



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 43

TOPICS

Topics: Obesity, greeting people in the United States, terrific, finally vs. eventually

GLOSSARY

to gain weight – to increase how much you weigh

* I used to weigh 140 pounds, and now I weigh 150 pounds. I've really gained weight this year.

to hit (a number) – to reach or become, usually used with age or weight

* When the price of gas hits \$4.00 a gallon, I think I will start riding my bike to work.

overweight – adjective used to describe someone who weighs too much or is too heavy

* My uncle has become overweight since he started eating two bags of potato chips everyday.

oversized – something bigger or larger than normal

* This t-shirt is oversized, but I can still wear it.

obesity – the problem of people being very, very overweight

* Obesity is a growing problem among children in the United States. Many of them weigh over 20 pounds more than they should.

appetite – having the feeling of wanting to eat; to be hungry

* I have a big appetite today. Let's go get some hamburgers!

to go on a diet – to try to lose weight by eating different or less food

* Now that I weigh 300 pounds, I think I will go on a diet.

a firm handshake – to shake or grab someone's hand strongly when you greet them or make an agreement

* He gave me a firm handshake when we agreed to the new contract.



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cheek – the part of your face below your eyes, in between your nose and your ears

* What is that on your cheek? Some lipstick?

to hug – to put your arms around someone, usually a friend or family member

* I kiss and hug my wife every morning before she leaves for work.

to slap someone on the back – to lightly hit someone on the back with your hand, usually to congratulate them for something they did

* My lazy son finally got a job, so I slapped him on the back and said, “Good job!”

to nod your head – to move your head up and down quickly; sometimes used to greet someone, to say “yes,” or show the other person that you are listening

* When I was introduced to my girlfriend’s mother, I nodded my head and smiled, but I don’t think she likes me.

terrific – wonderful or great; can also mean large or intense

* The Brazilian movie City of God is terrific! Let’s go see it again next week.

finally – adverb meaning at the end of something; after a long period of time

* After waiting four hours, my neighbor finally turned down his loud music.

eventually – adverb meaning after a long delay or time waiting, usually with some problems or difficulties

* My friend got into a car accident driving to my house. She eventually arrived at 7:00 PM.



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ENGLISH LEARNING TIPS

Many English learners believe that they must memorize all or most of the rules of English grammar in order to be able to speak it correctly. Some students and teachers even think that studying grammar is a “shortcut” or faster way to improve someone’s English. Unfortunately, this is usually not true, especially for speaking and listening. When you are speaking or listening, you usually don’t have time to stop and think about specific grammar rules consciously. If you did, you would have to speak...very...slowly...like...this! Most of what we use when we communicate is “unconscious”; that is, we use knowledge that we don’t have to think about or even know the rules for.

Here’s a very important point to understand: The best way to be able to use good grammar is to *listen* and to *read* English you can understand. Most native speakers of English can’t explain to you the rules of grammar, but they can speak and write English without any problems. How is this possible? Because they have listened and read a lot of English, and they “know” the rules unconsciously, without having to think about them. For you to get this same ability, you only need to listen and read as much as you can in English.



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café number 43.

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 43. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the beautiful city of Los Angeles, California, and the Center for Educational Development. Remember to visit our website at eslpod.com. You can get the Learning Guide for this podcast, which includes the complete transcript of everything we say on the podcast, plus the words and definitions, sample sentences, tips on learning English, and how to win a million dollars. Well, no, not the last one, but everything else is in the Learning Guide, so go to our website for that.

On today's café, we're going to talk about a problem in the United States called obesity. We're also going to talk about how you greet someone, how you say hello to someone, what are some of the things you do in American culture. And, as always, we'll answer a few questions. Let's get started.

When I was growing up back in Minnesota, back many years ago, I was very thin as a child and as a teenager. I was...did not weigh very much. This is probably because I was the youngest child. I have ten brothers and sisters who are older than me, so they ate all the food and then I didn't have anything to eat, you see. So, I was very thin for many years and I could eat whatever I wanted and not get fat. I would not increase my weight. The word we would use here would be "gain" weight. I would not gain weight. I could eat pizza, and hamburgers, and candy, anything. And that was true until about the age of 30. And when I hit 30 - "to hit" here means when I became 30, when I turned 30-years-old, all of those mean the same, hit is just sort of informal - when I hit 30, I suddenly started to gain weight. I started to become heavier. I could no longer eat whatever I wanted, and it was sort of the end of that part of my life.

