



ESL Podcast 381 – Watching the TV News

GLOSSARY

anchor – person who announces the news on television; person who sits behind a desk and reads the news to the viewers

* Angela works as an anchor on Channel 7. Because so many people watch the news on that channel, people recognize her everywhere she goes in the city.

special report – in TV or radio news, a detailed explanation of some situation or event that may not be covered by other reporters

* Tune in tonight at 10:00 for a special report on teenage drinking – only on Channel 5.

field reporter – person who travels to different locations to prepare news stories; a person who gives a news report outside of the news studio or office

* A field reporter must have a good car in order to go to all the places where news is happening.

latest developments – the most recent information about a news story; the newest information or events

* Every two hours, Pedro was responsible for updating the website with the latest developments on the coming storm.

feature segment – a story that looks closely at one person, group, or issue, and is often not the latest news events

* Each month, the magazine printed a feature segment on a popular singer.

to interview – to ask questions of a person or group to get information and/or for the audience to get to know the people being interviewed better

* The reporter interviewed a scientist to learn more about the causes of earthquakes.

top story – the first and most important story in a news program

* This evening's top story will be the election results. Everyone is eager to hear who will be the new president.

to murder – to plan and to kill someone; to end another person's life

* Ms. Lee was murdered last year, and her family believes that the person who committed the terrible killing deserves life in prison.



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high-speed chase – when police must drive quickly to catch a person they want to question or arrest; when one car or vehicle drives very fast to try and catch another car or vehicle that wants to get away

* The officer got a flat tire on his car during the high-speed chase, and the robber escaped.

to report live – to give the latest information during a TV or radio broadcast from the location of a news event while the show is being seen by viewers

* Alice still gets a little nervous when reporting live, but she knows that it is the best way to give viewers the most recent news.

to cordon off – to prevent people from entering a specific area by enclosing it with rope or something similar

* The security officers cordoned off the airport terminal when they received a phone call telling them that was a bomb in the building.

suspect – a person who may have committed a crime

* Police have no suspects for the theft at this time. They have been unable to find enough clues to determine who could be responsible.

hostage – a person held by another until specific demands are met; a person kept as a prisoner by another until what that person asks for is provided

* The government leaders took several foreign workers as hostages, saying they would not release them until all foreign troops have left the country.

standoff – occurs when both sides are not willing to compromise or to admit defeat; a point during a negotiation when neither side is willing to change their mind and no progress can be made.

* The governor and the legislature were in a standoff over the budget. When no budget bill was passed, the state government shut down for nearly a week.

surrender – to give power or control to another; to give up

* There was peace again in the city after the rebels finally decided to surrender.

custody – when an officer keeps a person in a place for safety; when the police takes a person to the police station and keeps him or her there

* The runaway child was taken into custody until the parents could be located.

studio – a room or building with the equipment for making television or radio programs; a room or building from which radio and TV programs are produced

* Technicians edit and prepare the film for broadcast at the studio.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does a field reporter usually do?
 - a) Read the news in the studio.
 - b) Travel to the places where news is happening.
 - c) Describe the weather expected next week.

 2. Which part of a news program might be prepared several days before the program and shown on a day when there is extra time?
 - a) A top story
 - b) The latest developments
 - c) A feature segment
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

anchor

The word “anchor,” in this podcast, means a person who reads the news on television: “Peter is an anchor for the morning news. For 10 years now, he has been providing people with the latest information from around the world as they start their day.” An anchor is also a device used to keep a boat or ship from moving. This anchor is usually a heavy piece of metal attached to a cable (a strong rope) and thrown into the water: “The sailor lowered the anchor when they got near to land.” Another meaning for anchor is a person who is unchanging and gives support when needed: “Dad is the anchor in our family. He always remains strong and confident even in difficult situations.”

studio

The word “studio,” in this podcast, means a building where television or radio programs are recorded: “Our studio is 20 years old and is in need of new recording equipment.” Another meaning for studio is a room where an artist or photographer works: “Elena keeps all of her art supplies in her studio, where she spends several hours each day painting.” We also sometimes call a small apartment a studio. A studio apartment is big enough for only one or two people and usually has one large room for sleeping and living in, a bathroom and sometimes a separate kitchen: “When Jen was in college, she decided to rent a studio. She did not need a large space because she would be away at work or school most of the time.”



