



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 40

TOPICS

Topics: John McCain, Little League sports, how to pronounce years and hours, using “some” plus a number, to hock, larger than life, to cheat on someone, I might say vs. I can say

GLOSSARY

navy – a part a country’s military responsible for war at sea

* After she graduated from high school, she joined the U.S. Navy because she liked being on a ship.

liberal – in the U.S., a political view that favors more government spending on social programs

* The last liberal president of the United States was Bill Clinton.

conservative – in the U.S., a political view that favors less government spending on social programs and (usually) more money for the military

* Many people think our economic policy is too conservative.

term of office – the time period a government official is expected to serve; usually two or four years for many elected officials

* How long is the term of office for a state representative?

league – an association of sports teams that organizes games for its members

* I played in a soccer league until I hurt my leg.

World Series – championship games of Major League Baseball in the United States

* It’s very difficult to get good tickets to any of the World Series games.

1800s – the years from 1800 to 1899

* That university was founded in the 1800s.

military time – using a 24-hour clock instead of AM and PM

* - What is 3:00 PM in military time?

- It’s 1500 hours.



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to hock – to give something to a pawnbroker for money; to sell something because you need the money

* I didn't have any money to pay my rent, so I hocked my CD collection.

pawnbroker – a person who offers loans to people who can give him something valuable to hold until the loan is repaid

* He took his guitar to the pawnbroker and got enough money to pay his car loan.

larger than life – very impressive; someone or something that people admire

* We want to get someone great to perform at this show, someone larger than life.

to cheat on someone – to have a secret romantic relationship with someone who is not your husband or wife, boyfriend or girlfriend

* I know they got a divorce, but did Brad cheat on Jennifer or did Jennifer cheat on Brad?

reality – being real or true; actual

* The reality is that we don't have enough time to finish this report.

hypothetical – something we say is true even if it may not be real; a situation, person, or thing we create only for discussion

* During the interview, he asked me this hypothetical question: What would you change about our company if you were in charge?



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ENGLISH LEARNING TIPS

Most American television shows and movies on DVD have closed captioning. Closed captioning means that you can read the words that are spoken as you watch the program or movie. The “captions” or words can be seen on the screen. This is an excellent way to increase your comprehension if the speakers are speaking too fast or not clearly enough for you to understand them.

There are a few ways to use closed captioning. Some people like to watch a program or part of a movie without the captions, to see how much they can understand. Then they watch it again with the captions. Or you can watch the program first with the captions and then without. Other people prefer just to watch it once, with the captions. Any of these ways is okay – pick one that you think works best for you.

Some additional ideas on using closed captioning:

- It is usually best to make sure that you have the English captions or words, not a translation in another language. If you can’t understand the video with the captioning on, it is probably too hard for you and you should find something easier to watch.
- If necessary, you can stop the program on a DVD to be able to read what the person is saying more easily.



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café Number 40.

This is the English Café, Episode 40. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California. On today's Café, we're going to talk about a famous American, who may not be famous outside the United States, but is very famous in the United States - a politician, by the name of John McCain. We're also going to talk about an American institution - little league baseball - and little league sports in general. And as always, we'll answer some of your questions. Let's get started.

As always, we remind you that there is a Learning Guide that goes with this podcast, that has all the definitions of the words that we use, the complete transcript of this podcast, tips on learning English. It also has additional sample sentences that we don't talk about in the podcast. So go to our website at eslpod.com for more information on that.

