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## TOPICS

Video-game violence; ROTC; should have done versus should have to do; just versus only; to learn as (one) goes

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## GLOSSARY

**realism** – seeming very real; appearing very life-like

\* This new program to help people learn how to drive has a lot of realism.

**insensitive** – not having an emotional reaction to something; not having feelings for something that is happening or that one is experiencing

\* Ron walked on hot rocks every day for a month until the bottom of his feet became insensitive to heat.

**arcade** – a place where people can go to play video games, usually by putting coins in large machines

\* Michele loves to play video games and has the highest score on several of the video games at the arcade.

**minor** – a person who is younger than 18 years old; someone who is not old enough to be legally considered an adult

\* Our favorite restaurant allows minors in the bar area, but they are not allowed to order alcoholic drinks.

**rating system** – a scale used for measuring something, usually showing how much something is or how much something contains

\* The movie rating system lets parents know if there is sex or violence in a movie.

**console** – a machine that is used to play video games

\* The new game console is difficult to hold in your hand while pushing the buttons to play.

**officer** – a leader in the military; a person with a high position of power and authority in the military

\* Only an officer has the authority to punish soldiers arriving late for duty.



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**branch** – a major part of the military, such as the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard; one part of a larger organization

\* I opened my bank account at the downtown branch, but I usually do my banking at the branch closer to my house.

**ranking** – one's official position within the military; the level of power and authority one has in the military

\* The officer with the highest ranking will start the ceremony.

**Don't Ask, Don't Tell** – an American military policy that says that homosexuals can serve in the military as long as nobody knows they are homosexual

\* Many Americans don't believe that "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is a good policy.

**gay** – a homosexual person; a man who is romantically interested in other men or a woman who is romantically interested in other women

\* The new couple that moved into the apartment upstairs is gay and have a new baby.

**should have done** – used to indicate that one should have taken an action in the past that was not taken

\* I shouted at my children because I was angry about my work. I shouldn't have done that.

**should have to do** – should be required to do; should be in need of doing

\* Do you believe that people who use more of the state's services should have to pay higher taxes?

**just / only** – without any others; merely

\* It was just a small mistake, and this is not the only time we'll play the game. You'll probably win next time.

**to learn as (one) goes** – to develop knowledge and skill as one does a task, usually without being knowledgeable about it at the beginning, but with the expectation of becoming better at it as one continues

\* Danielle has never done any gardening before, but she decided to plant a new garden in her big backyard and she's learning as she goes.



## **WHAT INSIDERS KNOW**

### **Video Game Publishing**

“Publishing” is the business of preparing something and making it available for sale. We use this term traditionally for products printed on paper. We’ve all heard of book publishing, magazine publishing, and newspaper publishing. In recent years, though, a new “industry” (field of business) has “emerged” (come into being; come into existence): video game publishing.

Similar to book publishing, video game publishers are companies that prepare products for sale to “consumers” (buyers). And like other publishers, video game publishers are responsible for “manufacturing,” making the product, and for “marketing,” or selling, the product.

However, unlike book publishers, video game publishers may “develop” (create) products “in house,” or within the company. They may “employ” (hire) their own “video game developers” to create new video games. A group of video game developers working within one company is said to work in a “studio,” or a place for creative work. Traditionally, we use the term “studio” to refer to a place where an artist works, and so we often hear the terms “art studio,” “music studio,” and “dance studio.” In this case, the artists are video game creators and their studio is a place for creative thinking about new and better ways to make and play video games.

Like traditional publishers, though, video game publishers may also “distribute” (sell to stores, who then sell to buyers) video games developed by other companies, perhaps smaller companies that don’t have the money or “resources” (materials and things needed to do a job or task) to market and “promote” (try to get others interested in) the product. The publisher takes the product, manufactures it “on a large scale” (in large numbers), and “advertises” (draws attention to a product) it to the public.



## **COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 267.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 267. 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](http://eslpod.com) to download a Learning Guide for this episode that will help you improve your English and give you whiter, brighter teeth – it's true!

On this Café, we're going to talk about violence in video games and some of the ways that American parents are trying to make sure their children don't play video games that are too violent. We're also talk about a program called ROTC, or the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, which is a program that has been in existence for many years, a well-known but sometimes controversial program at American universities by the U.S. military. And, as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

This Café begins with a discussion of video game violence. Video games have become common in many homes in the United States, especially those with families or older single men. Forty years ago, they were very simple video games; when I was a child we had games like Pong and Pac-Man, but over the years, they have become much more complex. Actions such as fighting, shooting, and killing are now very common in video games. And the games have a lot of "realism," meaning that they seem very real or life-like, in part because of the technology now is better so that you can make things look more real including acts of violence.

