

Episode Transcript

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Introduction

[Luke]

Hello listeners, welcome back to my podcast for learners of English all around the world. How are you doing today? I hope you're doing fine.

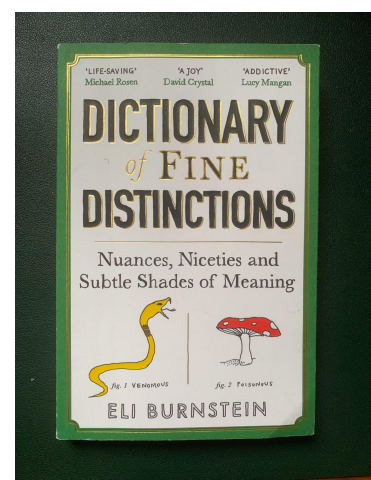
So I've got a really interesting episode lined up for you today. I think you're going to enjoy it and you should find it very useful. Let me tell you about it.

So it's a conversation episode with a guest. My guest this time is Eli Bernstein. He is a writer from Canada.

Eli has written various short pieces for a number of different noteworthy publications, including the New Yorker. But Eli has written his first book. It's available now from Profile Books.

And yes, let me tell you about it. So the book is called The Dictionary. No, not *The* Dictionary.

It's called Dictionary of Fine Distinctions. Dictionary of Fine Distinctions. It's a very useful and enjoyable book which aims to bring clarity to English vocabulary in a very entertaining way.



So the book focuses on nuances and subtle shades of meaning between pairs of words that seem very similar, but are in fact quite different. OK, that's what those fine distinctions are. So a fine distinction is a very slight or subtle difference.

OK, of course, as a learner of English, you must have noticed how English has a very wide vocabulary, including plenty of words which are very close in meaning, right, various synonyms. And this makes it pretty tricky to be sure that you're always using the right word for the right thing. OK, for example, I mean, here are some of the words that we talk about in this conversation.

So we talk about, for example, poison and venom, which could be a very important distinction to make. Poisonous versus venomous could be very important. What else?

Envy versus jealousy. For example, if I hear my friend Paul speaking perfect French and I feel that burning feeling in my chest, what is that? Am I experiencing envy or jealousy?

Which one is it? If you go to a coffee shop and you order a coffee with frothy milk, what exactly are you ordering? Are you ordering a latte, a flat white, a cappuccino or maybe a cortado or a macchiato?

What's the difference between all those different types of coffee, for example? When you're talking about English, right, and using English properly, maybe you want to make sure that you don't make any mistakes when you're speaking or writing. And also you might want to be sure that you're using exactly the right words for the right thing.

So is it important to be accurate or precise? Are we talking about accuracy or precision or both? What's the difference between accuracy and precision?

When you're texting your friends and you add a little smiley face, what are you using there? Is that an emoji or is that an emoticon? What's the difference?

Emoji and emoticon. And what about those other ones, those more complex ones? Cow emoji.

Have you ever heard of those? What about if I introduce myself to someone and they say, oh, where are you from? And I say, well, I'm from England and Britain and the UK.

I'm from, it's complicated. What's the difference between England, Britain, Great Britain and the United Kingdom? What about if, for example, I'm on the metro in Paris or the underground in London or the subway in New York, which doesn't happen very often, and I'm there and a young woman gets on and she looks like she's pregnant.

So I stand up and offer her my seat, but then she's really angry with me because in fact she wasn't pregnant. Oh no, what an idiot. What happened?

Did I assume she was pregnant or did I presume she was pregnant? What about if you're downloading images or uploading images on the internet? What's the difference between a JPEG and a PNG?

PNG, JPEG, JPEG, PNG. What about GIF? Is it GIF or GIF as well, those moving images?

Is that it? Emoji, emoticon, Great Britain, UK, envy, jealousy. Is that it?

Yeah, I think that's the specific distinctions we talk about from his book, but the conversation is full of the usual tangents and other details. That's the backbone, those distinctions. But also, since Eli is from Canada, we do spend some time talking about Canadian English and how it is perhaps similar to American English in some ways and similar to British English in some ways and the ways in which it is its own thing, the way it's unique as well.

So loads of stuff about specific distinctions in vocabulary and loads of other things relating to language, but also stuff about Canadian English as well. Okay, I think there's nothing more really for me to add in the introduction here, except that I would like to encourage you to just keep on listening, even though it's quite a long episode. You don't have to listen to this all in one go, but I do encourage you to come back to the episode and finish it off, because you'll see that there are insightful and useful details all the way through, including a section at the end where we get into some specific details about Canadian English, which I think is just quite interesting, really, and revealing.

Anyway, that's enough of an introduction. Let's now meet Eli Bernstein and talk about these fine distinctions in English vocabulary. And here we go.

Interview

So you're from Canada, Eli, right, originally, but you're living in England. You're living in London at the moment. How is it as a Canadian living in England?

[Eli]

Oh, that's a big question. So far, so good. I found people to be friendly, welcoming.

I'm enjoying learning the subtle differences in vocabulary. Perhaps we can get into that later. But as a lover of language, it's been really enjoyable to kind of pick up the vocabulary, differences in pronunciation.

And then, of course, the different regions of England and the accents. You know, once upon a time, I just thought of the English accent as kind of this monolithic thing and, you know, meeting people from Yorkshire and the South and the West. And I'm still working on picking up the differences in accent, but it's something I've been enjoying.

[Luke]

Yeah, that's good. What about your accent? When people meet you, do people assume that you're from the United States?

[Eli]

They generally do, yeah. I think these days you do have people say, oh, are you American or Canadian? Because you could tell they've made that mistake before and perhaps got a frosty look from a Canadian.

But I also, or vice versa, but I don't mind it at all. Our accents are virtually indistinguishable. Well, depending on where in the States you're from, there's the southern accent, there are regional differences.

And in Canada, too, there are some regional differences. But by and large, the kind of standard Canadian accent and I think what's called the general American accent are very similar. I think the one telltale sign is something called Canadian Raising.

And that is how we pronounce certain words with an O-U diphthong. I'm not an expert in phonetics, and I'm sure that O-U sound has a specific name, technical name, but the most obvious words that will kind of betray one's Canadian-ness is famously the word about and relatedly the word house. So an American would be more likely to say house.

It's got a bit more of an A sound, house. And a Canadian will say house. Oh, house.

It's more O. The O's hit harder, let's say. Yeah, yeah.

[Luke]

Yeah. I just know it as the O sound, like in our and now and house, as you say. And it's an A.

For me, in my accent, it is an A and an O sound together, O, like that. But yeah, interestingly, Canadians will pronounce words where I pronounce it O. And this is typically words with O-U spelling, like house.

I'll pronounce it ow, house. But yeah, Canadians, it sounds more like an O sound. House, something like that.

Say it for me.

[Eli]

That's right. So it sounds house, house.

[Luke]

House. Yeah, that's it. So it's like O-U, words with O-U often are the telltale sign that you're dealing with a Canadian.

[Eli]

But you have to, you know, I'm very impressed when people can tell because that is, it's a word that comes up often enough, but you still might find yourself waiting a long time for this very specific kind of language juncture to come up for someone to go, oh, you're Canadian. That being said, I do sometimes find people say, you know, I thought you were Canadian. I don't know.