We're going to start today by talking about a famous American politician. His name is John McCain, which is spelled McCain. And you probably know that the "Mc" in front of a word in English usually means that the person is either from Ireland - like McQuillan, I'm from...my ancestors, my relatives from many years ago were from Ireland. They could also be from Scotland, although in Scotland they usually say, or often say, "Mac." "Mc" in front of a name often indicates someone who's Irish or Scottish. It means "son," "son of." So, McCain would be "son of Cain," I guess, and McQuillan would be "son of Quillan." I don't know who Quillan was, but I guess I'm his son. Well, John McCain was...became famous in the United States before he was a politician. And one of the reasons was, is that he was in the military. He was a pilot in the U.S. military, in the United States Navy, actually. The Navy is usually the part of the military that has, takes care of the ships, and the boats. But, he was a pilot in the navy. And he became well known because his plane was shot down. They shot down his plane during the Vietnam War. And when the Americans were in, fighting in Vietnam, and he was captured by the North Vietnamese, and he experienced a very difficult situation during the war, and was in fact, tortured.



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And he, however, returned to the United States as a hero, and he got involved in politics. And in 1987, I think, he was elected as a senator from the state of Arizona. Arizona is located right next to California, but unlike California, different from California, Arizona is a very politically conservative state, a very Republican state. And John McCain is a Republican, just like President Bush. He became well-known after he became a senator, because he also tried to become president himself. He tried to get the Republican party to support him in the year 2000, but he lost his effort to do that, to our current president, George Bush. Well, John McCain is very well-respected because of his war background, his military background. And he's considered a hero. He's also well-known because he's a little less conservative in some things than other people in the Republican party.

Now, we should probably talk a little bit about what we mean by the word “conservative” in American politics, and “liberal” in American politics, because these words mean different things in different countries. In the United States, when we say someone is “liberal” we usually mean these are people who are on the political left. They tend to be people who believe that the government should be involved in the economy, and that they should take care of people, give more money to certain programs - what we would call “social programs” - to help people. They also tend to be believers that there should be a very strong separation between religion, between the church, and the churches and religious organizations, and the government. So this is someone who you would call a liberal. In other countries the word “liberal” means someone who supports a economic policy that supports something like free trade. But liberal in the United States does not mean that. In fact, the word “conservative” in the United States, that word is used to describe people who believe in a very limited government, lower taxes. Conservatives don't want the government to be involved in the economy here in the U.S. And so, those words get used differently in different countries. Well, John McCain, like our current president, is a conservative. Of course, there are other differences between liberals and conservatives, not just economics, but that's one important difference.

And John McCain, many people believe that John McCain will try to become president again, or he will try again to become president, I should say, in 2008, because 2008 is when President Bush's term ends. His “term” is how long he can be in as president. In the United States, you can only be president twice. So, you have eight years that you can be president; that's the most you can be president. Some countries it's different. In Mexico, you can only be president once, for six



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years. In other countries, like England, Great Britain, you can be the head of their government, the Prime Minister, as long as you want. Although, typically, they don't last more than eight to twelve years, at most. But John McCain will almost certainly be important in American politics in the next 10 to 15 years. Maybe even become a...one of our presidents. But he's well-known in the United States, and he is someone that you may read about in the news.

The second topic we're going to talk about today is little league sports. A "league" is a group of teams that play the same sport, and they play against each other. So, you could have a basketball league where you would have ten teams, and each team would play against the other throughout the season. So, perhaps in, in three or four months every team plays each other. You can have a hockey, a hockey league, a baseball league, any sort of league. A "little league" is not a, is not a small league, is not a small number of teams. "Little league" refers to children, who are, of course, little, small. And "little league" is a term we use to describe sports organizations, sporting leagues, for children, usually grade school children, elementary school children, younger children. And the term "little league" implies, or usually is related to, both baseball and softball. Those are the two sports that we most often describe as "little leagues," - and both baseball and softball, softball more popular for girls, baseball is more popular for boys, though some girls play baseball and some boys play softball.

Baseball and softball, of course, very popular sports in the summertime. And since we are in the summertime here in the United States, you can go to see a little league baseball game or a little league softball game. Now, most of the people who go to these games are the parents of the children. You can, you can guess that. It's, however, a popular way for children to spend their time during the summer is to play in these leagues. Now, the leagues themselves have different levels, which I won't bother talking about. They, actually, little leagues could be someone who's very young, but it also could include teenagers. I said before it's elementary school but, really, it could be elementary or high school. They have different levels of little league, and so you tend to play against those who are...against your own age.