Some people are concerned, parents in particular, that the realism of video games will make people insensitive to violent actions that occur in these games. "Insensitive" is the opposite of "sensitive." If you are sensitive to something you can tell the differences, you are affected by the differences. If you're insensitive, you don't see the differences or are not affected by this. What some people are saying is that, for example, if a player in a video game kills another character or player in the video game, he or she will become less sensitive – more insensitive – to the act of killing when it's part of the game, and maybe – and here's the controversial part, the part that people don't agree on – maybe in real life as well. Some people believe that seeing these kinds of violent actions in video games



will encourage people to do similar things in real life: they will hurt or kill other people.

One of the first controversial video games was a 1976 game called Death Race. I honestly don't remember this. When I was in high school in the late 70s I remember playing video games – one video game called Space Invaders, and to play the game you had to go to a store or restaurant that had one of the games. You put in a quarter (25 cents) and you could play the game for, I don't know, three or four minutes I suppose. That was the only video game I have ever played, and that was, well, 30 years ago plus. I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade in 1976, and I don't remember this game: Death Race. In it, the players controlled cars that ran over different kind of monsters – fictitious animals, things that weren't real. Now, this might not seem very violent, especially compared to today's games, but it was a controversial game. The popular American TV news program called 60 Minutes spent time talking about it.

Some groups tried to create laws in the early 1980s to restrict or to limit how close places that had video games, especially video game arcades, could be to schools. An "arcade" – a video game arcade is a place where people used to go and play video games just like I described. You would put a quarter or 50 cents into a big machine and then you could play the game. Some groups that tried to pass these laws thought that the games would make children violent.

Researchers have studied whether violence in video games can have an impact, or affect people's view of violence – of what is right and wrong. Many studies do not show a connection, but some studies do. Some studies have experimented with teenagers and children, giving them violent video games to play, and then noting how aggressive their behavior was afterwards. "Aggressive" means that you are perhaps violent, or you are very assertive of yourself: you are willing to do something to defend yourself or to attack another person. The truth is probably somewhere in the middle. That is, it's probably not the case that watching a violent video game will make you go out and shoot your neighbor. But it's probably also true that it does have an effect somehow on the way that you look at violence.

Violent crime in the United States declined a lot in the 1990s, when video games were getting more and more violent. However, these statistics are a little misleading. That is, they can give you the wrong impression – you can get the wrong idea from them. Part of the reason for that decline was because there were fewer and fewer young people, and therefore fewer and fewer crimes.



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Also, some people say that the economic health in the 1990s – the economy was growing with lots of jobs and so forth, and this might have also been part of the decrease in violent crime regardless of what the video games were doing.

Well, in 2005, the State of California passed a law that made it illegal to sell certain violent video games to “minors,” people who are younger than 18. However, the law has been challenged, and it will be one that will be discussed by the most powerful court in the United States, the United States Supreme Court, this year when we are recording this episode in 2010. The Supreme Court will decide whether this law is “constitutional,” that is, whether it goes against the rights of, for example, free speech in our Constitution – in the U.S. Constitution.

Beginning in the early 1990s the video game businesses created a rating system. This was first established in 1994. A “rating system” measures something on a certain what we call scale, a certain range. For example, movies in the United States can be rated G which means, therefore, a general audience: children, old people, criminals, cat lovers, anyone can see this movie. It’s okay for everyone. Now, if a movie has more violence or sexual content it might be rated PG, which is only for those who are, for example, over the age of 13. Or it might be rated R, only for those over the age of 17. Video games have a similar rating system based on how violent the game is typically.

There is a group called the Entertainment Software Rating Board (the ESRB). This is not a government group; it’s a private group. And they look at all of these video games and give a rating to each game. They look at the language and the violence; they look at how much blood is shown in the game. The rating system is supposed to help people know what kind of game they are buying, and decide whether it’s a good idea to buy it for their particular children – referring to adults, of course. The games’ ratings are on the box, so you can see when you buy it whether this is a game for an adult, for a teenager, or for a young child.