I can't tell why. But I thought your accent was Canadian. And so whether or not people could put their fingers on it or whether or not that's just confirmation bias and people, you know, once you find out where you are, you go, yeah, I wasn't sure.

But maybe at a subconscious level, we do register these things.

[Luke]

Yes, yes, yes. So we may talk about Canadian and British English and maybe American English, general American English as well later. But yes, we're going to talk about your book because you

have written the Dictionary of Fine Distinctions or sorry, just Dictionary of Fine Distinctions.

[Eli]

That's right.

[Luke]

Not the Dictionary of Fine Distinctions, but crucially Dictionary of Fine Distinctions.

[Eli]

That's right. I don't want to claim to be the only Dictionary of Fine Distinctions just in case.

[Luke]

Right. But you didn't choose to call it a Dictionary of Fine Distinctions.

[Eli]

That's right. Touche. I left it open.

People can decide whether or not it is definitive.

[Luke]

Okay. So it's just simply Dictionary of Fine Distinctions, which is very nice. So this is a lovely book.

Dictionary of Fine Distinctions, Nuances, Niceties, and Subtle Shades of Meaning. It's a lovely book. I've been reading it.

So what was your motivation for writing this book then? What made you choose to write this?

[Eli]

Yeah. So strangely enough, it started from the world, not of language, but of colour. So I would always confuse colours that were really similar to one another.

Examples would be like maroon and burgundy or lavender and lilac, fuchsia and magenta. And I always just wondered, why are there so many words for colours that are, to my untrained eye, virtually indistinguishable? And just out of curiosity, I started doing these kind of side-by-side comparisons.

I would Google them and kind of spend a little time looking at the colours. And that really helped sharpen the difference in my mind, really seeing two things side-by-side, that kind of almost grade school style compare and contrast. I was just reminded that's such an effective learning tool.

And I think from there, I just started to notice how many things, even beyond the world of colour, there were that were similar to other things, things that kind of fall beneath notice because they're so similar to one another. So little things like emoji and emoticon, which I have in the book, but also kind of bigger or more abstract things like shame and guilt or ethics and morality, words that we kind of throw around interchangeably, but we have two words for a reason. And if you kind of start looking and peeling back the layers, you realise these things point to ever so slightly different things.

[Luke]

Okay. Especially in English as well, right?

[Eli]

Yes. English has a vast vocabulary. So perhaps more than in many languages, at least, we kind of are swimming through a huge ocean of words and can really pick the most precise tool for our needs in the moment.

And I think it's really valuable to study vocabulary in order to do so because communication is just that much more effective when you really dial into your meaning at a very granular level.

[Luke]

Mason Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

And it's interesting because it sort of tells a story to some extent. The variety of words we have does tell a story of the English language. The fact that it's, in a way, sort of a combination of lots of other languages.

It's borrowed words from all over the place. And that can lead to, first of all, just the multitude of different words and synonyms. Many words that kind of often will do the same, more or less, kind of fill a similar role.

But then it tells you something about perhaps the level of formality, right? So you've got Germanic words, which might be a little more informal in English, whereas Latin words often are the bigger, more formal ones. So there's that sort of way of looking at it, formal and informal.

And just the origin story can also help you understand the correct meaning of the word. When you look at Latin, you realise there's a prefix in this word, which is telling me, like if you look at the word assume and presume, which we're probably going to talk about,

the understanding those are both from Latin. And there's the fact that pre, as in presume, means before, which kind of tells you it means making a conclusion about something before you actually know the facts.

Something like that, anyway. I mean, sometimes I find etymology and going into the history of a word can actually confuse me a little bit more. And what I need is just a simple, let's keep it clear and simple.

Just give me the definitions and make it simple. Which is actually what you've managed to focus on in your book, that you do a good job of actually getting rid of a lot of the unnecessary storytelling maybe in terms of etymology and just focussing on the simple things we need to know.

[Eli]

Well, thank you. Yes, I certainly try to keep things concise and to the point. So that, you know, not to get bogged down in the details, but really to just understand the difference, right?

These aren't encyclopaedia entries where we go on at length about the origins of the word assume and presume. But yes, just to kind of really kind of dial into the difference. But on the subject of English having kind of, you know, consisting of multiple languages, I find that so fascinating too.

You know, I even think of, you know, the British Isles is kind of having wave after wave of language kind of crashing in on its shores, piling up on each other. And yeah, I think that you're right, that kind of the kind of Germanic base has a slightly more informal

tone and also, but also a kind of a more visceral, earthier tone. A kind of directness.

Yes. Yeah. A bluntness, a chunkiness that I think can be really effective in your speaking and your writing.

And then kind of layered on top of this is this more airy, abstract Latin and French that can kind of make things more formal, but it can also make things a little lighter or can change the pace of things. But it doesn't, it's not a gut punch the way that kind of the more monosyllabic German words have. And I think that's probably the, certainly I would suspect the main reason English is so rich with fine distinctions, because, you know, you've got words like house, which come from, you know, the Germanic or relate to the German word house, of course.

And then you've got mansion, which comes from Maison in French and you're in Paris, correct? So you're, you know, you're French very well. And, but of course, Maison is better than mine.

[Luke]

Well, but no, it's interesting that Maison is a standard word for house and the direct equivalent in English is house. But then we do have mansion, which is from French, but mansion has connotations of a high class grandeur, big expensive house, which does again, tell you a story that it's the French influence came from nobility that after the invasion of William, the conqueror, Norman King from France, who brought French with him, we had a French aristocracy in the UK, in England for, you know, several hundred years.

And that's left an imprint on our language that often the French words have slightly more of a upper class or high class distinction to them like mansion rather than house.

[Eli]

That's right. I, I, I, I, I, that's my understanding as well that, that, uh, all over vocabulary, there are traces of this kind of, um, that the French terms having more prestige, um, kind of from a, uh, social perspective and house and mansion is a perfect example. I've heard that this is also true in the world of cuisine, that the, the animal, when it is being prepared is Germanic, but when it is being served and eaten is French.

So you've got the cow, but then you've got, which is I think, Germanic in origin, or at least not French. And then you've got beef, which comes from birth, which is French. Um, and I think that that's true.

[Luke]

Um, uh, so you could imagine then that you could imagine them, that the farmers, the people who are actually on the land, um, you know, uh, working with the animals that they're using the Germanic terms, exactly. It's probably a lower class level. And then the higher class people who are in the in the dining rooms, um, and you know, talking about it like in that context, then that's obviously, they're going to be using the higher level, uh, language.

So yeah, there's just that trace of that class distinction between the upper class people who, you know, are using the French words and the lower class people who are using the Germanic words.

[Eli]

Exactly. And I think that, you know, even though that that is, you know, millennia old history, it is these, they echo today, right? And, and are they, they're not necessarily part of the strict denotation or meaning of the word, but they are faint connotations that I think to the sensitive ear, you can still pick up and kind of to come full circle.

Um, I think even if you don't pick it up at an explicit level, it still affects you at a subconscious one that, that when you read a book or are in conversation, when people choose the Latin or French term versus the Germanic or, or anything else that these, these things do affect how you perceive the, you know, the, the picture of the author is trying to paint.

