



About the Author

Hilary P. is a professional psychotherapist and has practised in the United Kingdom for over 15 years. Hilary has a keen interest in language learning, with a classical language educational background. Hilary's particular interests & experience is in psychology, education & learning, especially online learning and language acquisition.

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Transcript Learn English Article 122

When You Need A Cool Topic For English Speaking
Conversation

Summary

We get lots of feedback from students who tell us the weekly speak English podcasts are great as English speaking practice lessons; we would love to hear from you as well, please leave feedback via Facebook or in the comments section.

You should take a look at our explainer podcast which will help explain how to get the best out of each of the speaking English lessons we provide.



If you are interested in why our approach to speaking English simply works, you should check out our free English speaking course which is full of videos explaining everything.

Welcome

Hi there, I'm Hilary and welcome to this podcast from Adept English. Adept English is here to help you with spoken English. How many people across the world, have a good vocabulary in English and also have a good understanding of English grammar, yet they find it difficult to understand conversation and to speak fluently in English? If that's you, then Adept English is here to help you. Our method of learning will take you towards fluency, helping you to understand fluently and then to speak fluently. Try our courses, use our podcasts - and listen to last week's podcast, if you missed it, on how to use the podcasts to get the most benefit.

So today, there's a word which is fairly new to the English language, which I'm going to talk about. The point of this podcast notice, is not just to learn this particular word. You'll hopefully remember the word. But it's also when you're listening to the explanation which goes with it, you'll be practising the words you know already and perhaps learning some new ones as well. Hearing words which are 'on the edge of your learning' is really important to help you to remember them, so that they're there, firmly in your head and you can use them when you want to speak.

Most Of The Time When You Are Learning English Speaking You Will Stick To A Safe/Limited Vocabulary

So the word today for this podcast is shrinkflation. And this word has arrived in some English dictionaries, but it's not even yet in the Oxford English Dictionary. But most people in the UK would know what shrinkflation means.

Think of a favourite food, which is a treat, something you enjoy, rather than something you might eat because it's good for you. Perhaps it's a chocolate bar. Maybe you like to eat a bag of crisps. Or maybe you like popcorn. But if the price of your chocolate bar, or your bag of crisps - they'd be called chips if you were speaking US English - or that bag of popcorn, which you might enjoy at



the cinema – if they went up in price, if they cost more, you might not be very happy. You might not buy them as often. And if prices go up continually, that can mean that there's a problem with the economy in the country that you live in. It can mean that there are real difficulties, which threaten the economy of a country. This is what it was like in the UK in the 1970s. Prices were going up all the time. And the word for this is 'inflation'. You can talk about 'inflation', that's a noun, or you could say that prices are 'inflated' or that the currency of a country is 'inflated'. So that's a well know term, a well-known word.

Knowing Some Facts, That Involve The People You Are Talking Too, Will Help Keep Them Interested In Helping You With Your English Speaking Practice

One example of extreme inflation was a problem in history during the Weimar Republic in Germany in the early 1920s. Prices went up so quickly and the currency became worth less and less. Inflation was so bad during this period of history in Germany, that you might call it 'hyperinflation'. If you put the word 'hyper' H-Y-P-E-R in front of some English words, it means very high, extreme. It comes from the Greek and works with lots of English words. Hyperinflation. So in Germany in 1923, prices went up because the value of the currency, the German Mark in this case, lost its value, its value dropped lower and lower. And there are places in the world today where hyperinflation is a problem.

Venezuela is suffering with this and having a very difficult time. The bolivar, the currency in Venezuela, has lost 99% of its value since 2012. This means that people in Venezuela find it difficult even to buy food. So hyperinflation is a very serious problem – people don't have enough money to buy food.

Now compared with that, what I'm talking about in the UK, is really a very small problem. But the word shrinkflation? How does that tie in with inflation and hyperinflation, that I've described already? Well, back to your chocolate bar, your packet of crisps or your popcorn. Remember I said that if the price went up, the price got higher, you might not be very happy? And you might not buy these things so often. Well, the companies that produce these items, that make the chocolate, the crisps or the popcorn know that their customers don't like it if the price goes up. So what do they do instead? Well, you've guessed it. They keep the price exactly the same, the price doesn't change. But the size of the



item does. So the size of your chocolate bar, the size of your bag of crisps or the size of your bag of popcorn gets smaller. You might not notice at first. But you do if it keeps happening – and your favourite food gets smaller and smaller. This is what we call ‘shrinkflation’.

We Think Knowing A Few Special English Words or Phrases Will Help Keep The Conversation Interesting For You As You Learn English Conversation

So the word shrinkflation is made up from the ending of the familiar word ‘inflation’ and it’s got the word ‘shrink’ at the start – S-H-R-I-N-K. The verb ‘to shrink’ means to get smaller and smaller. Sometimes we might say a person shrinks as they get older – they’re not as tall as they once were. Or if you put your clothes in the washing machine and you wash them on a setting which is too hot – you may find that your clothes shrink. They get smaller and maybe they don’t fit you any more.

So shrinkflation. It’s interesting – when companies making products like chocolate bars, or bags of popcorn, when they make the item bigger, it’s in really big letters on the front of the packet ‘20% Extra!’ They want you to know how generous and kind they’re being – you’re getting more for your money. But of course, when they reduce the size of the product, they make it smaller, but charge the same price. They don’t say ‘20% smaller’. What I think is bad about shrinkflation, it’s done in a sneaky way. They hope that you won’t notice that you’re getting less for the same amount of money. ‘Sneaky’ or ‘underhand’ – both those words mean when somebody does something which benefits them, not you. It makes it better for them and worse for you, but they don’t tell you they’re doing it. That’s sneaky, that’s underhand.

So examples of shrinkflation, in products in the UK?

Toblerone – that’s a chocolate bar which is known throughout the world, isn’t it? Toblerones in 2018 are smaller in size by around 25%, compared to 4 years ago, but they’re sold for the same price. Snickers – another chocolate bar is similar. Smaller by 28%. You could argue, well that’s better for you, you’re eating less chocolate. But it’s a bit sneaky, I think. Doritos are another example – they’ve got smaller, but you’re paying the same price. Sometimes where food



is in a pack, say of 20, you'll find that actually all of a sudden instead of 20 biscuits, or 20 fish fingers or whatever, you've only got 18 or 15 in the pack. But everything else, the packet and the price is the same.

So have a look at what you buy. Are you getting less for your money? Are you suffering from shrinkflation?

Goodbye

Enough for now. Have a lovely day. Speak to you again soon. Goodbye.

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