Interestingly enough, the rating system is not mandatory. That is, video game companies don’t have to use the rating system on their games; it is voluntary. However, most companies put the ratings because many stores will not sell the games unless they have ratings because they don’t want parents complaining that they bought a game that was very violent, and when that happens the parents are unhappy and often want their money back. So, the stores will not sell the games unless they have ratings. In addition, many “console” manufacturers, that is, companies that make the machines – the consoles that are used to play the game, like PlayStation for example – will not even license



games for their systems unless they have an ESRB rating. “To license” here means to say it is okay to play this game on my machine.

Since I grew up, after the popularity of video games became more widespread, especially games that you play at home. I don’t really have a lot of personal experience in these violent video games. It seems, again, reasonable for a parent to want to make sure that his or her child doesn’t watch things that are very violent. We normally don’t let our young children watch violent movies because we know that it can affect them – it could bother them. It could change their view on things, so it seems reasonable that a parent would want to know how violent these games are. But that’s just my opinion.

On our second topic, we’re also going to talk about a controversial program or issue. Today, we’re going to talk about ROTC, which is the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps. An “officer” is a leader, usually in the military: the Army, the Navy, and so forth, the Air Force. ROTC (sometimes called “rot-see”) is a program that is offered at most American colleges and universities to train students to become future military officers by taking special classes that focus on leadership, problem solving, planning, and ethics (what is right and wrong).

The ROTC program is used by many branches of the U.S. military. When we say “branches” normally we are talking about what comes out of a tree. The tree has different branches – different parts that go in different directions. Here, “branches” just means divisions or parts of something. The U.S. military has an Army; it has a Navy, for the ocean; it has an Air Force, for planes; it has Marines, who are special kinds of fighters; and it has the Coast Guard, which guards the coast of the United States. Students who participate in ROTC – if they graduate, if they take these classes – can, when they finish their school, be considered for higher “rankings,” higher positions in the military because they participated in this program.

Why would someone want to participate in this program? Well, some young men and women want to serve their country – they want to help the country in the military. There’s also the benefit of receiving scholarships – money – from the U.S. military to pay for their college education. However, if you are a member of ROTC, and you accept these scholarships, you need to agree to spend a certain number of years after you finish school serving in the military. Now, not all ROTC participants have to serve in the military, but it is required if you accept money, if you say I will take your money to pay for my college education, and





after I will serve four years, five years – I'm not sure of the exact requirement – in the U.S. military.

The ROTC program produces officers for all of the U.S. military branches that I mentioned except the Coast Guard. In fact, more than half of the officers in the Army are from ROTC programs. These were students in college who joined the program and then went into military service. Similarly, high percentages are also true in the Air Force: 41 percent. It's less true for the Navy: 20 percent, and not as common for the Marine Corps: only 11 percent have leaders – officers who were in an ROTC program. The Marine Corps often attracts men – young men and women who don't have the same level of education. The Marine Corps is considered perhaps the most difficult in terms of its training program for its young men and women.

How did this program get started? Well, it was actually first created back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of the Morrill Act of 1862. Now, the Morrill Act was one of the first pieces of federal or national legislation – one of the first laws – that dealt with creating colleges and universities in the United States. The University of Minnesota, where I went to school, was created in part by or as a consequence of the Morrill Act. In fact, we even had a building on campus called Morrill – Morrill Hall. The act, or law, was about more than ROTC, but ROTC was part of that law. It required that when the government gave land to different states to create colleges and universities that these schools include some military training for their students, and this training became known as ROTC. ROTC is now offered, as I said, at most American universities.

In fact in the past, some universities required that all male students participate in the ROTC program. Even if you didn't want to go into the Army, even if you did not accept a scholarship you still had to participate in the training: in the classes, and so forth. However, in the 1960s, as people became more upset about the U.S. participation in the Vietnam War, many universities changed their policy and made ROTC voluntary, you didn't have to do it. Some schools even stopped offering ROTC.

There have been other reasons why some colleges did not want to offer ROTC. Beginning in the early 1990s there was a policy in the U.S. military, which still exists as of this recording in fall of 2010, called "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Now, I talked about the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy in English Café 225, so I won't repeat that, but it basically says that if you are "gay," that is, if you are homosexual, you cannot serve in the military if you are open about it. That is, if





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you are actively part of that lifestyle – that way of living, and you tell other people. If you tell someone that you're gay the military can remove from service. However, they won't ask you if you are gay; you would have to tell them or they would have to find out some way. It's a very unusual policy, and again, listen to Café 225 for more information on that.

