



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 36

TOPICS

Popular words in the U.S. media, People Magazine's “Sexiest Man Alive,” to make a spectacle of yourself, to go berserk, basically, I'm whooped, doozy, fault vs. defect vs. error, David versus Goliath.

GLOSSARY

global warming – an increase in the Earth's temperature caused by changes in the atmosphere

* The report said that having so many cars on the road is part of the reason for global warming.

avian flu – a deadly sickness that you can get from contact with certain birds; also called “bird flu”

* Avian flu is spreading to countries on every continent.

aight – alright; not great, but not bad, either (slang)

* When I asked him how school was today, he said “aight.”

mad – very; a lot of (slang)

* She has mad money.

brill! – brilliant!; excellent, very good, great (slang; British English)

* Did you see that game? It was brill!

's'up – what's up? what is new with you? (slang)

* 'S'up? Are we going to the club tonight or what?

VoIP – Voice over Internet Protocol (Internet telephone)

* Since I got VoIP, I pay a lot less for long distance.

emoticon – an icon on email or a website that has a face, such as a smiley face

☺ or a sad face =(

* I hate it when I get an email with 50 emoticons in it!



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to make a spectacle of yourself – to embarrass yourself in public; to do something that will make people laugh at you or consider you strange
* Stop making a spectacle of yourself or I'm telling everybody that I don't know you.

to go berserk – to go wild, to lose control
* When I told him that we had lost all of our money, he went berserk.

basically – used to give a summary of an idea or to express your idea in a simple and direct way
* I basically go to the same place for a vacation every year.

to be whooped – to be defeated very badly by someone else in a game or contest
* We were whooped by their team for the third year in a row.

doozy – an adjective used to describe something that is very surprising, strange, or bizarre
* They told me a doozy of a story about how they spent their summer vacation.

fault – mistake or error; can also mean blame
* There is a fault in his argument.

defect – when there is a flaw in something, usually something physical
* I didn't notice the defect in the machine until I got it back to the factory.

error – mistake or fault
* The government office made an error on my new passport.



ENGLISH LEARNING TIPS

How many times should you listen to a podcast or other audio recording? Is once enough? Twice? Three times?

Listening to the same recording more than once can be helpful if there are things in the recording that you don't understand. After listening one time, you get a general idea of what is happening. This helps you understand even more the second time you listen. A third listening may help you if there are still several things you don't understand.

There is no rule about how many times you should listen to the same recording. The aim is to understand what is being said. You should stop listening if you are bored or understand everything you want to understand. Most people find that if the recording is difficult, it can help to listen at least two or three times (some will listen even more). But you should do what you find comfortable and useful. You may, for example, want to listen without the transcript the first time, then with the transcript the second time, reading along to see what you missed.



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café Number 36.

This is the English Café Episode 36. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

On today's cafe, we're going to talk about some popular buzz words in English. A "buzz word" is a popular word, a word that many people are using. We're also going to talk about People Magazine, a famous magazine here in the United States and a list of the most sexy man and woman alive. Sounds interesting. And as always, we'll answer a few questions. Let's get started.

I was surfing the Internet yesterday. And, of course, "to surf the Internet" means to be looking at different websites. And, I found a website that had popular words that are being used in the United States in 2005 and 2006, words that are used on the television, or in movies, or in the newspaper. And, it had a list of these different words, different kinds of words. I thought it would be fun to talk about some of these popular terms, popular expressions that are in the news and in...on the television. They had a couple of different lists. One of them was for political words or political terms. And some of the words that they had, or the terms they had, were: "climate change," "climate change." The climate, of course, is the weather. And there's been a lot of talk about something called "global warming" - global comes from the word "globe" which means the whole earth, the earth; and "warming," of course, is when the temperature goes up. And there are many scientists who are worried that we have a problem with global warming, that the temperature on the earth is going up. So, "climate change" and "global warming" are two words that you see a lot in the news here in the United States.

