you **invisible**, and in The **Invisible Man**, the main character uses chemicals to achieve the same effect.

**Neil**

Now, before we become **invisible** ourselves, how about we go through today's words?

**Dan**

Marvellous. First we had **invisible** – which means impossible to see. You could say that stars are **invisible** during the day.

**Neil**

They're only visible at night.

**Dan**

We also had **cloak** – who would wear a cloak? Maybe a king or a monk? Or maybe you, Neil?

**Neil**

I'm sure I could look good in a **cloak** – that's a long piece of material worn over the shoulders. What about **illusion**?

**Dan**

**Illusions** appear to be true, but they're not. It can describe an idea: you could say a politician has the **illusion** that everything he says is true. Then we had **mismatch** – which can refer to the difference between two things which perhaps should be similar: there's a **mismatch** between what Michael says and what he does.

**Neil**

Who's Michael?

**Dan**

Just an example! You could also say that Michael and Simone are an unlikely couple – they seem very different – they're a bit of a **mismatch**.

**Neil**

What is it with you and Michael?! One, he doesn't exist, and two, I think you're being **judgemental**.

**Dan**

Well, I'm criticising him so, yeah, you're right – I'm being **judgemental**. Perhaps I should stop. It's just that... it's just that I'm in love with Simone myself, and I get all nervous and **self-conscious** when I see her.

**Neil**

You mean you become embarrassed about what she might think of you – you become **self-conscious**?

**Dan**

I do.

**Neil**

Even though she doesn't exist either?

**Dan**

Well, only in my examples. Sometimes I wish I really did have an **invisibility cloak**.

**Neil**

Hey, hang on, Dan - where have you gone?

**Dan**

Haha – very funny, I'm still perfectly visible. Time to go – but do visit our Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube pages, and of course our website!

**Neil**

Goodbye for now.

**Both**

Bye!