



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 257

TOPICS

Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus; New York Fashion Week; predict versus forecast; foretell versus remind versus recall; polite phrases used before meals

GLOSSARY

circus – a traveling show with performers, such as acrobats, trained animals, and clowns

* Lisa took her children to the circus to see the animals perform.

acrobat – an entertainer who performs difficult tricks with his or her body, such as walking on or swinging from wires high up in the air

* The acrobat flew through the air and landed on another acrobat's shoulders!

clown – a funny entertainer who does silly things to make the audience laugh, and who dresses in brightly-colored clothing and has a painted face

* The clowns came out into the audience and played funny tricks on the children.

ringmaster – the person in a circus whose role is to keep the show flowing by talking to the audience and introducing the performers

* The show began with the ringmaster introducing the elephants and tigers.

clean – wholesome and honorable; without tricks or deception; honest

* The boxers fought a clean fight and there were no claims of dirty tricks.

reach – the extent to which one can make contact with more people and extend one's activities

* The tobacco company wants to increase its reach into the teenage market.

collection – in fashion, a group of clothes or accessories that are created for a particular season or purpose

* Our spring collection includes blouses and shorts in many shades of green.

what's in/out – something that is popular/not popular or trendy/not trendy; something that everyone wants to have or do/doesn't want to have or do

* Will reading fashion magazines tell me what's in and what's out for this summer?



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 257

star-studded – with many famous people attending; with celebrities or other famous people present

* I hope that the ESL Podcast fifth anniversary celebration will be a star-studded event!

invitation-only – an event that allows only certain people to attend, such as those who are rich or famous; an event requiring an invitation to attend

* The special dinner with the governor is an invitation-only event.

to sponsor – to provide money for a project or event in exchange for advertising

* Will the sporting goods store sponsor our soccer team again this year?

runway – a walkway that extends into the audience, usually a little higher up than the audience, for models to walk back and forth on so people can see them and their clothing

* The model wore a tight skirt that made it difficult for her to walk down the runway without falling.

to predict – to tell what will happen ahead of time based on past experience, from facts, or from laws of nature

* Who could have predicted that Jill and Eduardo would fall in love and get married?

to forecast – to tell some future event or the way things will be based on scientific information, often used when talking about weather and finances

* According to the weather forecast, we'll have plenty of snow for skiing this weekend.

to foretell – to tell what will happen in the future using any method

* This old book foretells of a major earthquake in San Francisco in the year 2045.

to remind – to cause someone to remember; to help someone remember

* I know I'll be 50 years old this year. Don't remind me!

to recall – to remember something; to bring back into one's mind something from the past, usually to tell others about it

* Can you recall the first time you rode a bike?



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Clown College

One of the major “attractions” (qualities making others pay attention) of any circus is the clowns. These funny performers “liven up” (make more fun and cheerful) any performance under the “big top” (tent inside which circuses perform). Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus has their own Clown College, which has been training clowns since 1968.

The College was started by the owner of the Circus and by one of their longtime clowns. In 1968, most of the clowns working in the Circus at the time were over 50 years old, and the Circus was having difficulty finding replacements. For this reason, they decided to open a college to train their own clowns.

Being “admitted to” (accepted into) the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Clown College is not easy. The applicant must complete a long personality “profile” (questionnaire; survey), and then they must go through an “audition” (performance to show their skills). These auditions are held at several locations throughout the country to get clown students from across the United States. Since only 30 to 50 people are admitted each year, some people say that it is more difficult to get into Clown College than to be admitted into Harvard Law School, the most “prestigious” (well-respected) law school in the U.S.

At Clown College, the “tuition” (school fee) is free, but the student must pay for his or her own “room and board” (place to live and food to eat) and other expenses. The “ratio” of men to women is about 8 to 1, which means there are eight men for every one woman admitted. Between 1968 and 1997, Clown College has trained over 1,400 clowns.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 257.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 257. 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. Download this episode's Learning Guide, an 8- to 10-page guide we provide for all of our current episodes that gives you some additional help in improving your English. You can also take a look at our ESL Podcast Store and our ESL Podcast Blog.

On this Café, we're going to talk about two famous circuses that have a strong historical connection with entertainment in the United States: Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey's Circus. We're also going to talk about a semi-annual event (twice a year event) related to fashion in New York – in New York City called Fashion Week. And, as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

This Café begins with a look at two very famous circuses that have been a source of entertainment for millions of American children and their parents. A "circus" (circus) is a traveling show made up of performers, people who do certain tricks. They may do tricks with animals, they may do things that involve going high up into the air; these are the sorts of things that you would find at a circus. We'll talk a little bit more about that in a minute.

