



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 37

TOPICS

Topics: Mother's Day and Father's Day, Seattle, TV show 24, should be going vs. should go, spur of the moment, slam dunk, relatively vs. extremely vs. tremendously, angry vs. mad vs. upset, off-the-shelf

GLOSSARY

gloom – sad or dark

* Her face was full of gloom when she heard the bad news.

greeting card – a card given to someone to celebrate a special day or event

* We need to buy greeting cards for Dan's birthday and Lara's graduation.

pacifist – someone who doesn't believe in violence or war; someone who thinks that disagreements can be settled in peaceful ways

* Some pacifists went to jail because they refused to fight in the war.

suburbs – an area outside a city; usually a residential housing area

* A lot of people work in the city and live in the suburbs.

motherhood – the idea of being a mother; to be a mother

* She decided not to have children yet because she's not sure if motherhood is right for her.

fictitious – not real, not true

* In the novel, the town where the story takes place is fictitious.

to uncover – to discover; to find out the truth

* The reporter wants to uncover the real reason the vice president left his job.

spur of the moment – suddenly, without planning or warning

* My neighbor decided to take a trip to Pusan on the spur of the moment.

slam dunk – when a basketball player jumps to reach the level of the ring and puts the ball into the basket; something that is sure to happen

* I did well at the job interview. I think that the job is a slam dunk.



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extremely – very, very much

* They were extremely happy when their son finally graduated from college.

relatively – in comparison to other things

* He's a relatively good soccer player but I don't think he'll ever play in the World Cup.

upset – unhappy; angry; worried

* They were upset when they get home from their vacation and found that their dog had run away.

off-the-shelf – something that is already made

* I needed a suit quickly so I bought this one off-the-shelf.

ENGLISH LEARNING TIPS

To be a good language learner, it helps to think of yourself as an actor. A British writer, Julian Symons, wrote that an actor is someone “who is not embarrassed and awkward on the stage, but finds it the easiest thing in the world to speak words that are not his own.”*

When you're speaking English, it may sometimes feel like the words are strange and you don't feel comfortable saying them. When I say being an actor is helpful, I don't mean that you really should become an actor. I mean that you should *think* like one. When you speak English, try to see yourself in the new “role” – the new person you are trying to be. This person is a good English speaker, someone who feels confident and comfortable speaking the language. Over time, you will become more and more like this person and it will become more natural to be in this role. This confidence will help you learn more English and to speak it with more ease.

*(1990). [Dearth's Darkest Face](#). New York: Penguin.



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café Number 37.

This is the English Café Episode Number 37. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

On this Café, we're going to talk about Mother's Day and Father's Day celebrations here in the United States. We will be looking at another American city. Today we'll talk about Seattle, Washington. And we'll also talk a little bit about a popular television program here which is called 24. And as always, we'll answer a few questions. Let's get started.

It is a sunny day today. I'm recording the podcast at the middle of the day, that is, sometime close to noon. Normally, in June here in Los Angeles, we have something which we call "June Gloom." "Gloom" is something that is sad. When you say something is, some person is very gloomy with a "y" at the end, you mean they're very sad, they're never very happy, they're depressed. Well, June Gloom is when we have a lot of fog here in Los Angeles. And we have a lot of fog in the city in May and June, especially for those of us who live close to the ocean. I'm about two miles from the ocean. That means that you don't get to see the sun sometimes until very late in the day because of the fog over the city and we call that June Gloom. And it's gloom because it's sort of depressing, I guess, not to see the sun. But today we do not have any June Gloom as I record this podcast.

Before we start, I want to remind you again that if you haven't visited our website at eslpod.com we have some new services and a all-new website that we put up a few weeks ago. You can take a look at that and, and get a Learning Guide for this podcast, which will include a complete transcript as well as additional explanations and vocabulary.

I also want to make a small correction last podcast (well, two podcasts ago, podcast ESL Café, I should say, Number 35) I spelled the word "fifth" wrong, it should be "fifth." And I think I spelled it "fith" without the second "f." So I want to thank Michael in Germany who was listening very carefully and discovered my mistake. "Fifth" of course is from the number five. It's what we call an ordinal



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number. An “ordinal” is the order that something is in, so first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, etc., and so forth.