Well, this problem of people eating too much and becoming overweight - "overweight," all one word, is sort of a formal or polite way of saying someone who is too heavy, who has too much weight. The informal expression would be fat. That's not a very nice thing to say, it's sort of an insulting thing in English, so we don't say, "He's fat." At least, you would not say that to the person. If you



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wanted to be nice you'd say, if anything, "He's overweight," or "She's overweight."

Well, obesity, "obesity," is when someone is very overweight, someone is extremely overweight. They have...they weigh too much for the size of their body. And there was an article I was reading on the web about this problem, and it's a big problem here in the United States. The article said that Americans are known for having big appetites and serving oversized meals. Well, an "appetite" is when you feel hungry. You say, "I have an appetite," means I want to eat. We use the expression big and small to describe how much you want to eat. "I have a big appetite," I want to eat a lot. Well, Americans are known for having big appetites and eating oversized meals. "Oversized," like overweight, all one word, oversized means that they're bigger than normal, and if you go to an American restaurant, one of the things you will notice is that the amount of food you get is often much more than in other countries. In Europe, or in Asia, or in Latin America, or in Africa, or in the Middle East, the amount of food you get is much less than what you will get in an American restaurant. And you may say, well that's a good thing because you get more food for your money, but unfortunately it also means that people eat more, because most people want to eat everything that they pay for, and so the result is that nearly two-thirds of adults in the United States, that's 66 percent, are overweight, weigh too much, usually ten or fifteen pounds more than they should. Part of the problem is these oversized meals. If you go to a fast-food restaurant like McDonalds or Burger King where they serve hamburgers, you can get a supersized meal. "Supersized" is the same as oversized, it means even more food than regular, even more than normal. And there was a documentary, a movie, last year that was very popular in the U.S. called "Supersize Me." Using supersize as a verb, "Supersize Me" was about a man, a true story of a man who decided to eat fast food everyday, for one month, and every meal - breakfast, lunch, dinner - he would eat hamburgers and that sort of thing, go to McDonalds every day. And it was about how this made him fat, but also how it was unhealthy, how it was bad for his health.

The problem of being overweight in the United States is also serious among children. About 20 percent of American children are overweight, and that's a problem that some people say, because American children don't exercise enough, they don't go out and play sports; they stay home playing video games at their computer. I don't know if that's true or not, but it is definitely true that more American children are overweight now than they were fifteen or twenty years ago.



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Well, one of the things that Americans have done and that most people do when they feel like they are overweight, is they try to lose weight. They go on a diet. A “diet” is when you try to lose weight, usually. There are organizations that can help you. One of the most famous in the U.S. is called “Weight Watchers.” “Weight Watchers.” And it’s an organization to help people lose weight, and you go to a meeting, I think, once a week and they give you food that you can eat, and the big thing is they try to get you to eat less food. Not so much what you eat, but how much you eat, and of course there are other diets that are popular ways of eating. And lots of people make lots of money selling books to Americans about losing weight. So one of my goals this summer is to lose a little weight, I’m not too overweight, I haven’t broken my chair yet, so that’s good, but hopefully I will be able to be back to the way I looked when I was 30, someday.

Our next topic is about how you greet people in the United States. “To greet” Is what you do when you first see someone or you see someone again that you know. There are two things you can do to greet someone. You can say something to them, “Hello, how are you,” or you can do something such as to shake their hand. So, I thought we’d talk a little bit about the way Americans greet each other and the way they don’t greet each other, or at least ways that are not very common. And there are different ways of greeting people who are friends of yours, who you know, or who are the same age as you, and someone that you don’t know, or who is perhaps much older, or in a formal situation such as at work, in your business. The most common way of greeting people both formally and informally is to say hello, and in fact we sometimes use that expression, “to say hello,” to mean the same as to greet, so you see someone, you say, “Hello, nice to see you,” “Hello, how are you,” Those would be common ways of greeting someone. Sometimes if you are meeting someone for the first time, the first time you’ve met them, you would probably introduce yourself, or someone else will introduce you to them: “John, I’d like you to meet my friend, Jeff. Jeff, John,” and then what will typically happen is you will look at the person, and you will say “hello” and you will do something; you will shake their hands.