The two circuses that are most famous, or have been most famous in the United States are Ringling Brothers – (Ringling) Brothers, and Barnum (Barnum) & Bailey (Bailey) Circus. These are names: Ringling, Barnum, Bailey are names of the men who started these circuses many years ago.

Before talking about the history and importance of these of these two circuses, let me talk a little bit more about circuses in general. A circus usually has a couple of shows – a couple of performances – over several days in a given city. It moves from city to city; it may spend three or four days in each city. Traditionally, circuses had large tents that you would set up – that you would construct in a large open area, and inside of the tent you would have the different shows and performances of the circus. A "tent" is a temporary house or a temporary building, you can think of it. The walls are not made of wood or



plaster or cement; the walls are made of usually a heavy fabric – a piece of material that you can roll up. Circuses are still held in tents, I suppose, in small towns. In most large cities, the circuses take place in a large building.

Many of the “performers,” the people who entertain you at a circus, are acrobats. An “acrobat” (acrobat) are people who use their hands and feet, they do very difficult physical actions. They will be jumping up and down. In an American circus, you will often see them swinging high above the ground. These particular kinds of acrobats are called “trapeze artists.” “Trapeze” (trapeze) is when you have an acrobat doing tricks way up high in the air. For example, acrobats may walk across a rope called “tightrope” that is high up in the air, and of course, they try not to fall down.

Circuses also traditionally have many clowns (clowns). “Clowns” are funny performers who do silly or stupid things to make the children laugh. Clowns usually wear very brightly colored “wigs,” a sort of fake hair, they have different colors painted on their face – different makeup. Once again, typically they have large shoes, and often a big red nose. That’s kind of how I look in the morning!

Circuses also have trained animals. They have, for example, someone who works with “lions,” large, very dangerous animals that you would find in a jungle. A “jungle” is a forest that is located in a very hot climate or hot area. We call these people – these performers who work with the lions “lion tamers” (tamers). “To tame” as a verb means to take something that is wild – an animal, and make the animal calm, be able to control the animal. Well, lion tamers control the lions – at least they’re supposed to. If they don’t, of course, the lions get to eat meat for dinner!

Circuses have “magicians,” those performers who do tricks that seem like magic; they have musicians; they have jugglers. A “juggler” (juggler) is someone who throws different objects up in the air and keeps them all up in the air. Usually it’s three or four balls, or it could be something else more dangerous. They also have “stunt artists” in a circus. These are other performers that do dangerous things. In a movie, for example, the famous actor or actress isn’t the one who does the dangerous things in the movie that you see. Instead, they hire someone who is a specialist in this area, what we would call a “stunt man” or a “stunt woman.” So a stunt (stunt) artist is someone who does that sort of thing, but in front of a live audience. Finally, there’s one person who is in charge of the circus, and that person is called the “ringmaster.” A “ring” (ring) is, in this case, a large circle. And in a circus, underneath this big tent, traditionally you had



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 257

different circles – different rings, where different performers were performing. A “ringmaster” (one word) is someone who keeps the show going, who is in charge of the whole show. The ringmaster talks to the audience and introduces the performers, or what we might call the “acts” (acts) – the performances.

Circuses became very popular in the late 19th century in the United States. As the country grew – as more people began to move west, away from the east coast of the U.S. into places like California, states in the Midwest – Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and so forth – there were new small cities and towns that were founded (that were started). Often, these were many miles from a large city. So the people in these towns wanted some sort of entertainment, and the circuses provided a way for the towns to have, at least a couple of days every year, some big performance – some big entertainment for the adults and for the children.

There were many small circuses that started. One of the earliest circuses was started by a man who is still famous in the United States, P.T. Barnum (P.T. were his initials). Barnum lived from 1810 to 1891, and was considered one of the first American mass entertainers. He was what we would call a “showman” (showman). He promoted many different things. Some things that he promoted in his shows were not necessarily true; he told people that they were true. But, the circus that he created he called “The Greatest Show on Earth.” Another famous quote from P.T. Barnum, perhaps more to the point here, is “There’s a sucker born every minute.” A “sucker” (sucker) is a person who will believe anything, a person who will allow themselves to be taken advantage of, to give their money away, to do things that are harmful but they’re not smart enough to understand what’s happening. So, that’s a sucker. P.T. Barnum said, “There’s a sucker born every minute,” I guess in part to say that there will always be money that you can make from people who are, what we would say, “gullible” (gullible), someone who is easily persuaded.

