



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 97

TOPICS

Atlanta, Michael Moore, to have versus to have got, singular versus plural verbs with percentages, sort of versus kind of

GLOSSARY

Deep South – the southeastern part of the United States, usually Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina
* We took a road trip through the Deep South and heard people in different areas speak with different southern accents.

metropolitan area – an urban area with many people living in it; a city and the surrounding lands with a big population
* Approximately 150,000 people live in Eugene, but about half a million people live in the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area.

resident – a person who officially lives in a specific area
* At state universities, students who are residents of that state pay less than do students who are residents of other states.

peach – a sweet, round fruit that is yellow on the inside, has red and yellow skin covered with small hairs, and has a large pit (seed) in the center
* This peach is delicious, because it is sweet and juicy.

host – the people, organization or government that organizes and pays for an event
* Moscow was the host of the Olympics in 1980.

civil rights movement – the period of time in the U.S. during the 1960s when African Americans and other racial minority groups loudly asked to be equal to white Americans
* Martin Luther King, Jr. was an important leader in the civil rights movement.

segregation – the practice of keeping two races separate; the practice of keeping whites and African Americans away from each other, so that they go to different schools, use different entrances, ride in different parts of buses, etc.
* During segregation, many water fountains were labeled “whites only” and other people weren’t allowed to drink there.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 97

relocation – the practice of moving oneself and one’s family to a new city, often to accept a new job in a different location

* Some large companies will pay for their employees’ relocation expenses when they want them to begin working at a different office in another part of the country.

racial makeup – the mixture of different racial groups in a population; the percentage of Caucasians (whites), African Americans, Hispanics (Latinos), Asians, Native Americans, and other groups living in a certain area

* The racial makeup of this city changed significantly after the major industries closed their factories.

documentary – an educational film; a film that is created to educate and inform viewers about a particular topic

* Super Size Me is an interesting documentary about the dangers of eating too much fast food.

plant – factory; a large building where things are made

* When the automobile plants closed in Detroit, many people lost their jobs.

commercial – financial; related to buying and selling products and services; related to making money

* In this city, most of the stores and big businesses are in the commercial area downtown.

critical success – a work of art, song, book, or movie that receives positive reactions from professionals in that field

* Lynn has been publishing books for 10 years, but it wasn’t until she published her latest book that she received critical success.

sicko – a person who is mentally ill or evil and enjoys doing things that are bad or hurt other people

* That man is a sicko. He likes to yell at young children to make them cry.

pharmaceutical – medicinal; related to medical drugs; related to making and selling medicines

* Do you think that pharmaceutical companies should be allowed to advertise their products on TV?



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Mockumentaries

The word “mockumentary” is a combination of the word “mock” and “documentary.” “To mock” means to laugh at something, and a “documentary” is an educational film. Therefore, a “mockumentary” is a movie that seems like a documentary about something in real life, but it is actually “fiction” (not true). Many mockumentaries are “satires,” meaning that they use comedy to “criticize” (say bad things about) something or someone.

One famous mockumentary is This is Spinal Tap, which was filmed in 1984. It is about a fictional heavy-metal rock band called Spinal Tap, and it shows the crazy lives of the “band members,” or the people who are in the band. Although the movie is about a fictional band, it is really “satirizing” (using satire to talk about) famous bands, like Iron Maiden and The Rolling Stones.

Another well-known mockumentary is Best in Show (2000), which is about five people who participate in a “dog show.” A “dog show” is a competition to see which owner has the best, most beautiful, or most talented dog. The dog owners are often “obsessed” (thinking about something too much) with their dogs. In this movie, the obsession of the dog owners is “exaggerated,” or made bigger than it actually is.

The Blair Witch Project is a mockumentary “horror film” (scary movie) that was filmed in 1999. It is about a group of film students who are trying to make a documentary about a “legend” (old story) of a local “witch” (a woman who makes bad magic). The students get lost in the forest where they are filming, and are attacked by the witch. Their bodies are never found, but the cameras and film are. Although it is a mockumentary, it seems very real, which is what makes it so scary.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 97.

This is ESL Podcast's English Café episode 97. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at eslpod.com, and download a Learning Guide for this episode that contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, cultural notes, additional definitions, sample sentences, and a complete transcript of this episode.

In this Café, we're going to talk about the city of Atlanta. We've been talking about famous cities and places in the U.S. Today we'll talk about Atlanta, Georgia; what it is famous for, what Americans know about it. We're also going to talk about a filmmaker – a controversial filmmaker – someone who makes documentary movies by the name of Michael Moore. Michael Moore is well known in the United States; we'll talk about him and his movies. As always, we'll answer a few your questions as well. Let's get started.

Our first topic today is the city of Atlanta, Georgia. Atlanta is the capital and the biggest city in the state of Georgia. Georgia is located in the southeast part of the United States; it's what we call a part of the “Deep South.” When people talk about the “Deep South,” they mean the states in the southeast part of the U.S., states that were part of the “Confederacy,” part of the United States that tried to separate during our Civil War back in the 19th century. The Deep South has the reputation of being very conservative politically and religiously.