It’s very common for both men and women in the United States of all different ages, both formally and informally, to shake hands with the other person; usually the right hand, you put in front of you for the other person to shake. That’s still the most common way of greeting someone, what we would call the “handshake,” all one word, “handshake.” That’s a noun for that action of shaking someone’s hand. It’s important in many, for many Americans, especially in a



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business setting that you have a “firm” handshake, a firm handshake. That means that when you shake their hands, you grab it - not tightly, you don't want to hurt the other person - but you grab it with some strength, you don't just stick your fingers there and let them grab your fingers. You have to grab their hand and shake it, usually once or twice, up and down, and you need to hold on tightly, and that's what we call a firm handshake. The opposite would be, probably, a “limp,” a limp handshake; that's a weak one, a handshake that someone doesn't, hold the other hand very tightly.

Well, there are other ways and other things you can do to greet people. In many countries, it's common to kiss someone when you greet them, especially a friend, or when you are introduced to someone. And some countries, you kiss someone once on the cheek. Your “cheek” is that part of your face...you have two cheeks, they're below your eyes, next to your nose and mouth, between your nose and your ear is your cheek. You can kiss someone on the cheek on one cheek, and some countries, you kiss someone on both cheeks, the left cheek and the right cheek. Kissing people on the cheeks is not very popular in the United States, in most places. Most people do not kiss each other on the cheeks, women with other women, or women with other men. That's not a very common way of greeting. And if you greet someone that way in the United States, they may be a little surprised, and they may go, “Oh, what was that?” That's not true for everyone. There are some people who greet their friends with a kiss on the cheek. That's especially popular here in California. You know that California has the reputation for being a little different than the rest of the United States. Some would say a little stranger, a little weirder than the rest of the United States. One thing that has become popular in California for friends, some friends, is to kiss them on the cheek. But it's still, for most Americans, I don't think, the most common way that you would greet someone, and you probably should never do that in a formal business setting.

Other things that you can do when you greet someone is to hug them. “Hug.” “To hug” means the same as “to embrace”. They both mean to put your arms around the other person, and again, hugging is okay if you are a good friend. Or it is a member of your family who you have not seen for a long time, you may hug each other. A husband and a wife, of course, would hug each other, every day, I hope, so that's okay. You sometimes will also hug friends, and again this is a very popular custom now in Los Angeles, in California - in general that when you see a friend, you hug them. You might also hug someone if something bad has happened, if they're sad, and you want to make them feel better, or you want



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them to know that you understand that they don't feel well, or they... something bad has happened. You may hug them at a funeral, for example, someone dies, you may hug someone. But once again, this is not something that you would do in a formal business setting. It's only among certain family and friends, and even there in many families it's not common. Many friends don't necessarily hug each other; if they do, they may be from California, but most of the time that doesn't happen, certainly not in a formal way.

Other ways that people could greet each other would be, for example, to slap someone on the back. "To slap on the back," The back of your body, and this is something that you might do to a very good friend, especially a man to another man. If a man is greeting another man, or if they're thanking them, or congratulating them they may take their hand and slap them. "To slap" means to touch, to hit somewhat hardly, so you make a slight noise, so that might be, that might be a slap. A slap can also be a bad thing. A slap, you can "slap someone's face," means you hit their face: "The woman slapped the man's face because he tried to kiss her," so that's a different thing. The slap on the back, or to pat on the back, same thing, means to hit someone lightly, softly, on the back, usually a man to another man, and that is another way of informally greeting someone. But again that's only usually with good friends and even then is not that common.