P.T. Barnum is not the only person to create a circus, or to start or found a circus. There were also a group of brothers, five brothers who lived in Wisconsin, which is a state in the Midwest part of the U.S., next to Minnesota. They were called the Ringling Brothers; that was their name: Ringling. They started as a small circus. Eventually they decided they wanted to make it bigger, they wanted to make it grow, and so in order to distinguish themselves from other circuses – that is, in order to show that they were different somehow, they began to create a reputation for themselves as being a very clean show. “Clean” generally means free from dirt; in this case, however, the word clean means that it was wholesome, it was honorable, they didn’t try to cheat you. It was



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 257

something that young children could go to and enjoy; it was for the family. Unlike some other circuses, the Ringling Brothers did not cheat their customers; they also did not allow gambling. The circus started in 1884, so the late 19th century.

In 1889, the Ringling Brothers decided to purchase (to buy) some railroad cars. That's the vehicle, if you will, that goes down a railroad track. They purchased the railroad cars to expand their reach and perform in more cities than they were previously. "Reach" here means to make contact with more people, to extend your business. If you could travel by train you could visit a lot more places more quickly.

At the same time that the Ringling Brothers were becoming popular, so was P.T. Barnum's circus, which by 1881 was called Barnum & Bailey's circus. Bailey was another person who helped organize the circus. Eventually, in 1907, the Ringling Brothers purchased the Barnum & Bailey circus. They continued to have separate shows until about 1919, and then they became one circus. So when I was growing up, this circus was still around. It was called the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

Circuses were very popular through most of the 20th century; I think now they are less popular. When I was child the circus would come to town, we would say – would arrive in our city, usually for four or five days, perhaps a week, and you could go to the circus. My father got us tickets to go to the circus a couple of times, and it was always fun; it was always entertaining. This is before the days of video games, for the most part. But the circus is still going, Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus is still active, and you can still see the circus in different cities throughout the U.S.

Our second topic today is quite different in some ways, but in other ways similar. It's also about public entertainment; it's something called Fashion Week. Fashion Week is an important event in the fashion industry – and we're talking now about clothing, about nice looking clothing. The event gives the people who design the clothing, the fashion designers, a chance to show their newest clothes, we would say their collection. The "collection" is the group of clothes and others things they sell for men and women to wear.

Fashion Week also lets people know what the new trends are, what are the new styles that are going to be popular this year; they let you know what's in or out. When we say "what's in" we're referring to things that are popular, we would say



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 257

things that are “trendy” (trendy). If something is “out,” it is something that is not popular, is not considered trendy; we would say is not fashionable.

Many cities have a Fashion Week: London, Paris, Milan in Italy, and New York City. We’re going to talk about the New York Fashion Week.

The New York Fashion Week is actually two weeks; it happens twice a year, once in the spring and again in the fall. The first Fashion Week in New York began in 1943. It was created to bring attention to American fashion, especially during the middle of World War II. Due to the occupation of France, the defeat of France against the Germans, there was no Fashion Week in Paris, and so American designers decided to create their own Fashion Week in the U.S., in New York.

Fashion Week in New York always takes place in a series of big, large tents. We talked about tents as sort of temporary buildings when we talked about circuses. Well, this is a different tent but it’s the same idea, it’s a temporary building. And, the event in New York is usually rather, we would say, star-studded. Something that is “star-studded” (star-studded) is something at which there are many famous people, famous celebrities: actors and singers, that sort of thing – podcasters possibly. Fashion Week is filled with celebrities, with beautiful models, who are the men and women who wear the clothing in the show, and, of course, there are fashion designers there. Admission to Fashion Week events is usually “invitation-only,” which means you must be invited, someone must ask you to come to it. There are typically about 100,000 people who attend each year. There’s lots of loud music and special lighting, and, of course, clothing.

In 2009, the car company Mercedes Benz became the major what we would call sponsor of the event, and now the Fashion Week is technically known as the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week. To “sponsor” (sponsor) means that you provide the money in exchange for advertising. So, this sponsorship allows Mercedes Benz to advertise its products – its cars – to a group of very wealthy, very rich and powerful people.

Who are some of the famous designers that go to Fashion Week? Well, I have no idea, but I looked it up: people like Ralph Lauren, Oscar de la Renta, Carolina Herrera, Michael Kors, Donna Karan, and others. Designers usually have their own show, so you can go to a number of different shows to see the different styles – the different collections of clothing.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 257

If you go to a show, you will have the models, male and female, wearing the clothing. We typically call the clothing an outfit. An “outfit” (outfit – one word) is the collection, if you will, the combination of clothing that you are wearing. When they wear the clothes they walk down a special narrow what we would call walkway. It’s called a “runway” even though you don’t run on it. A “runway” is what’s used in these fashion shows; that’s where you see the pretty women walking back and forth on these runways, and the runway goes right out into the audience so the audience can see that clothing that is being modeled.

