



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 212

TOPICS

Ask an American: Bartering; waiting versus awaiting; use of the infinitive; answering “yes” to a negative question

GLOSSARY

marketing – the way that businesses make sure people know about their products and services and try to get people to buy them

* The marketing department is trying to get younger customers to start buying our products.

produce – fruits and vegetables

* The doctors say we should be eating more fresh produce.

to establish – to begin, start, or create something

* Hank is trying to establish his restaurant as the best seafood restaurant in town.

brand – the name that a company uses for a particular product to make it different from similar products sold by other companies

* What’s your favorite brand of soap?

in turn – in exchange

* I took care of their dog last weekend and, in turn, they’ll take care of our cat this weekend.

down – slow; poor; not doing well

* This has been a down year for business. Hopefully we’ll get more sales soon.

agriculture – the part of the economy that deals with growing and selling food

* Much of Idaho is used for agriculture, especially for growing potatoes.

to barter – to exchange or trade goods and services for other goods and services instead of selling them for money

* I didn’t have enough money to get my car fixed, so we bartered: he repaired my car and I designed a website for his car repair company.

quaint – old-fashioned, or from an earlier time, but also interesting, attractive, or amusing

* He has a quaint way of speaking, saying “ma’am” when talking to women.



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charming – very pleasing, pretty, and attractive

* We stayed in a charming hotel that was decorated beautifully.

initiative – the way that a person does things without being asked or told to do them

* Thanks for taking the initiative and cleaning the house without making me ask you to do it. I really appreciate it.

to wait – to remain or stay in place in expectation of something or someone

* Where have you been? We've been waiting for you for nearly two hours!

to await – to wait for

* Nicole is eagerly awaiting her college admission letters.



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

How Bartering and Swapping Websites Work

Usually, the most difficult part of bartering is finding someone who wants what you have, and has what you want. The Internet is a good tool for helping people find bartering “partners” (people who are involved in the same sale, trade, or agreement). Today, there are many bartering websites, also known as “swapping” (trading; exchanging) websites.

Craigslist.org, for example, is a popular website that is normally used to buy and sell things. People can “place ads” (publish an advertisement) describing the things they want to buy or sell, and other people can reply to those ads. But Craigslist also has a section for bartering, where people can describe what they would like to trade. Some people describe what they’re giving away and say exactly what they’re looking for. Other people say they’re willing to “consider” (think about) anything “of value” (worth money; able to be sold for money).

Unfortunately, just as there are “shoplifters” (people who take things from stores without paying for them) in the world of buying and selling, there are “swaplifters” (people who take something without giving what they had agreed to give) in the world of bartering. If you decide to try bartering, protect yourself from swaplifters by having a written agreement that “specifies” (states exactly) what will be exchanged and when. If possible, try to barter the goods and services at the same time. This is easier with “tangible” (something you can touch and hold) goods, but more difficult with services, which may need to be delivered at different times.

When someone has a bad experience with a swaplifter, he or she might post an announcement on the bartering website, letting other people know what happened and warning them against bartering with that person in the future.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 212.

This is ESL Podcast's English Café episode 212. 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. On it, you can visit our ESL Podcast Store, which has some additional premium courses in business and daily English that you will enjoy, I think. You can also download the Learning Guide for this episode, and every current episode. The Learning Guide contains lots of additional information, including a complete transcript of this episode, vocabulary words, definitions, sample sentences, cultural notes, and a short comprehension quiz on what you're listening to now.

On this Café, we're going to have another one of our Ask an American segments, where we listen to other native speakers talking at a normal rate of speech – a normal speed. We're going to listen to them and explain what they're talking about. Today we're going to talk about “bartering,” the practice of exchanging products and services for other products and services, instead of paying for them with money. And, as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

Our topic on this Café's Ask an American segment is “bartering,” or getting things by trading them for other things instead of paying for them with money. For example, I might offer you a free hour of English lessons in exchange for one of your paintings, or for your help in fixing my car, or whatever other product or service you might be able to give me. Through bartering, you get a free hour of English lessons without having to pay for it with money, but you have to give me something else instead. Of course, for the bartering to work, you have to give me something I want or need. If you offer me a pig in exchange for the English lesson, I probably won't barter with you, because I'm not sure what I would do with a pig, and I wouldn't even have anywhere to keep it, since I live in the city and not on a farm. I would especially not want to get a cat for example, that would not be a good barter for me!

We're going to listen to some people talking about bartering. First we're going to listen to a woman named Valerie Gates. These quotes, as they are normally on Ask an American, are from the Voice of America service. Try to understand as much as you can, and then we'll go back and explain what she said. Let's listen:



[recording]

“I wanted to find a way to offer my services to farms, and I realized that farms usually don’t have money set aside for a marketing budget, but they do have produce!”