[Luke]

Mm. So yeah. Interesting for, for my listeners, this does pose a certain challenge on one hand, but also an opportunity on the other hand.

So the challenge being that, uh, uh, you've got to try and navigate all these different distinctions and understand, you know, the tone of the English that you're using. Is it, does it make you sound kind of literary in style or old fashioned or something? Um, or does it make you sound informal and young maybe?

Um, so there's that challenge, but then the opportunity is that you've got a quite a diverse range of different things you can express in English. And there's, you know, there's a lot of room for interesting, um, you know, use of English. Uh, it's, it's a, it's a fun, exciting palette to, to work with, I guess.

[Eli]

Yeah, that's right. But, but I think you're, you're absolutely right. You know, these, these are getting to the more advanced stages perhaps of, of, of English mastery and fluency to kind of pick up on these subtle registers of formal and informal or, you know, earthy versus abstract, um, kind of the qualities of sound of a word and how, how that kind of, but it still is, it's totally valuable and rewarding.

And one of the things that makes the English language kind of so rich and colourful.

[Luke]

Yes, absolutely. Um, shall we get into the book then? Shall we have a look at some distinctions?

The plan being that we will just sort of pick and choose a few things that, um, we can demonstrate and I can ask you to kind of like share the distinctions that you've come up with, and then we can maybe sort of talk about them a little bit.

[Eli]

Um, absolutely.

[Luke]

Yeah. So, so the first you've got it, well, first you've got emoji versus emoticon, which should be pretty straightforward to explain, um, emoji and emoticon listeners. Have you ever heard people talking about using, you know, do you ever use emojis or do you use emoticons?

Which word is more commonly used today? Which word sounds a bit older and what's going on there. So can you tell us about emoji versus emoticon?

[Eli]

Yes, absolutely. So emojis are graphics. So typically those, uh, little yellow faces or the thumbs up, um, the, the little graphics that you'll often use in, uh, text exchanges, whereas emoticons use type, which is to say they use punctuation.

Um, uh, they, they don't have any colour. They, um, yeah, they're a little bit more limited visually, but simply they use punctuation. Classic example would be to use a colon where you would say a colon in the UK, I believe, and a close parenthesis to, to, to make a smiley face.

So there it is, I think as you, yeah, exactly. Would you say, okay, bracket. Yes.

And brackets.

[Luke]

Yeah. We say brackets in British English. Um, and in American English and apparently Canadian English too, you're talking about parentheses, right?

Open and close parentheses. We call them, uh, open brackets and closed brackets, I guess. Yes.

But certainly brackets. Yeah. Sorry.

I'll cut you off.

[Eli]

No, no, no. I, I happen. I'd love talking about all of this, including punctuation, but, um, I know it seems like a needlessly elaborate word for something we use in writing every day, parenthesis and plural parentheses.

But I do also think colloquially, um, in North America, we just say brackets, but I think technically brackets refer to the square ones, um, that are used less commonly. Um, you know, the ones with the sharper edges at the top and bottom. Yeah.

I think that's technically the bracket, but these are, these are technicalities that most of my friends would just make fun of me for and say, Eli, they're, they're, they're brackets. Just don't be so fancy. Um, but yes, exactly.

So emojis are graphics to come full circle and emoticons use type.

[Luke]

Um, yeah. Um, Eli, these days, what do you use? What do you tend to use when you're texting or something?

Do you use emojis or do you still use emoticons? I said before, which one sounds a bit older. I think emoticons, the word emoticon is something that was used more frequently a few years ago.

Um, absolutely. Because yeah. Why is that?

[Eli]

No, I think you're completely right. And, uh, emoticons have the more, they are more dated simply because there was once a time

when emojis didn't exist in the early days of texting and writing. Uh, we didn't have the technological ability to include these little graphics.

Uh, the screen face probably being my favourite one, but, um, and, uh, uh, so, but, but emoticons at some point, I believe it was in the eighties, uh, is recorded the first recorded use of kind of that smiley face in the context of texting. My guess is this phenomenon though is centuries old, right? Probably as old as type as old as Gutenberg.

[Luke]

Sure. As, uh, as old as type people would have been when using typewriters, people would have been using emoticons from the very early days. And even before that, when people are writing letters, they're probably writing the drawing little things within their letters too.

Probably if they're like informal letters, I suppose the symbols that people are using beyond the alphabet, there's like, you know, kiss, hug, kiss, hug, X, O, X, O, which is like really common in handwritten letters. You know, see you soon. Lots of love, kiss, hug, kiss, hug, X, O, X, O, uh, which I, I mean, is that, does that count?

Anyway, we're getting into the weeds there on that.

[Eli]

No, I, I love that because, because, uh, you're right that the use of language to kind of just symbolise, uh, more than, uh, the sound of a vowel or a consonant, which is kind of how the English language works in alphabetic languages work. Um, it kind of takes the

English language into more, uh, other styles of language system where the character has a meaning all its own, right? So a little smiley face has a meaning it's, and, and I, I'm also realising I kind of dodged your question, which one do I use more?

I mean, I think like most people nowadays, I do use emojis more. However, I find myself, I don't know if it's nostalgia, you know, the, the wistfulness of middle age. I don't know.

I find myself regressing or reverting to emoticons more. I think sometimes I find the, the use of emojis a bit loud for the communication, but, uh, a humble, a simple smiley face, right? A colon and a bracket.

Um, I think sometimes it's just a nice way of, of saying, of, of signalling friendliness in your communication. And I think, uh, you know, perhaps this is oversharing, but I, I think I sometimes over-rely on exclamation marks. And this has been a nice way to kind of wean myself off of using them too much.

Cause I think sometimes you get an email and there's too many exclamation marks. And, and this, you know, there's a fine line between friendliness and kind of intense enthusiasm that seems either insincere or perhaps a bit dorky. And I think, uh, it's good to good.

It's good to moderate your use of exclamation marks that I found. Okay. Maybe you don't need so many, just use a little smiley face somewhere, uh, in a text or an email and, and you've done your job.

[Luke]

Yeah, I agree. I also will go for a, just a smiley face emoticon colon followed by close brackets. Um, yeah, I'm, I do that too, but you know, I have to admit that when I do it, I think, Oh, this is going to make me look old.

And then I don't care.

[Eli]

That's right. We are old.

[Luke]

Yeah. I mean, it's fine. You know, it's fine.

Um, uh, it's easier to, to just do colon brackets than to go into my emoticon, my emoji. Um, would you call it board in my library of emojis go in there, find the one I want. I know it's in probably in the one I used recently in the recently used section, but sometimes it's just easier to go colon brackets send, you know, um, the, the Japanese though, have taken this to, um, you know, very sophisticated levels, right?

Cause there's in your book, you've added the advanced distinction after emoji emoticon. We also have cow emoji. That's right.

And these have been around for ages. I mean, this is not new by any means, but they're still brilliant. What are cow emojis?

[Eli]

Yes. So cow emojis are an upright and more elaborate style of emoticon originating in Japan, as you say. So confusingly, the word cow emoji sounds a bit like emoji, which would make one

think that they use graphics, but no, they are actually cow emoji are actually a type of emoticon.

They use punctuation, but they use much more punctuation. They draw on characters that are not in English, uh, to create yes, more elaborate, um, uh, facial expressions, sometimes even little scenes. They're really fun.