There is actually a "world series" of little league baseball, and the world series is...when we use that term "world series" in the United States, we mean the national baseball championship for the professional teams. But, in addition to the term "world series" for professional baseball players, there's also a world series for children, and this is called the Little League World Series. And it's every



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August, there's a big contest. I believe it's in Pennsylvania, and teams from all over the United States go and play in this world series. Now it's sort of a strange term, "world series," because it's just about the United States. Many people have criticized the baseball organizations for calling their championship games the world series but the name has been around so long that I don't think they're going to change it, even though it's not the world. Of course, some Americans think they are the world and that's a problem, as you know. But, that's the name that we give the baseball championship. Now, let's answer a few questions.

Our first question today comes from Marco in Italy. Marco has a couple of questions. The first question has to do with pronunciation. He wants to know how we pronounce certain numbers. For example, how do we pronounce the year 1800? Do we say "one thousand eight hundred" or do we say "eighteen hundred"? Well, the answer is we say "eighteen hundred." That would be the year 1800. The...you have eighteen hundred, nineteen hundred, seventeen hundred, and so forth, thirteen hundred, even going back, you could say the year six hundred, the year eight hundred. We also use the term "eighteen hundreds" in the plural to mean the entire one-hundred year period. The entire nineteenth century would be called the eighteen hundreds, with an "s" at the, at the end.

Marco also had a question about pronouncing certain hours of the day. In particular, he wanted to know how we would pronounce 11:00 at night. In what most Americans would call "military time," which is the 24 hour clock. Many countries are used to the 24 hour clock so that midnight, one, two, three, up to noon, is twelve, but then 1:00 in the afternoon is thirteen, 2:00 is fourteen, and so forth. That's not very commonly used in the United States. You will see it, and people understand what it is, but it's not that common. We call that "military time" because it's the military that uses that system more than the average person. But, in this case, 11:00 at night in military time would be pronounced "twenty-three hundred hours." You may think that's strange that we pronounce the number as if it were two thousand three hundred, 2300. But in US military time they don't use the colon between the 23 and the 00. So, it actually looks like the number twenty three hundred. So, that is the way that you would pronounce that. 1:00 in the afternoon would be thirteen hundred hours. 7:00 in the morning would be o'seven hundred hours. And for numbers before 10 you say, "o" - o'six hundred hours, o'five hundred hours, would be 5:00. So, thank you, Marco, for that question.



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Marco has another question, too, also relating to numbers. He wants to know what the word “some” means, some, before an expression such as “some 25,000 items.” His question is that it seems like 25,000 is an exact number. Why do we use the word “some?” Well, usually when someone says the word “some” before a number, usually it means that it's not an exact number. “There were some 50 people there” doesn't mean there were exactly 50 people there. There were probably somewhere between 45 and 55 people. So, it's sort of an estimate, and that's the most common use of that. So, it would be used for a number that you're not exactly sure is the exact number.

Final question from Marco has to do with the word “hock.” What does it mean to hock something, or to hock something? Well the verb “to hock” means that you sell something, you give something to someone who gives you money for it, but usually there's a certain amount of time that you can go and get it back, you can buy it back. The person that you sell your, what you're selling - whether it's books, or a computer, or could be almost anything - is called a “pawn broker.” A pawn broker. And a “pawn broker” is a person that buys things from people who need money. Usually, they need money quickly and so they have to go and, and hock their, their possessions, what they own, in order to get money. And the pawn broker gives them money, and usually after a certain amount of time they will turn and sell that to someone else. So, you can go into a pawn broker's store, and you can see things that people have brought in because they needed the money and buy them, usually at a pretty good price. I've never gone into a pawn broker's. But that's what it means to hock something. There's also an expression, “to be in hock.” “To be in hock” usually means that you're in debt, that you owe other people money. So you don't want to be in hock. That's not a good situation, usually.