[end of recording]

Valerie says, “I wanted to find a way to offer my services to farms, and I realized that farms usually don’t have money set aside for a marketing budget.” So Valerie wants to use what she knows how to do, which is “marketing,” that is, the way that businesses make sure other people know about their products and services. The way businesses try to get other people to buy their products, that’s marketing. Valerie’s going to use marketing, which is what her expertise is – what she knows about in exchange for food from farms. So she says, “I wanted to find a way to offer my services (my knowledge) to farms (places that grow food), and I realized that farms usually don’t have money set aside for a marketing budget.” To “set aside” is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to reserve or designate, or say this money is going to be used for this. She’s saying that farms normally don’t have money set aside – they don’t have in their “budget,” in their list of things that they are going to buy or sell – their budget, that’s what you have in a business that tells you how much money you can spend on different things. Farms don’t have money in their budgets set aside for marketing; they don’t say, “Oh, I’m going to spend 1,000 dollars this year on marketing.” It’s not set aside – it’s not designated. They usually don’t have enough money to do that.

So, Valerie is saying that she will exchange her knowledge of marketing (advertising) with these farms for produce. “Produce” (produce) is a word that means fruits and vegetables. We normally talk about fruits and vegetables as being two separate categories, and they are, but when you talk about them together, for example in a grocery store, we call them together “produce.” So when you walk into an American grocery store, usually there’s a produce section that has all the fruits and vegetables. It’s often on the right-hand side of the store, at least here in Southern California; I’m not sure why. So Valerie, who knows a lot about marketing and advertising, is going to give her knowledge – her help to farmers who will then give her produce. Let’s listen to the quote one more time:

[recording]



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“I wanted to find a way to offer my services to farms, and I realized that farms usually don’t have money set aside for a marketing budget, but they do have produce!”

[end of recording]

Next we hear from one of the farmers, Jake Ferreira, who owns a farm and was interested in Valerie’s bartering idea. He’s going to talk about why, as a business owner, he was interesting in bartering with Valerie.

[recording]

“We were looking for tools that could better establish our brand and, in turn, she wanted to learn more about food and locally grown produce and the ability to cook.

[end of recording]

Jake begins by saying, “We were looking for tools that could better establish our brand.” “Tools,” in this case means ways of doing something; it doesn’t necessarily mean physical tools. The farm was looking to better establish its brand. “To establish,” here, means to start or create something. We often talk about establishing an organization. We might say, “This company was established in 1953,” meaning it was started – it was founded in 1953. Here, “establish” means something closer to making permanent, making sure that people understand it, giving it a good beginning. What they’re trying to give a good beginning to is their brand (brand). The “brand” is a particular name that a company uses for its product or service. For example, there are many companies sell soda, but Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola are brands; those are particular kinds of soda. The farm is looking for ways to establish its brand – its name, create some way to make its products memorable.

Jake says that in turn, Valerie wanted to learn more about food and locally grown produce and the ability to cook. The phrase “in turn” means in exchange for. I wash my wife’s car and, in turn, she washes my clothing. It’s something that you do in exchange for something else. You might write a report for your co-worker and, in turn, he might make some phone calls for you; you exchange those tasks.

Let’s listen to what Jake has to say again:



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[recording]

“We were looking for tools that could better establish our brand and, in turn, she wanted to learn more about food and locally grown produce and the ability to cook.

[end of recording]

Jake is now going to explain why bartering has becoming so popular recently in the United States. Let's listen:

[recording]

“In a down economy, it makes sense to return to certain traditions that can work out well, where people can trade for like items. For us, in the agriculture field, it's very easy for us to barter. It's not quite an apple for an apple, but maybe it's chives for onions.”

[end of recording]

Jake talks very quickly; let's go back and talk about what he said. He starts by saying, “In a down economy, it makes sense to return to certain traditions.” A “down” economy would be a slow economy, an economy that isn't doing very well. In a down economy, people are losing their jobs, companies aren't making very much money, things are not going well in the economic life of that country or that society. Jake says that in a down economy, like the one we're experiencing now, it makes sense or it is logical to return – to go back to certain traditions that work out well. Things that “work out well” are things that have a good result, things that end up with a good situation. Things that work out well are things that perhaps there was some difficulty, but now everything is fine. So, he's saying that there are certain traditions that work out well – that function well. The tradition he's talking about is, of course, bartering, where people trade things instead of giving each other money.