And, and I think one that's quite famous in, in the West at least is called, uh, the shruggy and it's, it's, uh, I have an illustration of it in the book for those who are watching, you can see it right here. Um, but it's, it's looks like someone kind of smirking and saying, I don't know. And their arms are kind of up and their shoulders are raised.

So they're shrugging to signal that they have no idea. And it's very adorable, but I've got more at the back of the book as well.

[Luke]

Um, and, uh, yeah, the table flip is, is a classic, isn't it? The table flip. That's right.

She's so, so brilliant.

[Eli]

Yeah, that's right. There's that it's so sophisticated, you know, we've here we are with our simple smiley faces and winky faces and in Japanese Kamoji. Yeah.

There's an angry little cute little guy flipping a table. Um, so a whole scene has been, a whole scene has been laid out with just a few characters. I think it's pretty wonderful.

I know I need to think of more reasons to use that.

[Luke]

Yeah, absolutely. Brilliant. The little flipping the table.

Um, and, uh, that what I like about, one of the things I like about that is, I mean, obviously there's the efficiency of just like these little shapes, these little symbols, which have been, which tell this really nice little story, but the table as well is, is like a very low table. It's definitely a Japanese low table. So anyway, that's brilliant.

[Eli]

Um, and these are, you know, I think Kamoji are, are still hugely in use, um, around the world. So these, these distinctions, although these are kind of the, the terms we use for it in English, emoji, emoticon, Kamoji, all three, uh, you know, are, are not unique to English. Of course they, they exist all around the world.

[Luke]

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Okay.

The next one, next distinction in that I'd like to talk about is, uh, great Britain versus United Kingdom. And, um, this is, this is a big one for me, of course, having, you know, being both English and British and from the UK, if that's possible. And obviously meeting so many people from around the world in my work.

And then I find myself having to explain this on a quite a regular basis. You've done a great job of it here. So yeah, go on, tell us the difference between Britain or great.

In fact, we've got Britain, great Britain. What's what's, what's the great and, uh, and yeah, the UK, the United Kingdom. There's also England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Northern Ireland.

We could go further. There's the British Isles as well, but anyway, anyway, Britain, great Britain.

[Eli]

I don't envy you having to explain that all the time. It must be quite complicated. Um, but yes, so great Britain is a geographical term referring to a single Island or landmass.

Whereas the United Kingdom is a political term referring to the country made up of England, Scotland and Wales, the three of which make up great Britain plus Northern Ireland. So to, to recap, great Britain is just that one Island, that kind of longish Island next to the Island of Ireland. And then the United Kingdom is that Island, uh, politically speaking, which has England, Scotland and Wales plus Northern Ireland, which is a kind of small part of the neighbouring Island of Ireland.

Uh, it helps again to have the visuals, which is why I very happily include them in the book. Um, so you could see, right, there's an Island and then there's a kind of a whole mess of names of countries within the United Kingdom and, and to elaborate on that. So you said, you know, what is, uh, you said, what, why is it great Britain?

Well, historically great doesn't mean better or best. It also means, well, it depends who you ask, right?

[Luke]

The people who've got well, a lot, a lot of people use it like that. That's, that's, you know, a lot of people assume it's that, that it means brilliant. Um, and that's why it's often used to like the great British, this, the great British breakfast pubs, restaurants will advertise the great British breakfast, for example.

Um, meaning this is a brilliant, fantastic, classic traditional breakfast, but yeah, great just is a gig, another geographical distinction.

[Eli]

That's right. Well, uh, you know, again, it just, it's so perfect that we're talking about this on your, on your show that not only in, in English, do we have many words for very similar things, but one word can mean many things. Uh, the layers of sense within a single word.

So great. Yes. Can mean better or, or great or very good rather, but it could also just mean very large.

And that's what it means. So great Britain in the sense of large Britain, um, because historically, uh, it was, I, it was paired at one point with Ireland, which was called little Britain. Um, again, not, not because they were part of the same, uh, you know, they were under the same empire or anything, but just geographically, Oh, look, there's two islands.

One's a little bigger than the other. So great Britain, little Britain, there's no kind of, you know, evaluative, uh, connotation to these words, just size. Um, and then at other points in history, um, there's a peninsula in the West of France called Brittany, uh, Brittany, sorry.

I, and, um, that was also called little Britain at various points in history. So which, which is the little Britain, uh, depends on which period you're talking about. Um, but the idea is simply that great Britain means it's the bigger chunk of land in the area.

[Luke]

Again, from the perspective of France, obviously, where I am at the moment. Um, yeah, there's this plate, this part of France, this sort of part of the Northwest of France, which they call Brittany. Okay.

And then in French, great Britain is so it's the same word and so, yeah, this is the French that they would make the distinction between this Bretagne here, and they would, they considered it to be all part of the same kind of region because the peninsula of Brittany, as we call it in English, is in the same zone as the UK, as the UK, you know, great Britain and Northern Ireland, sorry, and Ireland. This is a similar sort of geographical zone.

And to make the distinction between this peninsula and this Island, they call this one, uh, Bretagne and this one big Britain or Grande Bretagne. And so yeah, great Britain is that it's just that this is the bigger of these things.

[Eli]

That's great. So yeah, it's, it's even more obvious in French then, which is, which is nice. Yeah.

English masks these things we have Britain and Brittany, and perhaps to the, you know, undiscerning ear, you, you just think, oh, those words happen to sound alike, but, but they sound alike for a reason. There's a long history, uh, again, going back to the

mediaeval period where the French and the English were kind of a bilingual society and conquering each other and, uh, you know, going back and forth. So, yes.

[Luke]

But it is conflict is confused. The concept of the United Kingdom is a little bit confusing. You've got these nations, England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, but together they make one sovereign state.

Um, I, I, yeah, I've talked about this in standup, right. Um, I think you've done standup as well, right? I have, I have.

[Eli]

I've dipped my toes in this thing. Yeah.

[Luke]

Yeah. This used to be part of my standup routine. I haven't done it for a while.

Lay it on us. I know you should never do your material in, in situations like this, but I'm just going to quickly go through the bit that I used to do about this, right. Which is how I used to open my act.

I need to bring it back maybe. So if you just, I'm just going to do this, which listeners, if you can follow this, this will tell you everything you need to know, but it also will show you how complicated it is. So, uh, when people meet me, they ask me, ask me where I'm from.

So I'm from London, which is in England, which is in Britain, which is in the UK, which is in Europe. Well, it's not in the European Union anymore, but it is considered to be part of Europe. Although it's not on the continent of Europe because it's an island.

It's not Ireland. That's a different country. That's also an island, but it's actually called Ireland, just with different spelling.

But Ireland is not part of Britain and it's not part of the UK either. Don't make that mistake. Except for Northern Ireland, which despite its name is not actually an island because it's in Ireland, but it's not part of Ireland.

It's actually part of Britain, but it's not in Britain, but it is in the UK. So there you go. That should explain everything.

[Eli]

That was perfect. That was perfect. I think, well, yeah, couldn't have said it better myself.

[Luke]

Another question for you. As a Canadian, Eli, are you also American?

[Eli]

That's one that's frustrating for me, and not for the reason that you might think. Because most people would say no. Most people say, oh, I'm not American, I'm Canadian.