Our first topic today is going to be a celebration that we have every May and June in the United States, and in many countries. And, that is Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. Mother’s Day was in May this year and it’s always celebrated as the second Sunday in May. And basically it’s a day to call your mother if you don’t live in the same city, and talk to her, thank her for all that she has done. It’s a day to give thanks to mothers especially. Usually people send a card, a...what we would call a “greeting card.” And greeting, a greeting card is a card saying “hello.” The word greeting means to say hello to someone. And a greeting card is a card you would send for Mother’s Day or a birthday or some special event that was happening.

The origin of Mother’s Day here in the United States is sort of interesting, it was actually began during the American Civil War, 1860 to 1864. It was begun by a woman who was a pacifist. A “pacifist” is someone who doesn’t want to fight in a war, refuses to fight in a war, doesn’t believe in violence as a way of solving problems. Well, this woman who started Mother’s Day, she was a pacifist and she started Mother’s day because she thought that mothers would be naturally against war (more than men, I guess) and that was the reason why she started this day. But now most people have forgotten about the original intention of Mother’s day. And it’s just a day to give gifts or send a card or perhaps call your mother and wish her a Happy Mother’s Day.

Mother’s Day is all about motherhood. “Motherhood” is motherhood, all one word. Motherhood is the idea, if you will, the concept of being a mother. So, someone may say, “Well, how does she like motherhood?” – meaning, “How does she like being a mother?” And, of course, the opposite of that would be fatherhood. Well, fatherhood is celebrated on Father’s Day which is always the third June, I’m sorry, the third Sunday of June. I think I need a little more coffee this morning. The Third Sunday in June is Father’s Day and it’s like Mother’s Day, a day to call your father or send your father a card, or perhaps give them gifts. The classic sort of comical gift to give your father - sort of as a joke - would be a tie, because the tie, of course, is the easiest thing, in a way, to buy someone (to buy a man in particular) and so lots of fathers get ties for their Father’s Day present. I didn’t give my father a tie this year; well it’s, it’s, coming up this Sunday, but I will give him a card and send him a note. My father is, is 82



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years old, still in healthy condition and my mother is also still alive and healthy, and I can't tell you how old she is because she'd get mad at me if I did.

Another topic we're going to talk about today is the city of Seattle. We have been talking about different cities here on the Café, and today I thought we would talk about a city that is also on the West Coast of the United States, like Los Angeles and San Francisco. It's on the Pacific Ocean, and that is Seattle. Seattle is the biggest city in the northwest part of the United States. It is located in the state of Washington, which is on the border of Canada, and Seattle is a big city, about 4 million people in the, what we would call the metropolitan area of Seattle. Of course, the city of Seattle has other cities next to it, what we would probably call suburbs. And a "suburb," suburbs, is a city, that is, a community that is next to a big city. And the entire area of Seattle is quite large, and there are about 4 million people living there.

The nickname for the city of Seattle is "emerald city." Emerald is a type of stone, a type of, of rock that is often green in color. And an emerald is a name that they give Seattle because Seattle has a lot of rain, and because they get a lot of rain, they have a lot of green trees and other types of plants that grow. And so, the city is very green; they have a lot of evergreen trees, evergreen. Evergreen is a type of tree that is always green the entire year, and so, that's why they call Seattle "the emerald city," because it's so green. There is another expression in English, "the emerald isle" or "the emerald island." And that refers to Ireland, where it is also very rainy. They get lots of rain and, and it is very green there.

Someone who lives in Seattle is called a "Seattleite." A Seattleite. Someone who lives in New York is called a "New Yorker." And someone who lives in St. Paul, where I'm from, is called a "St Paulite." Well, if you live in Seattle, you're called a Seattleite. Seattle is known for a couple of things. Most Americans know Seattle because it has a famous coffee company which is now in the, many countries of the world called Starbucks. And Starbucks is a chain of cafes, and a chain is a group of stores that are all owned by the same company. And so Starbucks is owned, rather Starbucks is located, in the Seattle area. And there are lots of coffee shops - what we would call a cafe or a coffee shop - a place to buy coffee, to drink coffee, and so forth, and they drink a lot of coffee in Seattle as well.