Atlanta, and the surrounding areas around it, is a big city. The metropolitan area of Atlanta has over five million people. When we say the “metropolitan area,” we mean the main city plus all of the smaller cities or suburbs around it. So, Los Angeles is a city, but there are many other cities around Los Angeles. We would talk about the metropolitan area as being all of those cities and suburbs together in a single “region,” or area.

Atlanta has grown a lot in the last ten years or so. They have increased their population by almost, or slightly more than, a million people. They have a million more residents than they did ten years ago. A “resident” (resident) is someone who lives in a certain place.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 97

There are several different names that people know Atlanta by, one is the “Big Peach.” A “peach” (peach) is a type of fruit. Georgia is called the “Peach State,” because there are many peaches that are grown in Georgia. People also call the city of Atlanta “Hotlanta,” combining the words “hot” and “Atlanta” together. To say it’s “Hotlanta” means that it is popular – that people want to go there; that it’s cool; that it’s growing. It is definitely true that it is growing very quickly.

Atlanta is probably best known for being the host of the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. The “Olympics” are the every four-year sporting competition among nations. Atlanta was the host of the Olympics. We say they’re the “host” (host), we mean that’s where they are taking place. In 2008, the Summer Olympics will be hosted by Beijing, in China. Atlanta was the host of the Olympics in 1996. Los Angeles has hosted the Olympics twice, in 1932 and in 1984.

Atlanta was, or became, popular, during the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The “civil rights movement” was when blacks – African Americans – began to demand their rights – began to oppose discrimination against them. Many cities in Deep South, especially in the 1960s, were segregated. To “segregate” means to separate, so there were separate places for blacks and whites. Blacks couldn’t use certain public places, for example. That’s called “segregation,” when you divide or segregate people on their race – on the color of their skin.

Atlanta, however, was never a very strong area when it came to segregation, and this made it popular for African Americans. In fact, it became a very popular relocation destination. To “relocate” means to move from one city to another, or one place to another. So many blacks, or African Americans, moved to Atlanta that it became a city with a majority of black residents back in 1972. Since 1974, all of the mayors of Atlanta have been black, as well as most of the leaders in the city.

Today, we talk about the racial makeup of cities. The “racial makeup” means the percentage of people of different races in a city. In Atlanta, the racial makeup is about 60% black, 33% white, an increasing number of “Latino,” or Hispanic Americans, and a smaller percentage of Asian Americans.

When you ask people about Atlanta, the typical association, however, is not necessarily with any of the things we’ve talked about, except, perhaps, the Olympics. Atlanta is famous for two things, I think, for many Americans; at least, this is true for me. One is its professional sports team, the Atlanta Braves; it’s a professional baseball team.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 97

People also think about the Civil War when they think about Atlanta, and, in particular, the burning of Atlanta, when the city was burned by one of the generals from the Northern army in the Civil War. There was the North against the South. The Northern army, called the “Union” army, had gone into Georgia under a man by the name of General Sherman, and Sherman, when he got to Atlanta, burned it. If you have seen the American movie Gone With the Wind, there, I believe, is a scene in the movie about the burning of Atlanta towards the end of the movie. Gone With the Wind is one of the great American movies.

I have to say that I have never been to Atlanta or the state of Georgia. I've been to 44 states in the United States, but I have never been to Georgia. So someday, perhaps, I'll go.

Our second topic today is a controversial filmmaker; someone who makes films that some people love and some people hate. His name is Michael Moore. Michael Moore has won an Academy Award for his documentaries. A “documentary” (documentary) is a movie sort of like a news program – it's real; it's true; it's not an invented or imaginary story. The Academy Awards, sometimes called the “Oscars,” are the highest awards – the most important awards given to movies every year, and he won an Academy Award for the documentary category.

He, himself, was born in Michigan, near the city of Flint, Michigan. Michigan is famous, in the U.S., for being a place where there were many carmakers. Companies that made cars had many of their factories in Michigan, especially in Detroit and the cities close to that, around the state of Michigan.

During the 1970s and '80s, as more foreign cars began to become popular in the United States, the American car companies – Ford, General Motors – they began to lose money, and so they had to close many of their factories. So, many of the men and women who worked in the factories lost their jobs.

Moore was very interested and concerned about this topic. He started at the University of Michigan as a student, and then he dropped out. He left the university when he was 22 years old and started working at one of the factories – one of the General Motors plants. A “plant,” here, means a factory. “Plant” has other meanings; of course, here it means a place where you make something – make cars, in this case.

Moore started his own magazine, and in the mid-1980s worked for some liberal political magazines. In 1989, he decided make a documentary called Roger and



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 97

Me. This was a film about the company of General Motors closing its factories – its plants – in Michigan, and opening new ones in Mexico. And, it was about how the company was “firing,” or getting rid of, its workers, but was still making a lot of money because they had moved their factories to other countries.