Or people will say, you're not American, you're Canadian. I agree with that, but I also find it frustrating that if I want to say that I am from North America, I have to use that many syllables to say so.

Because culturally, of course, there are differences between Canadians and Americans, but there are also many similarities.

And often in conversation, I want to say, oh, well, in North America, we say this, right? We have this kind of accent, or that's our term for it, right? I live in the UK now, so differences in vocabulary and expression come up all the time.

And I want to say that, but I have to use that many syllables to say so. I wanted to say, in America, or, you know, I think we need a new word. I was thinking, we need a word to refer to that kind of shared culture that isn't so many syllables.

And then, of course, add to that. Sorry, please, go ahead.

[Luke]

I think maybe this is what you're going to say. But also, when you say in North America, you're also including Mexico, which is obviously Spanish, mostly. So if you say, in North America, we say this, well, not everyone does.

So yeah, it's tricky, because it's difficult for you, because you can't really say, in North America, because it includes too much of a diverse set of, you know, cultures, and also too many syllables, as well. North America, it's just too, too many. And also, when people write to me, whenever I use American or America, when I'm talking about the United States of America, understandably, some people who are from the larger continent of America, including everyone in South America, they might get a bit annoyed when we say America to mean the United States of America.

You said, for example, I'm not American, I'm Canadian. The distinction you're making is, I'm not from the United States, I'm from Canada. But, I mean, in a way, you are American, because you're from North America, which is part of America.

[Eli]

Completely. That's right. I think the point you're making is, the United Kingdom is not alone in its kind of terminological woes, because these are all frustrations for me.

I would like to say that I'm American, not in the sense of from the United States, but from the dual continents of North America and South America. And that I would also like to say some term to refer to the English speaking portion of North America, simply for cultural or linguistic similarities, just as a short word for that. So, we're lacking at least two words, one for American, not in the sense of from the United States, and English North American, let's say.

[Luke]

You got like at least eight syllables to deal with. You got like, in the United States and Canada. Is that eight or nine syllables?

Yeah, it's a mouthful, isn't it?

[Eli]

You need like Borealia, or something like that. Borealia?

[Luke]

Did you just say?

[Eli]

Yeah.

[Luke]

Wow, that's nice.

[Eli]

Yeah, because I think the word Boreal means Northern, in Latin or Greek. It's got the Boreal Forest, Aurora Borealis is the Northern Lights. So, I think Boreal means North.

So, Borealia, let's call it that. Let's say, okay, that's Canada and the US collectively. Again, not as a political entity, but geographically and perhaps culturally to some extent.

I'm submitting that to the language gods. Let's introduce it.

[Luke]

We'll see. We'll see what the language gods decide ultimately. Okay, moving on to something completely different.

Envy versus jealousy. I'm sure that my listeners have wondered about this at certain points. Envy versus jealousy.

This includes also the other parts of speech and to be envious, to envy someone, the verb, to have envy, jealousy, and the adjective to be jealous of. So, how would you describe the differences between envy and jealousy?

[Eli]

So, envy is when you want something that someone else has, but jealousy is when you don't want others to have something that you do. So, they're kind of mirror images of one another. So, again, to

just elaborate on that, envy is when you kind of long for the possessions or qualities of I envy your success or your fame or your physique.

Or earlier, I said I don't envy you for having to explain the UK versus Great Britain. So, it's when you want something that someone else has, whereas jealousy is when you don't want others to have something you do. So, you have something and you don't want others to have it.

So, like a classic example is a jealous boyfriend, right? Jealous girlfriend. You don't like it when people hang out with your partner, you feel insecure, you worry about losing that person is a classic example.

[Luke]

What about when you don't want someone to have something that you also don't have and you're just like, I don't have this thing. They're getting it. Now that's envy, isn't it?

That's envy because you want the thing that they are getting. And I suppose if you also don't want them to have the thing that you want, that's the same thing. That's envy, isn't it?

Yeah. Whereas jealousy is like, I've got a thing and I don't want other people to have it. You don't want other people to have something that you feel is yours.

So, if you feel it's yours and you don't want other people to have it, that's like jealousy. So, in a way, I'm thinking like if someone has got something and you feel like that I have a claim to that, then you're feeling jealous. So, there's a bit of murkiness.

[Eli]

Oh, definitely. And in fact, you're right to point out the murkiness because, strictly speaking, these are the definitions, but all the time people use the word jealous to mean envious. So, this is where things get a little messy in the English language.

They do have different meanings, but one of them can mean the other. It only works in one direction. You can't use envy to mean jealousy, but you can use jealousy to mean envy.

So, just to give an example, if you said you just got a beautiful new pair of shoes and you showed them off, I'd go, oh, I'm jealous. Or, oh, I'm going to Greece for the summer. I'd say, oh, you're going to Greece?

I'm so jealous. And what I mean is I'm envious because I want to do that, or I want to be going to Greece. I don't mean jealous in the sense that, oh, I'm going and I don't want you to go.

So, jealous is a bit of a switch hitter. And in fact, my theory is that we use jealous in that sense when the matters of envy are a bit lighter and less intense. So, envy is a more serious kind of like, I envy your success.

I envy the happy life that you lead, and it makes me feel bad. But if you just have a nice pair of shoes or you're going to Spain for the weekend or something, I'd be like, oh, jealous. It's more friendly and light.

These aren't hard distinctions, but that seems to be the convention that I've observed.

[Luke]

Mason. So, jealous is probably used more frequently, right?

[Eli]

Yes, definitely. It's the more common word.

[Luke]

Something my listeners need to think about, obviously, as learners of English, is all these different things. Like, obviously, what do the words mean? But, you know, which ones are more frequent?

Which ones do you need to probably use a bit more often? And there's also grammar as well, right? For them.

Which is, you know, the fact that envy as a verb, we say to envy someone. Like, I envy you, I don't envy you, you know, because you have to explain the UK, and that's complicated. So, I don't envy you.

But you can also envy someone's thing. I envy your talent. I envy your physique, for example.

So, there's that. I was just going to quickly run through the others. So, there's envy the noun.

You can have feelings of envy. You can have something envy, like to have car envy, to have kitchen envy. Right?

If you go to someone's house and you see their wonderful kitchen, you might say, oh, I've got real kitchen envy, meaning I want the

same kitchen. And to be envious is the adjective, to be envious of someone. Right?

So, just quickly, let me just finish this. Jealousy is the noun, to feel jealousy, to cause jealousy, to be overwhelmed by jealousy. The adjective, jealous, to be jealous of someone, is like envious of, same form.

To be jealous of someone's thing. I'm jealous of your kitchen, which is where it sounds like envious. Ooh, it's a bit complicated, but there we go.

[Eli]

You're right. In fact, I hadn't quite thought about just how versatile both of these words are, grammatically.

[Luke]

Or even particular they are, because from the point of view of a learner of English, they're thinking, okay, so I only have to learn these words and what they mean, but I've got to learn that they go in these structures. So, I've got to learn that it's envious of, jealous of. Okay.

So, I've got to learn all these other words, too. You know? You wouldn't say, I'm jealous at something, or I have jealousy, or to be jealous.

You know, these other prepositions as well that are part of the package. That's just an extra layer of challenge for my listeners. Yeah.