You could also bow to someone to greet them. "To bow" means that you bend your body or your head down and up. This is common in, for example, some Asian countries; it is not common in the United States, and you will probably never see someone informally or formally bowing among most Americans. Some Americans who are, whose families were originally from Asia may do that, especially in the home, but it is not a very common way of greeting someone. And, of course, you can also just smile at someone, and nod your head. "To nod" means to put up and down, so your head goes up and down slightly. And that's also a way of saying hello to someone, especially if you're in a big group. And there are, let's say, ten of you and you're standing in a circle, and someone introduces you to someone who's two or three feet, or one meter, away from you. Instead of walking over there and shaking his or her hand, you may just nod, so put your head up and down, so they know that you are saying hello. Well, before we say goodbye, I think it's time we answer a few questions.

Our first question comes from Dany in Italy. The question has to do with the word "terrific." What does terrific mean and when do we use it? Well, terrific can have a couple of different meanings. It can be used as an adjective, to mean great or



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wonderful, something that is fantastic, something that is very good, we might describe as being terrific. “He’s a terrific cook,” means he’s a very, very good cook, he’s a great cook. I am a, not a terrific cook. I am the opposite of a terrific cook. Or, “She is a terrific doctor,” she’s a great doctor, she’s a wonderful doctor, she’s a very good doctor. Another use of terrific is when you want to say something is very large or very intense, and we use that word as an adjective, often for things that are negative or bad. So it’s very different than the other meaning, where you mean it’s good; sometimes it can mean it’s bad. For example: “I have a terrific headache,” means I have a big headache, I have a very painful headache, or, “There was a terrific storm last night,” means it was a big storm, it was a large storm, it was an intense storm, so both of those meanings are possible. I would say that great and wonderful as a definition for terrific is more common. People don’t say I have a terrific headache, that’s not as common, but it is possible. Thank you for that question, Dany.

The next question comes from Gouwei, originally from China, now living in Canada. And a very good question has to do with the difference between the two adverbs “finally” and “eventually.” Well, this is a good question because many times we use these two words to mean the same, or we use them in the same sentence, the same situation. They can mean, even when they’re used in the same sentence, something slightly different. Let’s start with finally. “Finally” usually means after a long time, after waiting a long time. Sometimes it means after waiting a long time with a lot of difficulty, with a lot of problems, a lot of troubles. Finally can also mean the last thing that happened, after many other things. There was this, and this, and this, and that, and finally, the last thing happened. “Final” can also mean last. So finally can mean the last thing that happened, or it could just mean after waiting for a very long time: “It’s seven o’clock. My brother was, was supposed to come to my house at five o’clock. He finally got here five minutes ago.” He finally, after waiting a long time, me waiting a long time, he finally got here. It’s...really you have sort of both meanings there, you have waiting a long time, but also it’s the end of something. He arrived at my house.

“Eventually” is...we sometimes use eventually to mean unexpected, longer than I planned, longer than expected. “After five hours, my neighbor’s son stopped crying,” that’s true; he sometimes cries for five hours, it’s not good. Well, “After five hours, my neighbor’s kid eventually stopped crying.” The idea here is very similar to finally, in fact, you could say, “My neighbor’s kid, finally stopped crying.” It, in part, is dependent on the emphasis that you want to put. If I say, “After five



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hours, my neighbor's kid, eventually stopped crying," that tends to emphasize the effort or the difficulty to get him to stop. If I say, "My neighbor's kid, finally stopped crying," there the emphasis would probably be more on the length of time, the long time that it took, but again in this sentence, the two are very similar.

There are some sentences where you would only use one and not the other, however. For example, if you are trying to learn a new language, let's say Italian, and you say, "Eventually, I will learn Italian," you would not say, "Finally, I will learn Italian." Eventually means that it will happen, you're not sure when it will happen, it will be difficult, there will be problems as you are learning, but after a certain amount of time, you will, you will learn Italian. We would not say finally, unless we were going to learn, for example, three languages, Chinese, Portuguese, and Italian: "I will first learn Chinese, then Portuguese, and finally Italian," after the other two languages. There are also cases where you would use finally and not eventually, and it's similar to our example, when you have a series, a number of things one after the other, after the other. For example, "I am going to visit three cities next year: Tokyo, Shanghai, and finally Seoul." There we have things in order one after the other, and finally means the last thing. There are probably some other small differences but those are the most important ones.

Well, that is all that we have time to talk to you about today. We are finally done, you might say, and we thank you, as always, for listening. Please do come back and listen to us next time, and visit our website at eslpod.com. From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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