**24. The countries whose language I am learning**

**English speaking countries – language, inhabitants (obvyvatelia), stereotypes, conventions, customs (obyčaje**)

English is one of the most widespread (rozšírený) languages in the world. It is the first language (**mother tongue** – materinský jazyk) for most inhabitants of the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. There are a great number of countries where English is spoken as a second language, for example by immigrants. For tourists, who come to an English-speaking country, English is a foreign (cudzí) language. The English language has become a language of international communication in business, science and politics. English is used in many different countries in the world. These countries share the same language (or its variations), but every one of them has its own traditions and habits. English is also used within many international organizations, although (hoci) it is only one of the many official languages of the European Union.

Great Britain consists of England, Wales, and Scotland. *Together with Northern Ireland it forms the United Kingdom*. It includes (zahŕňa) four nations: the *English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish* people. They all differ (odlišujú sa) in their way of life, customs, values (hodnoty) and traditions.

The **British** people are said to be **reserved** (zdržanlivý, odmeraný, rezervovaný) **in their manners** (spôsoby, správanie), dress and speech (reč). Other nations (národy) often say that they are **conservative** and **stick to traditions** (držia sa tradícií). They are famous (sú známi) for their **politeness** (zdvorilosť), **self-discipline** (sebadisciplína, sebaovládanie), **reliability** (spoľahlivosť) and for their **specific sense of humor**. They **never seem to be in a hurry** (sa neponáhľajú). These features (črty) of British manners are often seen as typical, but it does not mean that all the British people are actually like that. Many British people are not conservative at all. There are big differences in manners between individuals (jednotlivcami) within (v rámci) one nation.

On the other hand, there are habits (zvyky) and customs (obyčaje) which characterise many Brittish people. It is true that the British people **rarely** (zriedkakedy) **shake hands** (potriasť rukou) when they meet, except (okrem) when being introduced (sú predstavovaní) to someone for the first time. It is also true that British people are very **fond of animals and sports**. Football is the national sport and it is on TV almost (takmer) every day. They are also fond of (zaujímajú sa) cricket, rugby, golf, tennis and horse racing. Most of the British people like to spend their summer holidays at the seaside (pri mori), often in Spain or France.

Many British **women** work now, rather than (než by) stay at home and do the housework (robiť domáce práce). The role of women has changed and many British women have their own careers (kariéry). The husband and the wife share the housework (sa delia o domáce práce) and also the responsibility (zodpovednosť) for the education of their children. Young people in Britain have their own interests (záujmy), lifestyle and special youth culture (kultúru mladých). Those who leave school at 16 and get their first jobs are already independent (nezávislí). They have their own money to spend on CDs, DVDs, clothes or entertainment (zábavu). Teenagers, who stay at school until the age (do veku) of 18, preparing to go to college or university, often take job in a shop or babysit to have some more pocket money (vreckové). Saturday night is the most popular night of the week and people go out to parties or to a disco with friends. Going to the cinema is very popular among young people. They do not go to the theatre very often.

**Scotland** is a country where special traditions are kept (kde sa dodržiavajú zvláštne tradície), such as playing *bagpipes* (hra na gajdy) and *wearing kilts* (typical knee-length skirts for both men and women) There are special meals which are prepared only in Scotland. Scotland is known for its Scotch whisky, there are many whisky distilleries (liehovarov) with a long tradition. The Scottish people speak various dialects of English or Gaelic – their original ancient (staroveký) language.

**Wales** is rich in culture and history. The Welsh people are known (sú známi) for their love of music and poetry. Welsh people speak English and Welsh, which is a Celtic language and very different from English.

**Northern Ireland** (also known as Ulster) occupies (zaberá) the northern fifth (severnú pätinu) of the island of Ireland and is a part of the United Kingdom. Most of the country is rural (vidiecka) and over half of the population (viac ako polovica obyvateľstva) is Protestant. **The Republic of Ireland** (also known as Eire) is an independent state and is mostly Catholic. The life of the people and the politics of Northern Ireland has been dominated (sú ovládané) by religious (náboženskými) and economic problems. The Catholics want Northern Ireland to join (pridať sa) the Republic of Ireland but the Protestants want to remain (zostať) part of the UK. There are still conflicts between Protestants and Catholics accompanied by (sprevádzané) by civil unrests (občianskymi nepokojmi) and terrorist attacks (teroristickými útokmi).

The **Irish** people are said to be very similar to the Slovaks. They are hospitable (pohostinní), friendly, they like music and dancing. Music is their national passion. Drinking plays an important part in their culture. Social life (spoločenský život) concentrates in pubs where live musis is very common (bežná).