[Eli]

That's right. Learning the word is just the beginning. Then you have to know how to plug it in to the structure.

Yeah. You could even say, I envy you your success, or sorry, I envy you, I envy your success, or sandwich it together, I envy you your success, which is kind of a strange form of phrasing you don't encounter elsewhere much, but it is something you occasionally hear. I envy you your success.

But I think you're right to point out that they're both common words. I wouldn't say either is obscure, but jealousy is more often used, and perhaps because it can kind of do both. It can accomplish both meanings.

[Luke]

Okay. Let's have coffee. Not literally, I mean, let's talk about coffee as the next item.

Because on page 10 and 11, you've got latte versus, so listeners, you're going to a coffee shop, right? You just want caffeine to be delivered into your body in some way, but you've got all these options. What's the difference?

In some places, they have it written like this. In other places, they have it written like that. What's going on?

Latte versus flat white versus a cappuccino versus a cortado as well, which is not ... I don't see that very often, but it is a thing. There's also macchiato, I should add too, just to throw in a curveball. It's a baseballing term.

Latte, flat white, cappuccino, cortado. Should we start with that?

And macchiato.

[Eli]

Yes. All four or all five are espresso plus steamed milk. That's why if we leave this world, you've got Americanos, you've got filter coffee.

Setting aside the world of black coffee, we're just talking about milky coffee drinks. Really, you can get clarity just by talking about the amount of milk. Normally, the amount of espresso is the same.

There can be differences, but usually, yeah, it's a double shot, sometimes just a single shot, but it's kind of the same across the board. Lattes have the most milk and so will be the mildest tasting, but will be the bigger drink, but the coffee flavour will be cut quite a bit. Whereas a cortado or even more so a macchiato has the least amount of milk.

It would be the smallest drink, but with the strongest taste. Macchiato would be the smallest. Then going up a little bit, you've got the cortado, but then where things get confusing is with the middle two.

You've got flat whites and cappuccinos. They're not as big as a latte. They're not as small as a cortado or the even smaller macchiato, but they're kind of a medium-sized drink.

Here, the difference is different. A cappuccino normally has a little more air introduced into the milk. I mentioned at the beginning that all of this is steamed milk.

The espresso machines have a little steaming wand and the barista will add air into the milk to give it a bit more volume, a bit more texture. They will do this more or for longer with cappuccino milk to give it a fluffier texture. That can mean that there's a slightly smaller amount of milk going in to begin with, because if you add more volume, you don't need as much.

So it could taste a little stronger, but really the difference is about texture. The flat white will probably have a texture more like a latte or a macchiato. The milk is kind of what you might say is velvety or silky, whereas a cappuccino, there's more air, it feels fluffier.

It's wild to talk at such length about such simple things as coffee, but it clearly does get kind of complicated.

[Luke]

Yeah, but that's good. That's really good. So latte is the largest one.

Am I really going to try and summarise what you just said? Latte, largest, milkiest, flat white cappuccino, very similar, but the cappuccino is going to have more fluffy foam, right? And probably slightly less milk in the coffee.

And then the cortado is like the coffee content is more or less half coffee, half milk with some foam. And then a macchiato is an espresso with a little spoonful of foam layered on the top. So there's going to be less milk in the actual coffee.

[Eli]

That's well done. Yeah. What's your, what coffee do you drink?

[Luke]

I just keep it simple. Just keep the milk out of the picture entirely. And just go for an Americano or a filter coffee or an espresso, depending on what mood I'm in.

There is a difference between an Americano and a filter coffee though, isn't there?

[Eli]

There is. Yes. An Americano is still an espresso drink.

So in a way it is a cousin of all the drinks we just discussed, only there's no milk. So you can either just have an espresso, which is just a shot of coffee pulled through an espresso machine, or you can add boiling hot water to make it an Americano. So it's a longer drink.

But then you've got filter coffee, which is brewed in a completely different way. You use a brewing machine and kind of, I want to say North American style brewing machine, or at least they're very popular there, to produce filter coffee where hot water is poured over ground beans sitting in a bed of, or sitting in a filter and it kind of goes down into a coffee pot.

[Luke]

Yeah. The water filters.

[Eli]

So it's more, a little more gravity based. Yeah. Filter coffee because there's a coffee filter.

Exactly. It's all in the name.

[Luke]

Classic American diner, classic American diner, North American. I mean, Central and North, North American diner.

[Eli]

Borealian coffee style.

[Luke]

Borealian diner.

[Eli]

As people say, as people say.

[Luke]

Well, they will, they will after this.

[Eli]

That's right. And, and in fact, you, you, I think you draw an interesting parallel, which I believe that the Americano was kind of originated in as an attempt to imitate American style filter coffee. This could be apocryphal or, or made up.

So, you know, please check your sources. But the story I have heard is that American soldiers in Europe after World War II or during World War II would ask for this coffee, I think particularly, specifically in Italy. And, you know, in Italy, they had this espresso culture and they said, well, we don't, we don't have your filter coffee, but why don't we just add some hot water to the espresso?

And it's going to fill a mug and look like the coffee that you like. And so it's called an Americano.

[Luke]

Yeah, I can totally imagine that. And that sort of also rings true in Paris as well. You can imagine Americans like, can I get a coffee?

And the waiter's like... and then they give them the coffee and it's an espresso. No, I want an American coffee, you know, like they do in America. And they're like, well, what should we do with these people?

Or just, just put hot water in it, call it an Americano. And then they'll, then the Americans will know. Yeah.

Yeah. Okay.

[Eli]

And they're pretty good. I mean, they did a good job.

[Luke]

Yeah, they did. They did a good job. I was going to say, what's your favourite coffee of choice then?

[Eli]

I'm like you, I'm a black coffee drinker. I will occasionally indulge in the odd flat white, but no, typically I do black coffees at home. And when I'm out, when I'm out, I'll get a filter coffee if it's around.

If they don't have that, I'll get an Americano. So very North American of me. And then at home I do a pour over, which is, we didn't discuss pour over.

What's that? It's very much like filter coffee, but you just, it's just a little ceramic cone that you put directly over your mug, put in a paper filter and you kind of pour the hot water directly over your mug. So it's like a made to order filter coffee.

So instead of making it through a big machine with a pot where it'd have multiple cups, it's just a single cup. And I think the idea is that it's fresher and you know, yeah, it's made to, it's bespoke.

[Luke]

This is the equivalent of making a cup of tea just directly in the mug rather than making it in a teapot. You just plonk the teabag straight in the mug and pour the boiling water right onto that rather than going through the whole rigmarole of making it in a teapot with loose leaf tea and all the rest of it. Actually, my original question for you about your favourite coffee drink, I'm going to repeat it because it's just so funny and brilliant.

It was, what is your favourite coffee drink and why is it not tea?

[Eli]

Oh, what a, that's what we call a loaded question. What is my, so yes, I've answered the first half, I think, which is a pour over, a black pour over coffee or filter coffee or Americano if I cannot find the first two. Why is it not tea?

I actually do enjoy tea, but I, I enjoy coffee more. I love the full flavour. I like the ritual.

I, I, I think that my morning coffee is my favourite part of the day. So I'm perhaps, I'm one of those people that really, really loves his

coffee. But you know what, a perfect, a cup of Earl Grey with a little bit of milk, delightful.