Seattle is also famous because of the music, the rock music that comes from Seattle especially in the 1990's, the early 1990's. There were several famous bands that came out of Seattle, music bands. And they had a type of music



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which was called grunge, grunge music. The famous, most famous group was probably Nirvana, Nirvana which play this type of music. And that's also something that people know about Seattle, and as I said before, the rain - it's very rainy in Seattle and a lot of people know about Seattle because it is so rainy.

Our final topic today is going to be about a very popular television show that I thought I would tell you about briefly. It's called 24. And the interesting thing about this show is that there are 24 episodes every year, every season. Remember in the United States the television season begins usually in September and ends in May, sort of like school. And this is the time where the television stations have their most popular programs because, during the summer, people are traveling and there isn't as many, there aren't as many people watching television. So, during the regular television season in the fall and in the spring there are shows on, and this particular show is called 24, and it has 24 episodes. Each episode is one hour in a single day, and the show is, begins at midnight or at some time. I actually have never watched the show, but I have heard about it. And you go through one day in these 24 episodes; we would say that the show uses a "real-time format," real, real hyphen time. Real time means that because each hour of the television show is one hour of the 24 hours, it's the actual time that something is happening in the television program.

Well this is a popular show. They like to use a technique called the "split screen." A split screen, two words, is when you see two different pictures on your television, two different things that are happening at the same time. And this is in order to make it a little more exciting, so they can show two things happening at the same time. The show, I should tell you, is about a secret government agent. And, this is a person who's responsible for protecting the United States government, protecting the president, for example. And he works for a fictitious government agency. Fictitious, means that it's false; it's not a real government agency or government organization. And his job is to, as I say, protect the president and to uncover plots against the government. "To uncover" means the same as to discover, to make public. A "plot" here means a plan that someone has, usually a plan to kill someone or a plan to do something against the government - a terrorist attack, for example, bombing a building.

Well, this show is all about one person who works for the government, and the U.S. government, and tries to stop terrorists and others from doing things, and it's interesting of course because terrorism is an important issue in the United States. And there are several television programs about terrorism, about



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intelligence agencies. "An intelligence agency" is a group in the government that, that tries to find out information from - about people who may try to attack the United States or attack a particular building. Well, it's interesting that these television programs are very popular, and it I think reflects people's ideas, people's concerns probably. Well, now let's address your concerns by answering a few questions.

Our first question comes from Ladau, not sure where he's from, but Ladau has a question about the difference between the expression "should be going" and "should go." If someone says "well, I should be going" is that different than someone who says "I should go." Well, you probably know that in English we very often use the present progressive, the form of the verb "to be," plus the "-ing" form of a verb so, "I am talking." "Am" is the verb "to be," "talking" is the "-ing" form of the verb "to talk." We use the present progressive to express the idea that it is going on right now. Sometimes we use, however, the present progressive when we want to have some emphasis or when we want to communicate, in this case, that something has to be done immediately, right away, so someone who says "I should be going," they are saying they need to leave right now. They may say "I--I need to go immediately," "I should be going." The expression "I should go" means the same but we would probably use that as more of a general statement, not necessarily "I have to leave right away," but yes, I should probably go but it isn't necessarily something I need to do right now. People use the expressions however many times to mean the exact same thing. So someone who says "I should go," "I should be going" - there isn't a big difference between them. If there is, it's this idea of needing to do something right away.

Thierry in France had a couple of questions. One was the meaning of the expression "spur of the moment." Spur, spur of the moment. Spur of the moment is when you do something without planning it, without thinking about it very much. "I decided to go to the grocery store this afternoon. It was a spur of the moment decision." I didn't plan it. I didn't think about it last night, or last week, I just decided to do it right now. So someone who does something on the spur of the moment - and that's the expression we would use, "on the spur of the moment" - is someone who does something without planning on it. Usually, they do something that is a change from what they are doing right now, they-they-they decide to leave or they decide to, to go somewhere.