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CULTURE NOTE

In the United States, anchors for the major TV networks are treated like “celebrities” (famous people, usually in entertainment) and may receive a very high salary. For many anchors, especially female anchors, “appearance” (how a person looks) is very important and part of how they are judged by viewers.

Some people complain that anchors today may lack “hard news” background because they started their career doing “lifestyle stories” (stories about topics like gardening, fashion, or home decorating), reporting sports, or interviewing celebrities about their latest book or movie. “In contrast” (very differently), they say, anchors from 30 or 50 years ago “paid their dues” (worked hard to prove themselves worthy) by reporting on difficult stories, such as from “war zones” (locations where wars are being fought) or from sites of major disasters.

Some people complain that TV news has become entertainment rather than a source of information. The major goal of the TV networks is to attract as many viewers as possible, in order to make as much money as possible from advertisers. “Critics” (people who point out the problems) of this present “trend” (change or development) say that television news has become “shallow” (lacking real information) and “sensational” (intended to excite or shock). Movies like Broadcast News (1987) and Network (1976) explore this topic of real news versus entertainment.

The 2004 movie Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy shows a “stereotype” (commonly held view that may be wrong) of the TV news anchor in the United States. The main character, played by Will Ferrell, is not very intelligent, but is quite “vain” (interested in his own appearance). Anchorman makes fun of modern news programs that create “hype” (interest created by advertising and discussing something frequently) about what is not very important. For example, in the movie there is a story on the news called “Panda Watch: Day 46” that contains no real information about pandas.

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – b; 2 – c



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 381: Watching the TV News.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 381. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. You can go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode to help you improve your English even faster. The Learning Guide has all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions, comprehension checks, culture notes, and a complete transcript of everything we say on this episode.

This episode is called "Watching the TV News." We're going to listen to two people on the television giving us the news. It will give us a chance to talk about some of the special vocabulary you may hear when listening or watching the news. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Anchor: Good evening. I'm Gary Singh and this is the evening news. Tonight, we'll have a special report from our field reporter, Monique Sanders, on the latest developments in the Eddie Litton court case. And in our feature segment, we'll go to Arizona to interview the world's fattest dog, weighing 210 pounds! We'll also have this week's weather and the latest on sports.

But first, our top story: A man suspected of murdering his business partner led the police on a high-speed chase through downtown this afternoon. Reporting live from downtown Los Angeles is Tanisha Gray. Tanisha?

Tanisha: Thanks, Gary. About three hours ago, the police cordoned off a half-mile area around City Hall after the suspect ran into one of the City Hall offices and took two women as hostages. After a nearly two-hour standoff, the suspect surrendered. Neither of the two women was hurt and the suspect is now in police custody. Back to you, Gary, in the studio.

Anchor: Thanks for that report, Tanisha. We'll have more for you as this story develops.

[end of dialogue]



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The first person who speaks is the anchor of the television news show. An “anchor” is a person who gives the news on television, the person who usually is sitting behind a desk and reads the news to the people watching. We call that a “news anchor.” “Anchor” has a couple of different meanings in English; to find out more, take a look at our Learning Guide for today’s episode.

The anchor begins by saying, “Good evening. I’m Gary Singh and this is the evening news.” I’ve always wanted to be a news anchor myself! The anchor says, “Tonight, we’ll have a special report from our field reporter.” A “special report” is a term you often hear on TV news or radio news; it usually means a detailed or more detailed explanation of some situation. This is going to be a special report from the field reporter, Monique Sanders, on the latest developments in the Eddie Litton court case. A “field reporter” is a person – a television reporter, who travels to different locations to prepare news stories. So when you watch the news, you’ll see, for example, a reporter standing outside of a government building. That’s a field reporter. They’re not back at the television studio, where the anchor is; they’re out, we would say, “in the field,” in different locations in the city. The field reporter is going to report on the “latest developments.” Again, this is a common expression in the news; it means the most recent information about a news story – the newest information.