He says that in the “agriculture” field, the part of the economy that deals with growing and selling of food, it's very easy for farms to “barter,” to trade goods instead of selling them as they would normally do for money. That's because everyone needs to eat, so everyone, or most everyone, uses produce – fruits and vegetables. Bartering, he says, is not quite an apple for an apple, but maybe it's chives for onions. Well, there are a couple things going on here. First, the idea “an apple for apple” probably comes from the idea of another expression, which



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is “apples and oranges.” You can’t compare apples and oranges. That expression means you can’t compare two things that are completely different. To exchange an apple for an apple would be an equal exchange. However, we understand economic activity somewhat differently. You don’t actually exchange things that are exactly equal, otherwise you wouldn’t bother exchanging them. You always think that you’re getting more from the exchange than what you are giving away. Similarly, the other person always thinks they’re getting more from the exchange than they’re giving away. So in this sense, Jake is not a very good economist. We never make exchanges apple for apple in the sense that we think that we’re getting something of the same value back. Instead, we always exchange for things with money or a barter – using barter – for things that are worth more to us than what we are giving, and the same for the other person.

Well, putting that aside – forgetting about Jake’s ignorance of economics, he says that it’s chives for onions. So he’s saying well, I may give you chives, which is a long, green, leafed plant; it has a flavor similar to onions. We often put chives on the top of baked potatoes in the United States. Chives, however, aren’t the same as onions, but they can be used instead of onions in certain recipes, so it’s considered something equivalent. Again, barter and exchanges don’t have to have that sort of equivalency, and they certainly are never equal. But Jake is trying to make the idea known that you exchange things for other things that you may need, and if you are a farmer, well, it’s easy to find people who are willing to exchange things with you.

Let’s listen again to Jake’s explanation:

[recording]

“In a down economy, it makes sense to return to certain traditions that can work out well, where people can trade for like items. For us, in the agriculture field, it’s very easy for us to barter. It’s not quite an apple for an apple, but maybe it’s chives for onions.”

[end of recording]

Finally, we’re going to listen to a business professor by the name of Jim Hoopes. He’s going to talk about bartering and its popularity, and whether it’s really a good thing or not. Let’s listen:

[recording]



“It’s a quaint, charming practice and it’s fun to see and it reflects individual initiative. As a social policy, it’s not something we want to encourage.”

[end of recording]

The good professor says that bartering is a quaint (quaint), charming practice. Something that is “quaint” is something that is old-fashioned, something that people used to do a long time ago, but it is also something that we still find interesting, attractive, perhaps even amusing. We go, “Oh, isn’t that interesting,” “that’s kind of funny,” or “that’s kind of neat.” Some people, for example, like to visit small towns that they describe as quaint, because they still have a kind of lifestyle that people used to live in the U.S. many years ago. Well, this professor is saying that bartering is quaint, it’s old-fashioned, it’s still sort of interesting. He also calls it “charming,” something that is usually very attractive, perhaps something that is pleasing, something that we like. We often describe someone’s personality as charming, especially a woman: “She’s a very charming person,” especially if they have good manners – if they are well behaved, if they say the right things at the right time. We can also use it to describe a man; you could say, “He has a lot of charm,” or even use it as a verb: “He charmed her,” meaning he said the right things and made her like him or made her do something that he wanted her to do.

The professor says that bartering is quaint and charming and fun to see. He enjoys watching people barter. He says that bartering reflects or shows individual initiative. “Initiative” is the way that some people do things without being asked or told to do them. Many employers like their employees to take initiative, to look around and see what needs to be done and do it, without asking whether they should. People who barter are, in some ways, taking initiative, because they’re finding their own way to get things when they don’t have the money to buy them as they normally would. You can take initiative in almost any situation. If you are at a dance and you want to ask a girl to dance, you would need to take the initiative. You probably shouldn’t wait until the girl or the woman comes and asks you to dance, because that’s not something that normally is a very successful strategy. I practiced that strategy for many years, and I can tell you it’s not very successful; you must take the initiative!

Now, getting back to bartering. Even though the professor thinks bartering is fun and shows initiative, he also says it’s not something we want to encourage as social policy. He doesn’t want more people to start bartering; he doesn’t want to encourage it. The reason is bartering is very slow and inefficient; it’s not a good way to exchange products and services. Money was invented in order to make



this easier and quicker. You can spend money on anything, but you can't always find someone who wants to barter for the things that you have to offer. So bartering is, if you will, a pre-monetary system, it's a system used primarily before the invention of money. It is used when money is difficult to find, as we mentioned earlier. But, the professor is saying well, we don't want to create a barter economy; that's not a very efficient way of people obtaining what they want – of getting what they want.

Now let's listen to the professor one more time:

[recording]

"It's a quaint, charming practice and it's fun to see and it reflects individual initiative. As a social policy, it's not something we want to encourage."

[end of recording]

Now let's answer a few of your questions.

Our first question is from Daniele (Daniele) in Italia (in Italy). Daniele wants to know the difference between "waiting" and "awaiting." Good question.

"To wait" means to remain or stay in a place expecting something or someone: "My mother was waiting for me to come home." She was sitting at home waiting for me. "Are you waiting for the 10:00 bus?" you might ask someone. They're sitting on a bench (which is what you sit on when you are waiting for a bus in public); they're waiting for the bus.