Barbara, from Italy, also has a couple of questions. Her first question has to do with the expression “larger than life.” What does it mean when someone says, “He was larger than life,” or “She was larger than life?” Well, they're not saying that this person was fat. It's not that they were a big person, a tall person. That's not what we mean by “larger than life.” Larger than life means that people consider this person to be very important, maybe even more important than any of the other people around them. They were considered greater than the other people. And so they, people noticed them because they were great people, or they had done things that were very famous or very important. Lots of people could be described as larger than life. It also is used to describe people who have a certain personality. Famous people who have a personality that is very -



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well we would, we would say someone who is very conscious of their importance, let's say - could also be someone who you might describe as larger than life. So, a president, a famous leader, a famous religious leader, might be called larger than life if they were considered to be...had done great things.

Barbara's other question has to do with the expression "to cheat on someone." What does it mean when someone says, "She cheated on me," or "He cheated on me?" Well, "to cheat on," that expression means that you are dating someone, you are in a romantic relationship with someone, or you're married to someone. And your girlfriend, or your boyfriend, or your husband, or your wife - the person you are romantically connected to - decides to get romantically connected with someone else, if you understand what I mean. And they, of course, don't tell you about it, and that's what we would call "to cheat on someone." It's when your husband or wife or boyfriend or girlfriend goes and has another romantic relationship or relationships – plural – with other people. Not the best situation for a relationship. If you discover your boyfriend or girlfriend or husband or wife is cheating on you, you are probably not going to be very happy. I know I wouldn't be.

Well, there is actually a television show now called "Cheaters." Cheaters. And a "cheater" is someone who cheats, or cheats on, someone. And this is a program - it's a terrible program, I think - it's a program where they, they find somebody, say a wife, who thinks that her husband is cheating on her. And then they, they hire a private investigator - someone who goes and finds out, who follows the person and takes pictures of them - to see if they are, in fact, cheating on them. And when they are, they take, in this case the wife, they would take her with them and they would follow this guy until he got to his, his other girlfriend's house. And then, they would come out of the car with all the cameras and they...and the wife yells at the, at the husband in this example. Not a very pleasant thing. It's part of, that kind of television show is, what we would call "reality television." Reality, because the idea is that it's real life, but usually it's not real life. Usually, it's things that are manipulated, where the people who are making the television program make it look worse than it is, or different than it really is. But, in any case, that is the definition of the word, or the expression, "to cheat on someone."

Our next question comes from Pawel in Poland, Pawel. He wants to know the difference between the expression "I might say," might, and "I can say." The expression "I can say," for example, in the sentence: "I can say that he is a very



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honest person.” What you are saying there is “I believe this.” When you say, “I can say,” you’re saying “This is true. I want you to believe me.” And you’re emphasizing that fact. We also use that expression when you are trying to limit what you are saying, when you are trying to say, “Well, I know this part is true, but I don’t know about the other parts.” So, someone may say to you, “Is there a plane that goes directly from Los Angeles to Houston, Texas?” And you say, “Well, I can say that there was one plane that I saw at the airport that was going directly to Houston. I don’t know if there are many planes.” So, you are limiting what you are telling them, saying, “This is what I know is true, but I don’t know about some other things.”

The expression, “I might say,” is when you are proposing a(n) example to someone. But it’s only an example and what you’re saying is not necessarily true. It’s very similar to saying, “I could say,” and again that’s what we would sometimes call a conditional example, or a hypothetical example. Something that is hypothetical is something that isn’t necessarily true. It’s something that someone imagined, that they made up, in order to explain something. So, that’s how we might use the expression, “I might say.”

That’s all we have time for on today’s podcast. Remember, if you have a question, something you want us to answer, just email us at eslpod@eslpod.com. From Los Angeles, California, I’m Jeff McQuillan. Thank you, as always, for listening. We’ll see you next time on the English Café.

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