Another one, of course, is "avian flu" or "bird flu." "Bird" and "avian" are, are the same. Avian flu is, of course, the disease that, unfortunately, has killed some people in different countries that is...comes from, we believe it comes from different types of birds. And, of course, that is a potential problem that people are worried about. Another word, political word, that you see a lot in the news is "insurgency." "Insurgency" is I-N-S-U-R-G-E-N-C-E - and this describes essentially people in a country who are trying to overthrow or take over the



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government by violent means, by using violence. And of course, the situation in Iraq right now has led to many different groups of insurgents. An “insurgent” would be the person; an “insurgency” is the movement or the, the cause of these people who are trying to change the way the government is working or not working.

So, those are some of the political words. They also had an interesting list on this website of slang words that are being used by high school students and college students. These are words, of course, that change every year. And they change, sometimes, very quickly. With the Internet, of course, it's very easy for these words to spread. And when we say “to spread,” we mean to become popular in different places. Different people hear about them. And there are Internet websites that make these words more known to other people, or better known to other people. Some of the words they had on their list... One of them is “aight,” “aight” which is short for “alright.” Someone says, “Eh, he was aight, he was aight.” It means he was alright, he was pretty good. It's, it's again a slang expression. Another slang word being used now, according to this website, is “mad” M-A-D - to mean “a lot.” “She has mad money,” means she has a lot of money. Again, I would never say that, but that's something that some high school and college students are saying. Another one from England, from the United Kingdom, is “brill,” “brill” which is short for “brilliant.” And in England, they use the word “brilliant” to mean great or excellent. We don't use that in that way here in the United States, but it is very popular in Great Britain, and the short form of that would be “brill.”

Finally, they, they have one that is also very popular here in the United States and that is, “s'up.” “S'up.” Well, “s'up” is a short form of “what's up,” meaning what's going on, what's happening. But, instead of saying, “what's up,” we just say, or younger speakers just say, “s'up.” “S'up?” “Hey, Bob, s'up?” means, what's up, what's going on? Again, these are very popular among younger speakers, high school and college-age speakers.

Finally, they had a list of technology words that are popular now. One of those is “VOIP” - Voice Over Internet Protocol. And that just means the ability to be able to talk on the Internet, like talking on the phone to someone. Most people I know pronounce this by saying, V-O-I-P. They don't normally say “VOIP,” even though you could pronounce it that way. It's mostly, I think, pronounced “V-O-I-P.” Another popular technology word is “emoticon.” This is an Internet term and an emoticon is when you put a little, for example, smiley face in your e-mail or on a



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website, or you can put a sad face, or all sorts of different little pictures on a website or even in your e-mail. These are called emoticons. It comes from two words, “emotion” and “icon.” “Emotion,” of course, is whether you're happy or sad and so forth. An “icon” is a little button that you see on a website that usually represents or stands for something. Usually, if you have an icon, it, it stands for a computer program. And if you, if you click on it, if you hit it, that computer program will open up, will start running. So, an emoticon are these little smiley faces and so forth that you find on websites, especially blogs and e-mail. So, those are some of the popular words that are being used in the United States.

Our next topic has to do with one of the most popular magazines in the United States...popular magazines...is called People. And People has been around, they've, they've been publishing, for probably 25, 30 years. I was in high school, I think, when they started publishing. So, it couldn't have been 25 years. Yeah, that's about right.

Well, anyway, People Magazine is a gossip magazine. And, and “gossip,” of course, means that people are telling stories about, usually, famous people. We would call that celebrity gossip. A “celebrity” is a famous person. So, you can read about Madonna or Britney Spears or Tom Cruise, the actor. So, actors and singers and sometimes, podcasters, too, you'll see talked about in People. And this magazine, every year, has a list of the most beautiful people, the best-looking, the most attractive. And they call this list the - for, for men - “The Sexiest Men Alive.” And “sexiest” means the most sexy, the most attractive, physically attractive. Actually, I, I'm reading here I think People started in 1974, so that's more than 30 years ago. Well, they have this list and I thought it would be fun to look at some of the people who are on this list.

The first person they named, back in 1985, is Mel Gibson. And you may know Mel Gibson is famous for a couple of different movies. He won an Oscar, he won a prize, for Braveheart, which was a very good movie, back in, I think, 1990, '91. And he had a very famous movie two years ago called The Passion of the Christ about Jesus Christ, the founder of the Christian religion. Well, he was considered in 1985 to be the sexiest man alive, the first person to be given that title. Some of the other people who have won include Sean Connery. Sean Connery is the actor who used to play James Bond in the movies, the, what we would call the double-07 (007) movies. These, these were spy movies about a British spy.