And because if I, you know, you can kind of customise how much caffeine is in it, which is really nice. You know, you can make it a little weaker, a little stronger. So if I want a kind of light little pick me up in the afternoon, I think it's perfect.

[Luke]

Mm. So living in England, you haven't had anyone like make you a cup of builder's tea then, have you?

[Eli]

So I was late to the builder's tea game. I didn't know what that was until I moved here. And I've been to a few caffs here in London.

So kind of, I think what, correct me if I'm wrong, but it's, it's what might be the British equivalent of a, of a diner or, or what we might even call a greasy spoon is kind of the casual way of, of calling a diner in North America where you could get a full English breakfast and beans on toast and all these kinds of classics. And I went, I went not too long ago and got a builder's tea and I loved it. But a builder's tea, what is a builder's tea exactly?

[Luke]

It's just, it's just a cup of what internationally is called English breakfast tea, but generally in the UK, we just call it tea. So when you go to the supermarket and you buy tea, you're probably buying English breakfast tea, which is basically, it's black tea. So builder's tea is, is a cup of English breakfast tea, but it's really strong.

It's just super strong and might've been brewed for quite a long time. And with probably quite a lot of milk in it as well. And I think probably the builder's style, I mean, it's, you know, builder's style is probably strong just because builders, you know, they're like strong things, don't they?

Cause they're builders. But maybe also because in those cafes, those cafes I've seen before, you have actually a large metal drum, which has, which is full of tea. Right.

And so that's a lot of tea that's been brewed in one large drum and it's stayed in there for quite a long time. And there's a tap on the front and they pour the tea out of the tap and it's just super strong because it's been brewing in there all morning and it's on tap. And then they just add a big glug of milk and there you go, mate, there's your tea, you know.

[Eli]

Well, whatever they do, they, they do it right. I mean, I think you're right though. That's, I, I've seen these big crafts and, uh, uh, it is delicious.

I think, you know, old habits die hard and I'll, I'll probably stick with my coffee for now, but every time I have one, I go, yeah, there's nothing wrong with that. I like that. Yeah.

[Luke]

Um, yeah, I just, I, it's one of my things, um, living away from the UK for some reason, you know, you kind of, maybe I've got into tea even more after leaving Britain, but I don't think so. Cause anyway, I was always a, uh, a, a compulsive tea drinker like most Brits are. Um, right.

We, earlier on, we, we mentioned, um, the word presume and also assume, um, can we just cover that one, um, as well?

[Eli]

Yes, this is quite a subtle one. Um, but to assume is to suppose without proof. Whereas to presume is to do so with confidence or authority because there's more inferential support for the thing that you're assuming.

So let me just quickly repeat that. So to assume is to suppose without proof to presume is to do so with confidence because you have greater grounds for the assumption you have more, there's more what you would say, uh, more inferential support. Um, so example, you know, you might say, Oh, I assumed you knew where you were going when the person driving the car got you lost.

So you'll often say you assumed when you were incorrect, not necessarily, but it's your, you, you made an assumption based on very loose evidence or no evidence at all. Whereas you presume when there's strong enough, strong enough, uh, evidence for your assumption that you'd probably be willing to bet on it. Right.

So, so you might say, Oh, your daughter, I presume, you know, you open the front door and you go, Oh, meet Jane. I go, Oh, your daughter, I presume, right.

[Luke]

You know, evidence seems to suggest that she is his, his or her daughter. Exactly.

[Eli]

Yeah, exactly. The context, everything points to that. Yeah.

[Luke]

Yeah. But assuming is that you've got no, um, no evidence that would lead you to that conclusion at all. So be assuming something is sometimes, uh, a mistake as well.

And it's often what you say, it's like, why did you, why did you, you know, um, why did you go here? Why'd you go to this place? Oh, I just assumed that it was the right place.

I'm sorry. It's like, we shouldn't, you know, you should never assume it's, it's almost like the thing that happens sometimes when you've made a mistake and you just, Oh, sorry. I just assumed that this was the right thing to do.

I'm sorry. It's like you put, you put milk in my tea. Why did you do that?

Oh, I just assumed that you'd want it. I mean, why wouldn't you? Um, um, yeah.

Whereas, whereas you, you would probably put milk in my tea because you would, you know, cause I'm English and that's the normal way we drink tea. So I just presumed that I've added milk. I presume that that's to your liking.

[Eli]

That's right. And, and one could still be wrong. Uh, but then you might, then you might change tactics and say, Oh, I'm sorry.

I assumed. Right. So first you said, I presume you, you'd like some tea, some milk in your tea.

And you say, well, yes, that's right. Thank you. But if I was wrong, you'd be like, Oh, I'm sorry.

I assumed I shouldn't have assumed. Um, in fact, that, that reminds me of the, you know, perhaps you don't hear it much, uh, these days, but when I was younger, when you would assume incorrectly, people would say, Oh, when you assume you make an ass of you and me, um, which is a little joke,

[Luke]

you make an ass of you and me, but it's sort of like quite a bad joke because it doesn't quite work because it's, you make an ass of you M E that's a S S U M E, which is how you spell assume. But when you assume you make an ass of you M E, which means it's meant to say you make an ass of you and me.

So you make us both fools when you assume, but it's the joke's so bad, isn't it? It's such a bad joke because you make an ass of you and me, you M E and that's meant to, never mind.

[Eli]

It's not, it's not even true. I mean, you just make an ass of you.

[Luke]

Yeah. The assumer, the assumer makes an ass of themselves, but the other person often is untainted, untouched by the assumption. And it's like, you're on your own, you know?

Um, yeah, it's kind of a lame cringe worthy, uh, joke that people do say that's like, well, when you assume you make an ass of you and me, you what? Oh, Oh, right. Yeah.

Yes.

[Eli]

Listeners ignore this joke. Don't make this joke.

[Luke]

Know that it exists. So if someone says, well, when you, when you assume you make an ass of you and me, you can be like, Oh yeah. Right.

Also, I wanted to just add that presume, I think, uh, presume and assume, assume is probably more common again, like we have with jealousy and envy, jealousy, probably more common. Assume I think is more commonly used. Presume feels a bit more formal, sounds a bit more formal.

So because we do use it in, for example, quite often it's used in a legal context, uh, presumed innocent, right? Someone is presumed innocent until proven guilty. I think it sounds a bit more old fashioned.

I personally would probably end up saying expect. I expect, I expected you, you would want milk or I expect you, I expect you're tired. You know, um, I'd probably use expect in those situations rather than presume because it just sounds a bit old fashioned and a bit formal.

[Eli]

I think that's, I think that's right. I would add also that presume often takes the form of presumably. So one will say, Oh, well, presumably, Oh, where's, where's David?

He said he'd be here. Well, presumably he's just running late or right. Presumably he'll be here soon enough.

So, and, and that kind of, I think, uh, reinforces this idea that you, you feel pretty confident. Um, whereas you might say, Oh, I, I assumed, I assumed he'd be here. It sounds like you're starting to worry.

He might not show up. Right. So, so assumed, assumed is a bit shakier and presumably you feel, you feel confident.

[Luke]

But that's right. Presumably. Yeah.