The policy, of course, was controversial. Many American universities did not want to have the policy supported, and so they said okay, well, if you're going to have this policy we're not going to allow ROTC on campus. Well, the federal government had an answer to these colleges. It's said okay, if you don't have ROTC on your campus, then we won't give you any money from our Department of Defense. This law, called the Solomon Amendment, was passed in 1996. Most American universities, however, were accepting money, and they needed this money that the government was giving them, and so many of them changed their policies in order to allow ROTC on their campuses again.

I was not a member of ROTC. I had a friend, or someone I knew in high school who joined ROTC, this is in the early 1980s, and was a member of the military. There are even some high schools still today that have what are called junior ROTC programs, where the high school students themselves participate in this military training. It's still found at some private high schools in the U.S. There was a movie in the 1980s called Taps (taps) about a high school that had a program like this.

Now let's answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Paolo (Paolo) in Italy. Paolo wants to know the difference between “should have done” and “should have to do.” Well, “should have” indicates something that was expected in the past, something you were supposed to do yesterday or this morning or last week, earlier than right now. “Should have to” means should be required; it isn't necessarily required but it should be. For example: “A student should have to correct their mistakes if they get an answer wrong on their homework.” They should have to; they might, they might not. Teachers might require it; some do, some don't. But I'm saying that they should have to do that, they should be required.

“Should have” refers more to something, as I mentioned, that was expected in the past but did not take place. “They should have given him an award for giving such a good speech.” They did not give him an award but they should have



given it to him. Or you could say, “My wife should have been home by now.” She should have, she was expected an hour ago but she is not yet home.

In American speech, you almost always hear “should have” as a contraction: “should’ve.” In fact, when we’re talking fast it really sounds like “shoulda.” “He shoulda called me” means he should have called me. “Should have to,” however, is never spoken as a contraction; native speakers will pronounce the entire word “have” when they’re using that particular expression. The contraction “should’ve” is sometimes confused, even by native speakers, to mean “should” plus the preposition “of” (of). However, it is not a contraction of “should” and “of,” it’s a contraction of “should” and “have.” A contraction, of course, is when we take two words and we put them together in a special way, usually by using an apostrophe as part of the punctuation of the sentence – or the word, rather.

Regine (Regine) in Germany wants to know when we say “only” and when we say “just.” What’s the difference between the word “only” and the word “just”? Well, both words can mean the same thing. “Just” can mean without any others, alone, solo. “There were just two cookies left.” There were two and that was it, no more. You could say, “There were only two cookies left.” It means the same thing.

Both words can also be used in place of the word “merely.” For example: “My ankle isn’t broken, it’s just a sprain,” “...it’s only a sprain,” “...it’s merely a sprain.” “Sprain” is when you hurt some, typically, muscles around the bone, but the bone isn’t broken. “Merely” is used to mean it’s not as serious as you are saying; it’s less severe, it’s less serious, or it’s lower in degree. For example: “That’s not a computer, it’s merely a monitor.” It’s just the video projection system, but it isn’t actually a computer. That’s how we use the word “merely.” “Just” and “only” can also be used in that way.

There are some differences between the two words however. “Just” can mean very recently, a few moments – a few minutes ago. “My brother just arrived.” He arrived at my house five minutes ago – he just arrived. You cannot say “he only arrived,” that would be incorrect; only “just” can be used in that case.

“Just” can also mean exactly, such as in the expression “that is just perfect.” Finally, “only” can mean alone in a group, single. “He’s an only child.” That means that the parents only had one baby – he’s an only child. You can’t say “he’s a just child,” that would be something different. Or you could say, “Tim is the only kid in class who got an A (who got a perfect score).”



Finally, Janusz – I’m sure I’m mispronouncing that word – (Janusz) in Poland wants to know the meaning of the phrase “to learn as (one) goes,” for example: “I’m learning as I go.” This means to develop knowledge or skill about something as you do a particular action, even though you don’t know much about it when you start. But the idea is if you continue to do it you will learn better how to do it in the future. We usually use this phrase when we don’t have all of the knowledge and skills we need to finish some task – some thing, some action – before we start. So for example, maybe you do not know how to cook. Well, you can start and experiment and learn as you go while you are cooking, while you are doing that action, and eventually you will be more knowledgeable, you will be more fully prepared. We do not want our doctors to learn as they go, to say, “Ah, I don’t know anything about medicine but I’m willing to cut this person open and look inside.” That would not be a good idea!

It would be a good idea if you have a question or comment to email us. Our email address is [eslpod@eslpod.com](mailto:eslpod@eslpod.com). We don’t have time to answer all of your questions, but we’ll do our best to answer as many as we can.

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

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