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Let's see, who else do we have here - Brad Pitt won in 1995. And Brad Pitt, of course, is now, well, used to be with Jennifer Aniston, the actress from Friends. And now he is with Angelina Jolie. So, in case you haven't been reading the news... Denzel Washington won in 1996. And Denzel Washington is a famous actor. He is the only African-American actor, person, ever to be put on this list.

And so, there are, of course, other winners. Let's see, uh, Ben Affleck won in 2002 and actor Johnny Depp, also an actor, won in 2003. Usually, it's an actor. And, of course, they also have most beautiful women. And lots of different names on that list, as well. Jennifer Aniston, we mentioned before. The 2006 winner of the Sexiest Man Alive, I think, well, I don't want to give away any secrets here from Hollywood, but I heard a rumor that it might be...Jeff McQuillan from ESL Podcast. (Thank you, thank you very much.) No, no chance of that happening, at all. So anyway, people know about this list. It's a very famous list. As I say, they also have women list, what they call the Most Beautiful People list. There are lots of famous actresses on that list, as well. So that's a little bit of American culture. People talk about the "sexiest man alive list," they mean, the list from this magazine called People.

Now, let's answer a few questions. Our first question comes from Ana in Germany. Ana has a couple of questions, a couple of expressions she wants to have defined. One of them is "to make a spectacle of myself." A "spectacle"...a "spectacle" is normally a show, a very big and fancy or elaborate show that someone puts on. But, when we say, "to make a spectacle of myself," they mean to, we mean to embarrass ourselves, to do something that would make someone look at you, and that you would find embarrassing. They may laugh at you or think you are ridiculous. So, for example, if you went to a wedding of a good friend, and instead of putting on a suit, you decided that you would come in your bathing suit, with no shirt and no shoes. And you walk in to the wedding, people would look at you and they may say, "He's making a spectacle of himself." He's embarrassing himself by doing something stupid in public. So, it's normally a negative expression when we say "he made a spectacle of himself" or "I made a spectacle of myself." I did something to embarrass myself in public. Another question Ana has is with the expression "to go berserk," "berserk" is spelled B-E-R-S-E-R-K although many people pronounce it "b'zerk," instead of "ber-zerk." "To go berserk" means to go crazy, to be out of control, to be acting in a wild way. Usually, this is when someone gets very angry. For example, "I went into the post office and the person next to me went berserk." He started throwing papers. He was yelling. These are all examples of someone who goes berserk. It means



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to go, to become very wild, to do things, perhaps even violent things, to other people, “to go berserk.” So, that is the same, sort of, as to go crazy. Thank you, Ana, for your questions.

Next question comes from Etienne in France. The question has to do with the use of the word “basically.” Well, the most common use of the word “basically” is when you are trying to tell someone something in a simple way or in a short way. You are going to tell someone the most important thing about the topic you are talking about or the most essential thing. “Essential” - the most important. For example, you are talking to your friend about the bad trip that you had going to San Francisco. It wasn't very good and you'll say, “Well, basically, I had a terrible time.” You're giving a summary, you're giving the most important piece of information. And I use that expression, I'm sure, a lot in the podcast, when I'm trying to summarize, give the most important piece of information. So, basically, “basically” means to give the most important meaning or most important information about a topic.

Our next question comes from Jay in Hong Kong. Jay wants to know the meaning of the expression, “I'm whooped.” Well, I have never heard that expression, but I can guess what it means. The verb, “to whoop” usually means to defeat, to beat someone in a game or competition. Usually, it means to beat someone by a very big score. So, if we say, for example, that the American soccer team was “whooped” by the Brazilian soccer team...I don't know, just about any other soccer team, probably. When we say that “they are whooped,” we mean that they were whooped by them, they were beaten by them, they were defeated by them by a very large score. I should say that this is an informal use of the word. It is sort of a slang use of the word. There is another meaning of the verb “to whoop” which means to yell or to shout when you are very happy or excited. “They won the game and they began to whoop.” They began to yell and scream and say things because they were very happy and excited. But in this case, I believe, it is the more informal use, which would mean “to beat” or “defeat.”