"Awaiting" is very similar; it means to wait for: "I'm awaiting delivery of my new car." I am waiting for delivery of my new car. Notice when we say "wait" we would have to say "for," but if you say "await" you don't use the word "for." "I'm awaiting my new book from Amazon.com." I ordered a book, I'm awaiting it – I'm waiting for it; they mean the same thing. So "waiting," when it is followed by "for," means the same as "awaiting." "Awaiting" is a little old-fashioned or perhaps a little more formal; we don't hear that in conversation as much. "Waiting for" is much more common than "awaiting."

"Waiting" or "to wait" has a different meaning; it means also to serve a customer or to serve people who are eating in a restaurant. In fact, the person who waits on you is called the "waiter." Notice we use the preposition "on." "To wait on (someone)" means to help someone at a store or to be in a restaurant, and



taking their order, and bringing them their food, and so forth. That's "to wait on." "To wait on" can also mean "to be waiting for," so it's a little confusing. But normally if you say "I'm going to wait on (someone)," you mean you are helping that person; you are an employee helping a customer.

"Awaiting" cannot be used alone; it has to be followed by either a person or a thing: "I'm awaiting my paycheck." But you can't simply say "I'm awaiting," you can say "I'm waiting." What are you waiting for? Well, then you could tell someone. But it's possible to say simply "What are you doing?" "I'm waiting." But, "awaiting" has to have another word after it – another object.

Our next question comes from Maziyar (Maziyar); I'm not sure where he or she is from. But the question has to do with the use of the infinitive form of the verb. The infinitive form of the verb is the verb that has the word "to" in front of it: to walk, to run, to podcast, to wait. These are all infinitive forms of the verb.

The infinitive form cannot be used in a sentence without another verb. You can't say "I to wait my brother," that's not possible. You would have to do what we call conjugate the verb, you would have to put the verb in another form. But, the infinitive can be used with another verb: "My advice is to talk to your boss." There, the infinitive is used really as a noun. But you could also say, "I want to go." In that second sentence, the infinitive functions more as a verb.

Maziyar also wants to know if it's possible to leave out the "to," to not use the "to." Sometimes informally that is possible: "What I want you to do is leave her alone." You would normally say, "What I want you to do is *to* leave her alone," but sometimes in informal use – in conversational use, people don't use the "to" in front of the verb, even though it should be an infinitive form. However, to be safe it's probably best not to omit the "to," not to take the "to" out, because that's a very informal conversational way of using the verb and it's not always possible to do it. So, the safest thing to do is to keep the word "to" before the verb.

Finally Dave (Dave) in the Philippines wants to know how we use the word "yes" if it's a negative question. This has something to do with something called tag (tag) questions. For example: "You don't want to see the art exhibit, do you?" This is a very difficult construction for many people learning English. It's something that many English teachers try to teach students their first or second year. I say normally it's not worth worrying about; it's something that you just need to hear a lot before you really get it, but we'll talk about what the logic of this particular construction is.



When someone says, “You don’t want to see the art exhibit, do you?” the implication – the idea in their mind is that you don’t want to see it. So, if someone says, “You don’t want to see the art exhibit, do you?” (notice the “do you” is affirmative – is positive), you say, “No, I don’t.” If you said, “Yes, I do,” that would surprise the speaker. So you can say you either “Yes, I do” or “No, I don’t,” but the speaker (the person asking the question) is expecting you to say “no.”

This use of the tag question, “You don’t want to see (something), do you?” with a negative and the affirmative in the same sentence is sometimes confusing for native speakers, so many people, in order to be clear, would answer the question, “Yes, I do want to see the exhibit.” They would give a full sentence to make sure the person understood what they wanted to do. Or they might say, “No, I don’t want to see the exhibit.”

Another case, besides tag questions, where this gets confusing is if someone asks you a question in the negative. For example: “Don’t you like the movie?” They are asking you if you like the movie. You could also say, “Do you like the movie?” It actually means the same thing. People say, “Don’t you like the movie?” when they, perhaps, are surprised. They see that for some reason you don’t like it and they want to know why, or they think it’s strange. So if someone says, “Don’t you like the movie?” you may say, “No, I don’t. I really don’t like Brad Pitt. I think he’s ugly, I think he’s a bad actor,” and so on. I’m kidding, of course; I love Brad Pitt...not really!

So, you can answer the question, “Yes, I did like it,” or “No, I didn’t like it.” But when someone says, “Don’t you like (something)?” versus “Do you like (something)?” the idea is that they are perhaps surprised but you don’t like it, or they could be assuming that you don’t like it. In either case, you would answer both questions the same way: “Yes, I like it,” or “No, I don’t like it.”

We like getting your emails. You can email your question or comment to us at eslpod@eslpod.com. We don’t have time to answer everyone’s questions on the Café, but we’ll do the best 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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