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Another expression that Thierry had asked about was a "slam dunk." A slam, slam dunk, two words. Well, this expression comes from the game of basketball, which of course is very popular here in the United States. A, a dunk is when you are able to take the basketball and put it through the net, through the hole, where if you put the ball through the hole you get a point. Well, a slam dunk is when you are able to go up, you're so tall that you're able to score a point, put the ball through the hole without any difficulty. When someone says, "It's a slam dunk," they mean it's, it's easy. It's going to happen, there is no doubt. Usually, we say this when we are talking about someone who's trying to accomplish something. For example, you may say to your friend, "I asked this woman out at my work. I asked her to go on a date with me," and the other person may say "Well, did she say yes?" and you could say "Oh yes, I'm sure she will. It's a slam dunk." It will happen without any doubt; so, when you're able to do something easily. We sometimes use that expression, "it's a slam dunk." Usually though, there's some sort of competition, some sort of a game, not necessary basketball. For example, you could even say that the election of a certain politician is a slam dunk. It will happen without any doubt.

Mark in Taiwan has a question about the differences between relatively, tremendously, and extremely. All of these are adverbs and sometimes they are used the same, but there are some differences. Relatively is when you are comparing one thing to another thing. For example you might say, "Here in Los Angeles, it's relatively dry," - means compared to Seattle or New York we don't get very much rain. So, relatively is when you're comparing two things. Tremendously, tremendously is very similar to extremely. They both usually mean very, very. Again the idea here is to emphasize, to say "I am extremely excited, I am extremely happy" or "I am extremely angry," "extremely mad." Those mean "I am very, very happy," "I am very, very angry," "I am very, very, very, very happy." All of these have to do with saying that you are - you are very much that particular thing. Tremendously is also, can also be used to mean very, very. I would say that this word tremendously is often used with certain expressions. Usually, for example, someone might say "I am, I am tremendously busy," that means the same as "I'm extremely busy" or "I'm tremendously excited." You probably would not say "I'm tremendously sad;" however, I would say that we would probably use it with an emotion that is neutral or positive. Not so much with a negative emotion. But, it is possible. You could say "I'm-I'm tremendously upset," that's, that's possible to say. The, the use of "tremendously" is not as common as the use of "extremely." So you will hear



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“extremely” more than you will “tremendously.” And they both can mean very, very something.

Our next question is from Satoshi in San Diego, and Satoshi wants to know the difference between a couple of words I just used - angry, mad and upset. Well, all of these can be used to mean the same thing, but there are again some differences. When you say that you are mad, that's usually a slightly informal usage to mean that you are not happy. When you say you're angry, angry is a little bit more than just mad. “I'm really angry” would mean that perhaps you are even madder than if you would say “I'm just mad,” so you're a little bit more feeling that particular emotion. When you say you're upset - that means that you're mad but, but it's not very serious. So, upset: “I'm upset about missing my television show last night” - I'm not angry because I'm not, it's not that serious. I might not even be mad, I might just be upset. So, it's sort of...upset is less serious. Mad is sort of serious. Angry is often very serious but angry and mad are many times used to mean the same thing. So, thank you Satoshi. I hope you're not angry, or mad or upset with ESL podcast.

Our final question comes from Spain, back over in Europe, from Cayetano. Cayetano wants to know the meaning of the expression “off-the-shelf.” If someone says, “I bought my computer off-the-shelf” what does that mean? Well off-the-shelf, shelf is the opposite of custom or custom made. When something is custom made, it means that it was made just for you, specifically for the way you wanted it. So you might go and buy a new suit to wear for a wedding or a, or a job interview. And you go to the person that makes the suit. He or she is called the “tailor,” the person who makes suits. And you say “Well, I want one this big, and I want the pants to be this long,” and so forth. And he or she makes a suit just for you, to fit you perfectly, so it-it looks very good on you. That's a custom made suit. If you were to go to the store and just say, “Oh I'll take this coat here and these pants.” That would be buying something off the shelf. A shelf is where you put things in a store, they're usually long pieces of wood or metal that you put things on top of. Although, if you went to a clothing store, they would probably have the clothes hanging up on what we call a “hanger” and the name of the thing where you put clothes in a clothing store is called a “rack,” a clothing rack. So, you would go to the store and you would just take something off the shelf or off the rack, and buy it. It's not specific for you, it's not custom made for you. So, thank you, Cayetano for that question.



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That's all we have time for today on the English Café. Thank you as always for listening. From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. We'll see you next time on the English Café.

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