This was a popular film. It was a funny film; Moore combines some comedy with a serious subject. It was also very controversial. It was criticized by many conservatives, and some liberals, as being unfair to General Motors; but it was still a very popular movie. I saw the movie back in 1989. If you want to understand a very different side of the United States, of those that worked for these companies and that were now living in poverty, you should rent this movie. It will give you a different perspective on the United States.

Moore's second popular film came several years later, in 2002. It was called Bowling for Columbine. Columbine is a name of a town in Colorado, where there was a terrible tragedy. Two students with guns came in and killed several other students, and then, themselves. Moore looked at guns in the United States, and the way people think about guns. If you wonder why so many Americans have guns, or are involved in violence with guns, this is a movie that will give you one perspective – one opinion – about guns and gun control. We talked about gun control on another Café, back on Café number 69.

The film, Bowling for Columbine, was a big success, very successful both commercially and critically. When we say something was a “commercial success,” we mean it made a lot of money; many people went to see it. When we say it's a “critical success,” we mean that the movie reviewers for the newspapers and magazines – the movie “critics” the people who write their opinions about movies – these people liked the movie: it was a “critical success.” It won an Academy Award; it won a prize at the Cannes Film Festival in France, and many other awards.

Michael Moore's third popular film was called Fahrenheit 9/11. This was an examination of what happened in the United States under President Bush after the terrorist attack back on September 11th, 2001. It talked about the possible links between President Bush and the families of Osama bin Laden.

This movie won the Palme d'Or, the top honor at the Cannes Film Festival. It was very popular in the U.S., but also very controversial. Many people thought that, again, that Moore was not being completely honest, that he did things in the film that made the President look worse than he was, or is; but it was a popular



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 97

movie. The title, Fahrenheit 9/11, comes from a book called Fahrenheit 451, a science fiction book by Ray Bradbury.

Moore has a new movie that is now being shown in the United States, a new documentary called Sicko (sicko), about the health care system in the United States – about our hospitals and doctors – and the great problems we have with our health care, especially people who do not have health insurance.

The word “sicko” usually describes someone who is mentally insane or someone who is very evil or very mean. Moore is particularly critical, in this film, of the pharmaceutical industry. The “pharmaceutical (pharmaceutical) industry” are the companies that make drugs.

I have not seen Sicko; I did see Fahrenheit 9/11 and Bowling for Columbine and Roger and Me, so I'll probably see Sicko. Even if you don't agree with Michael Moore, and many people do not, you can, at least, get one “opinion,” or one view, about American life, American culture through his movies.

Now let's answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Rosalba (Rosalba) in Puerto Rico, in the United States. Rosalba wants to know the difference between “I have” and “I have got.”

These expressions mean the same thing. “I have got” is more informal English; “I have” is a little more formal English. You could ask someone “How much money do you have?” – how much money have you got, they mean the same thing. “I have a car.” “I've got a car.” Both of those sentences are correct. “I have to go.” “I have got to go.” Once again, they mean the same thing, but “I have got” sounds a little more informal

Jan (Jan) in Luxembourg – I think this is our first question from Luxembourg, one of the smallest countries in Europe – wants to know whether percentages are singular or plural. For example, when you say, “47% of the population,” do you say, “47% of the population is” – singular, or “47% of the population are” – plural?

This actually depends on what it is a percentage of, so it could be singular, it could be plural. You have to look at what comes after the word “of.” For example: “50% of the pie was missing.” “Pie” is singular, and so the verb is singular: “50% of the pie was missing.” There's one pie, and half of it is now gone.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 97

If the “object,” or the word that comes after “of,” is plural, then the verb is plural. For example: “50% of the pies were missing.” “Pies” is plural, and so the verb is plural. “There were many pies, and now, half of those pies are gone.” Notice, in the example, “half of the pies,” we use the plural verb: “are.” So, it depends on what it is a percentage of.

Finally, over to Asia, with Jimmy from Taiwan. Jimmy wants to know how we use the expressions “sort of” – (sort) of – and “kind of.”

“Sort of” and “kind of” can be used to mean the same thing: not completely – somewhat. For example, your friend asks you “Are you hungry?” and you say, “Well, sort of” – I’m sort of hungry, or “Kind of” – I’m kind of hungry. Somewhat; not completely; a little bit – that’s what you’re saying.

You can also use it to express uncertainty; you’re not sure about something, or it’s not quite exactly what the person is describing. If your wife asks if you want to stay at home and watch the baseball game instead of visiting her parents, you could say, “Kind of, hmm, sort of.” You’re saying, “Well, not really.” But, of course, if you want to stay married, you should say, “Of course, dear, I’d be happy to go with you. Yes, anything you want.” A little lesson!

If you want answers to your questions, send us an email. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com. We can’t answer everyone’s questions, but if we have time, we’ll try to answer it here on the Café.

From Los Angeles, California, I’m Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We’ll see you next time on the English Café.

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