This is going to be a special report about the Eddie Litton court case – were not sure what that is! “And in our feature segment,” The anchor continues, “we’ll go to Arizona to interview the world’s fattest dog, weighing 210 pounds!” A “feature segment” is a news story usually that looks at one person, one group, or one issue. It’s not necessarily the most current or recent news; it’s about something or someone that is very interesting that people would be interested in. The feature segment, here, is about the world fattest dog. It’s very common in local TV newscasts, for example news shows just for Los Angeles or just for New York, to have at the end of their show, which is usually a half hour long in the evenings, some sort of feature segments – some sort of less serious story – and certainly the world’s fattest dog is not a very serious story. Notice that the anchor says they’re going to interview the dog, which, of course, would be a little unusual! He also says, “We’ll also have this week’s weather and the latest on sports” – the latest information.

He then says, “But first, our top story.” Your “top story” is the first story of the news program; it’s the most important story. “Our top story (tonight): A man suspected of murdering his business partner led the police on a high-speed chase through downtown this afternoon.” So, there is a man who the police believe “murdered,” or killed, his “business associate,” the person he works with.



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This person led the police on a high-speed chase. When we say he “led the police,” we mean the police were following him – the police were chasing him. He was trying to “escape,” to get away from the police, so he got in a car and started driving very fast. A “chase” is when one person or one animal tries to catch another one who is trying to run away. So, the police are on a chase; it’s a “high-speed” chase because the person they are chasing is going very fast in their car.

Many times, the news media will have their own helicopters and they will follow these high-speed chases, and they will be on the news. This is very common in Los Angeles, probably because we have a lot of freeways here. You see high-speed chases all the time, at least once a month on the news. The police always catch the person, or almost always catch the person, because there are helicopters and many different police officers that are trying to catch them. So, this is something that we’re used to, in Los Angeles, seeing on our local news. It’s not that common in other parts of the country.

The anchor then says, “Reporting live from downtown Los Angeles is Tanisha Gray.” “Reporting live” means the reporter is going to give the news at the same time as we are watching her or him. It’s not a “taped” segment, it’s not something they recorded two hours ago and now are going to show you; it’s something that’s happening right now. That’s what we mean on television when we say it’s “live,” it’s something that you can see going on right now.

Tanisha says, “Thanks, Gary. About three hours ago, the police cordoned off a half-mile area around City Hall.” “To cordon (cordon) off” something is a two-word verb meaning to prevent people from entering a specific area. Usually this is something the police do if there has been a crime; they don’t want anyone going near where the crime took place, what we would call the “crime scene.” This is a area the police have cordoned off because the “suspect,” the person they think committed a crime, ran into one of the City Hall offices and took two women as hostages. “City Hall” is the name we give for the government buildings for the city – the main government buildings. City Hall here in Los Angeles is very famous because it has appeared on many different television shows, especially police shows.

“The suspect ran into one of the City Hall offices and took two women as hostages.” A “hostage” is a person who is held by someone else against their will. Usually the person is asking for something; you take a hostage and you ask for money, for example. Or perhaps there’s some political purpose for you taking a hostage. You may also hear the expression “to hold someone hostage,” it’s the same idea.



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Tanisha says, “After a nearly two-hour standoff, the suspect surrendered.” A “standoff” occurs when two sides are unwilling to change – unwilling to compromise. A standoff is when you have some negotiation, but neither side wants to change their position. That’s what happened for two hours, and finally the suspect “surrendered,” meaning he gave up – he said, “Okay, you can arrest me.” Tanisha says that neither of the two women was hurt and the suspect is now in police custody. “To be in someone’s custody” (custody) means that you are being kept or held by that person. In this case, the suspect is being held by the police. They take the person and they bring them to a police station, and they keep them there in a what we would call “cell.” A “cell” is what you find in a prison that keeps the prisoners inside a little room. That room is usually called a “cell” (cell).

Then Tanisha ends her report by saying, “Back to you, Gary, in the studio.” This is a common way for news reporters – field reporters – to give the broadcast back to the anchor: “Back to you.” Gary is in the studio, which is the room or building where the anchors sits; it’s usually at the headquarters of the television or radio station. It’s where the program is filmed or recorded.

Now let’s listen to the newscast again at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by someone not in the studio, for ESL Podcast, Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us next time on ESL Podcast.

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