**The USA**: Besides *English,* which is the official language, the people of the USA speak their *minority* (menšina, menšinový) and *immigrant languages* e. g. Spanish is an important language, especially (obzvlášť) in the southern states. The image (obraz) of an American is often based on what people see most often – American tourists. They think Americans are loud (hluční), extremely self-confident (sebaistí), fat and dressed in tasteless (nevkusný) clothes. These stereotypes are usually changed when the people get to know (spoznajú) Americans better. They are open, friendly, hard-working, independent and self-reliant (sebestačný). Another image of Americans is the result (je výsledkom) of movies (filmov) and advertising (reklamy). They show Americans as rich people, who live in luxurious houses, spend most of their time at parties and drive expensive cars. America is a wealthy (bohatá) country and Americans enjoy one of the *highest standards of livin*g (sa tešia z jednej z najvyšších životných úrovní) in the world, but there is a high level (ale je tam vysoká úroveň) of poverty (biedy) in many cities. Parents teach their children the independence (učia deti nezávislosti) from an early childhood (od skorého detstva). From the age of 16 they can drive a car and many teenagers have their own car. Each member of a typical American family has his/her own car. Students drive to school and colleges, adults to work. They like travelling and they often drive long distances (často cestujú na veľké vzdialenosti) across the country, especially during the holidays to visit their friends and relatives (príbuzných). Americans do not usually live in the same town all their lives. They like to move. It is not unusual (nie je nezvyčajné) for families to move house or to go to live in another town or state more than once every ten years. Nowadays, Americans have started to take care of their health. They do some sport, eat healthier food, smoke less and drink less alcohol. Smoking is banned (zakázané) in public places in several (niekoľkých) big cities.

**United Kingdom** (Spojené kráľovstvo)

Its official name is The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is situated on the British Isles (ostrovoch) and separated from the Europe by the North Sea and English Channel. It is an island country. Its area is about 245000 square kilometres (štvorcových kilometrov). **CLIMATE**: It has got mild and rainy climate and is influenced by the Gulf Stream (je ovplyvnené golfským prúdom), so it is quite warm, but it rains very often. It has 4 parts: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. There are 2 large islands (ostrovy): Great Britain and Ireland and some smaller ones e.g. Isle of Wight, Isle of Man. The longest **rivers** are the **THAMES** (Temža) which runs through London and the **SEVERN**, which is the longest one and rises (pramení) in Wales. The best known lakes are in the Lake District and Loch Lomond and Loch Ness in Scotland. **SURFACE**: Great Britain is a flat country. It has not got high mountains – the highest peak (štít) is Ben Nevis in the Scottish Highlands (v Škótskej Vysočine). Other mountains are Cornish Heights in the south west of England, the Cambrians in Wales, The Cumbrian Mountains in the Lake District, the Pennines… GB has about 57 million inhabitants (obyvateľov); there are 4 ethnic groups: English, Irish, Welsh and Scottish. Majority of people speak English. GB is a constitutional monarchy (konštitučná monarchia) with the Queen Elizabeth II as the head of the state (na čele štátu). The UK is governed by the Cabinet with 20 ministers and the Prime minister. The official residence of Prime Minister is DOWNING STREET 10. The British Parliament consists of the House of Lords (snemovňa lordov) and the House of Commons (dolná snemovňa) and is one of the oldest in the world. Main political parties in Britain are the Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats. UK is an industrial country. Major industries include iron (železiarstvo), steel engineering (oceliarstvo), textiles, plastics, cotton (bavlnársky priemysel), chemicals, wool, shipbuilding (stavba lodí) and food processing (potravinárstvo). Wheat (pšenica), barley (jačmeň), oats (ovos), potatoes, sugar beet (cukrová repa), milk and meat are the chief agricultural products (hlavné poľnohospodárske výrobky). Territorially (územne), Britain is divided into counties ([ˈkaʊntɪ] grófstva). The capital of the whole Britain is London. The capital of Wales is Cardiff; Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland and Belfast of the Northern Ireland. Other big cities are Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester, etc. Oxford and Cambridge are the old university towns. Stratford-upon-Avon is the birthplace of Shakespeare. The English countryside (vidiek) is full of peaceful (pokojné) harbour towns (prístavné mestá) with fishing boats (rybárskymi člnkami), yachts, cottages (chalupami) and the English like to spend their holiday there. The flag is called Union Jack and consists of 3 red and white crosses on the blue background.

**London**: (parts: the City, Westminster, the West End, Kensington, Chelsea, Soho…) It is a city full of traditions, historical buildings, monuments, theatres, parks and museums. It is the biggest city in Europe. The *City* is the oldest part of London. It is the biggest financial and commercial centre of Europe. London lies on the banks of the River Thames.

**Sights/historical buildings/monuments/places of interest**: On *the River Thames*, there is the Tower Bridge which rises in the middle to let ships to pass up the river. The Tower of London – It was a fortress, a royal palace and a prison in the past. Nowadays it is a museum of weapons and arms (zbraní) and the place where the crown jewels are kept. It is London’s top tourist attraction. There are many beautiful churches in London and St. Paul’s Cathedral is the greatest of English churches. It is known for its whispering gallery. It was built by Sir Christopher Wren. Palace of Westminster (know as Houses of Parliament) is the seat of the British Parliament. There is also a famous clock tower – Big Ben that is famous for its accuracy and for its 13 ton bell. Buckingham palace is the London residence of the British royal family. Outside the Buckingham Palace the changing of Guard takes place. The most famous shopping street in London is Oxford Street. Other streets known for their shops and entertainment are Piccadilly (the busiest and noisiest place in London, it is regarded as the centre of entertainment with its theatres, cinemas, night clubs and restaurants), Bond Street, and Regent Street. Trafalgar Square (Trafalgarské námestie) with the statue of Admiral Nelson is one of the largest London squares. There are many galleries (National gallery and National Portrait gallery – house paintings by famous painters, Tate gallery – modern paintings), museums - the British Museum, London Dungeon (hladomorňa) – horror museum, etc. Madam Tussaud’s is famous for its waxwork of famous people. London has a large number of parks and gardens e.g. St. James’s Park, Hyde Park known for its speaker’s corner and Kensington gardens.