Going back over to Germany now, I have a question from Uwe. And the question has to do with something that Uwe saw in the movie, Groundhog Day, which was a very funny movie a few years ago that had Bill Murray as the star. And it was a very interesting movie. Well, there's an expression in the movie where one of the characters says, “Watch the first step. It's a doozy.” “Doozy” is usually spelled d-o-o-z-y. Sometimes, you'll see it spelled d-o-o-z-i-e. But, in either case, doozy is



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a very difficult situation or something that may cause you a lot of problems. It is, however, an old word, an old expression, not as common today as it was probably 50 years ago. But, you will still hear it every once in a while. In this case, the character is saying, “Watch the first step. It’s a doozy,” meaning, the first step on a, on a stairs might be very difficult, it might be a very big step. And so, if you are not careful you could fall. We use that expression “it’s a doozy” for, for something that is difficult often, or something that would cause a problem. You might even say, for example, “We had a big storm yesterday; it rained a lot. It was a doozy of a storm” - means it was a very big storm that caused a lot of problems.

Our next question comes from Dmitri, also in Germany. Dmitri wants to know the differences between the expressions or the words “fault,” “defect,” and “error.” All of these mean something related to making a mistake. And they’re used in different cases. When we talk about that there is a fault in something, usually we’re talking about, for example, someone’s argument; there’s a mistake in their logic, in their reasoning. You may say, “Your argument is faulty”; it has problems, it has mistakes in it. You could also say that they were errors in your argument. An “error” is a mistake that someone makes. Usually, it’s a smaller thing. It’s something that, for example, you make a spelling error or you forget to pay your electricity bill; you made an error. It’s not a big problem, usually. It could be, but when I use it, when I think about it, I think of it as a smaller issue. A defect is usually something that is wrong with the way something is made, a physical defect. And again, that’s a mistake. “The company who made, which made my computer forgot to put the keyboard on it.” That would be a defect. And that is again, a mistake, but it’s usually a mistake with something physical. We probably wouldn’t say, “there’s an error in my computer.” We wouldn’t say, “there’s a fault in my computer.” We’d say, “there’s a defect,” because again, it’s the way something is made. Probably would not say defect for an argument, however. We’d say, “there’s a fault in the argument” or “there’s an error in the argument.” For things that are smaller, like spelling or grammar, we would call those errors, not faults or defects. So, it depends on the context, what you are talking about, which of these words you would use.

Our final question comes from Cliff in Shanghai, China. Cliff wants to know what the expression, “David versus Goliath,” means. David, like the name David, versus Goliath. Well, this is actually a story from the Bible, the book of Christians. It’s actually from the Old Testament, so it’s from the Jewish scriptures, as well. The story is that when Saul was king of the Israelites, king of



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Israel - this is of course many thousands of years ago - that they were fighting another group. And the biggest warrior, the biggest soldier of this other group, his name was Goliath. And he was huge, he was supposed to be very tall and very strong. And the Israelites had a soldier who was called David. And King Saul sent David to fight this big, this big soldier named Goliath. And of course, everyone thought that David, who was much smaller, was going to get whooped, was going to get defeated. However, David took a “slingshot”--and a slingshot is when you take like a, a rubber band, a elastic band and you put a rock and you pull it back and it, it, it projects forward; so, it's a type of weapon to throw a rock at someone else. Well, he used the slingshot to kill Goliath. And everyone, of course, then thought that David was a hero. And eventually, he became the king of Israel. Well, the expression, “David and Goliath” or “David versus Goliath” is used now to mean when you have a small or weak person fighting a very large or big person. It could be a small company trying to sell more than a big company. And the idea is that they win, even though they are smaller or weaker. They defeat the larger person or the larger company, whatever happens to be the situation. So, thank you, Cliff, for that question.

Remember to visit our website at eslpod.com for the complete script of this English Café, as well as additional information. From Los Angeles, California, I am Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on the English Café.

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