There are other fashion shows; other cities and towns have started their own fashion shows. For example, there’s a fashion show in Miami, Florida, in the southeast part of the U.S., that focuses on “swimwear,” things you would wear to go swimming or to the beach. There’s also a fashion show in Portland, Oregon, which is a state that is north of California on the west coast. Oregon is known for its environmentalism, and so the fashion show there is what is called environmentally conscious; we would also use the expression eco-friendly (eco-) friendly. The clothing, that is, is friendly to the environment. I’m not exactly sure what that means – you’ll have to ask the people up in Oregon!

Now let’s answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Oleg (Oleg) in Russia. Oleg wants to know the meaning of the words “predict,” “forecast,” and “foretell.” These words have similar meanings, though we sometimes use them in different ways. Let’s start with “predict.”

“To predict” is a general term to say that something is going to happen in the future. Your experience, your analysis, or perhaps simply the way the world works tells you that there are certain things that will happen: “I predict that the World Cup will be won this year by Spain.” Now actually, I’m recording this after the World Cup, so that’s not actually a prediction since I know it. But, I did predict that last spring, you just didn’t hear me! So, a prediction is your idea about something that will happen in the future – could be tomorrow, could be 10 years from now, could be 100 years from now.

A “forecast” (forecast) is usually based on some more scientific information. We often use this verb – or noun, it can be either – when we are talking about the weather (what the temperature will be like, whether it will rain or not) and finances (the stock market and so forth). So you could be watching the forecast on TV, the weather forecast, that would tell you if it’s going to rain tomorrow. Or,



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 257

you could read in the newspaper a forecast about the economy, whether it's going to get better or worse.

Finally, we have the word “foretell” (foretell), which is also a prediction, you're saying something that will happen in the future, but it isn't necessarily based on any scientific or rational information. Some people say they can foretell the future, meaning they can somehow see into the future and tell you what will happen – probably shouldn't believe those people! We sometimes use this verb “foretell” in talking about what are called “fortune tellers.” These are people who look at your hand or your face or some playing cards and try to make predictions about what will happen in your life. Again, you should remember that there's a sucker born every minute!

Anna (Anna) in Italy wants to know the difference between “remind” (remind) and “recall” (recall). These, again, are similar words. “To remind (someone)” is to cause someone to remember something, or to help someone remember something. “My mother reminded me that my sister's birthday is next Thursday.” I forgot, but she told me; she reminded me, she made me remember. “To recall” means to actually remember something, to bring some thought into your mind. “I read a book last night, but I don't recall what happened in the last chapter.” I don't remember. So here, “recall” is used as a synonym for “remember.” So, “remind” is to help yourself or someone else remember something. “Recall” is to actually do the remembering of some past event.

There's another pronunciation of this word (recall), which is “recall,” same spelling but a different meaning. “Recall,” as a noun is when a company makes a mistake in its product, something that it makes, and it tells people to return them, to bring them all back. There's something wrong with them; perhaps they are dangerous. We also use that word in some states of the U.S. when you want to get rid of a politician, someone is elected, and even though they are supposed to be there for two years or four years or six years, if you don't like them you can have a recall election, where you say, “You know what? We want you to leave your position right now.” That happened to the governor of California a few years ago, a man by the name of Gray Davis. The person who replaced him? Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Finally, Marco (Marco), also in Italy, wants to know what Americans say before someone is about to eat to wish them a good meal. In French you would say “Bon appétit.” In Italian it would be something like “Buon appetito.” In the United States, some people will use the French expression, especially in formal settings.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 257

However, English doesn't have an exact common phrase like this. You could say to someone "Enjoy your meal," meaning I hope that you like your food, or simply "Enjoy." That is something a waiter might say to you. I don't think it is as common a practice as it is in other countries. In Spanish-speaking countries they may say "Buen provecho." In English we would say "Enjoy your meal" if we say anything.

English also lacks, or does not have, a common expression for when someone goes on a trip or vacation. The French would say "Bon voyage," the Spanish would say probably "Que te vaya bien," or "Buen viaje," but in English we might just say "Have a good trip." Not quite the same, not quite as common.

There is one thing that in all cultures you usually find, including in the U.S., and that is something you say before you have an alcoholic drink. We would say in English "Cheers." Other countries would have different versions. Often it's "To your health," "Salud" in Spanish. Maybe you're having a drink right now, in which case I say "Cheers," even though I'm not drinking – not yet!

If you have a question or comment after doing a lot of drinking, you can email us. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com.

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

ESL Podcast's English Café is written and produced by Dr. Jeff McQuillan and Dr. Lucy Tse, copyright 2010 by the Center for Educational Development.