That's, I think much more common than saying, I presume, you know, Oh yeah. Uh, your daughter, I presume a bit, a bit Jane Austen. Um, but, uh, presumably, uh, he's stuck in traffic.

It's sounds a bit more every day.

[Eli]

Yeah.

[Luke]

So this next one, I think is again, quite an important one for my listeners and quite a relevant one for them. And it's, um, accuracy versus precision. So accuracy versus precision, quite an important distinction to make.

What can you tell us about that?

[Eli]

So accuracy refers to how close you are to the correct answer. Whereas precision refers to how closely or finally you're measuring. Um, so accuracy is really about how, how close you are to hitting the mark.

If you're kind of can picture a bullseye again, we've got, we've got this lovely image. So the, the big rocket on the left, that's accuracy. It's hitting the bullseye.

Um, but precision, you notice it's a much smaller arrow, um, but it's not hitting the bullseye. Um, it's more about kind of the, the fineness with which you're measuring. So, um, I have an example in the book here, which is that, uh, a jar, there's a jar with jelly beans down here.

Uh, there's 76, 76 jelly beans in it. Um, David guesses there are 125. Lucy guesses there are between 50 and a hundred David is precise, but not accurate.

Whereas Lucy is accurate, but not precise. So David's way off the mark, but he's gave you a, an exact number. Lucy gave you a range and she was correct that the right answer is in that range, but she didn't give you an exact number.

So she was a little imprecise, but technically accurate.

[Luke]

This is, this is a reference also to a kind of game that you get in fairgrounds or, or fairs or things like that, where there's a jar of jelly beans and it's competition. See who can guess how many jelly beans there are in the jar. It's a wonderfully fun game, of course, but, um, yeah, it's a typical thing that there'll be a, you know, at a fairground or a street party or something.

And there's, there's kind of various things like games. And one of the games is there's a jar and yeah, you have to try and guess how many beans are in the jar and the winner gets a prize. Uh, so yes, David guesses there are 125.

He's gone specifically for 125. So that is a very precise number, right? Not 126, not 124, 125.

Um, Lucy, however, guesses there are between 50 and a hundred and she's correct because there are 76 beans in the jar. So she is accurate in the sense that she is. Accuracy is how close you are to the correct answer.

She is correct. Accuracy and correctness maybe. Anyway, um, she's closer to the correct answer.

So she is accurate, but, uh, but she, cause she gets the answer in a, in a sense, whereas David is precise, but he's, he, he still doesn't get the answer. Um, um, can I give an example from, uh, for, for learning English, right? For my learners of English.

So I reckon we would use accuracy that we do use accuracy to refer to whether or not you're making mistakes, right? So accuracy, we talk about grammatical accuracy, and this is something that you are, if you're taking an English exam, um, let's say you've

written an essay, which is being assessed, you will be assessed on a number of different, uh, criteria. One of those will be accuracy.

So how many errors are there in your grammar? So that's, that's accuracy, whether you're making errors or not. Whereas precision then would refer to, uh, whether or not you're using exactly the right word to say what you want.

Right? So, so, so that's precision. So I guess accuracy would probably be more like grammar, getting the grammar right, and precision probably is about word choices and choosing the right words.

You think?

[Eli]

Yeah, I think that's a very good example. Um, I perhaps it helps to add that precision. The opposite of precision is imprecision, but vagueness, right?

So accuracy is, I think you're right. Whether or not you're making mistakes, whether you're on the mark or off the mark, uh, in a test experience, but you might also lose marks, uh, for being a bit vague, you know, your, your instructor or teacher might say, you know, correct, technically correct, but you didn't really hit the bullseye. You're kind of in the right area.

Um, you're, you're kind of dancing around the correct answer, but you haven't really read it, you know? So I think vagueness is a helpful word here. And perhaps you could say accuracy is the object or the content and precision is the format.

Are you being a bit vague in how you grab a hold of it or are you being very specific?

[Luke]

Okay. Let's go back to computers and, uh, technical things. We had emojis and emoticons before.

Here's another thing that people will no doubt have come across when using computers. And that is images, photographs, pictures, that we deal with photos and things. We have JPEGs and we have PNGs.

Um, even the way we say these, I would automatically say JPEG. I don't know if there's another way of saying it. Does anyone say JPEG?

I don't think so. It's JPEG, isn't it? JPEG versus PNG.

[Eli]

Yeah. So this one certainly goes beyond the English language, but it is a fine distinction, or at least the distinction most of us wonder. We go, oh yeah, what is that?

I don't know. Computers, let me just download my file and move on with my life. But they refer to, um, their, their image file types and specifically they are different compression formats.

So there are different ways of kind of minimising the, uh, amount of storage that that image would take up. So the raw image would be typically a very huge file, too much for your computer to handle. It would slow down the load time for a webpage, things like that.

So we're always kind of compressing, uh, file sizes to kind of save some space and speed things up. Um, but they do it in different ways. JPEG, uh, JPEGs tend to be, um, they compress more aggressively, so they compress more and they are good for really big photographs, really complicated images that have a lot of data to begin with, um, because they, you need to do some serious shrinking.

Um, and we don't need to get into the minutia of how it does so, but they're good for photographs. Um, you can also customise how much you compress. So you could do it just a little bit.

If you really want to keep the image high resolution, super sharp, or if, you know, it's going to be a tiny little thumbnail image on your website and you don't need super high resolution, you can shrink it, uh, or compress it a lot. Um, but then if you were to blow up that compressed image, you would see that it was really low quality, low resolution. So you have to be careful.

Um, PNGs, uh, don't compress things so much and they are good for very, very simple graphics, logos, typefaces, you know, not photographs or paintings, but computer generated graphics, um, because they compress, uh, in a way that actually doesn't, you can't tell visually. So they just kind of use the, they organise the information that's under the hood more efficiently. Again, we don't need to get too much more tactical than that, but they're good for icons and graphics and logos and very simple things.

[Luke]

Yeah. Okay. Just for me in my day to day, uh, work of, of, uh, making images for my podcast and stuff.

I've for me, just noticed that basically JPEGs are smaller file sizes than PNGs. That's the distinction for me. That's the practical day to day distinction for me is that, okay.

Um, it needs to be less than two megabytes. I better convert it to a JPEG. Uh, otherwise if, if otherwise I'll stick with the PNG, if I'm making like graphics, for example, for YouTube thumbnails, um, I often have to convert it to a JPEG in order to actually upload it to YouTube.

There you go.

[Eli]

Yeah, that's right. Getting into the very specific, uh, into the weeds of, of kind of life on the computer. Um, I should add one more, one more detail and, uh, which is that PNGs rather are, um, they also, uh, can remove their background.

So if you just want the logo, but you don't want kind of a square white box that goes behind your logo, because if let's say you're putting it on your website and the background is green, you don't want a white box around your beautiful logo, uh, then use a PNG because it supports no backgrounds. Okay.

[Luke]

Okay. Some people might be thinking, but wait, this is all brilliant, but what does JPEG stand for? What does PNG stand for?

Uh, JPEG, uh, is JPEG stands for Joint Photographic Experts Group. So this is actually the name of an organisation which standardised this format during the late 1980s and early 1990s. So JPEGs are really pretty old, really relatively old.

So Joint Photographic Experts Group, you can imagine a group of people who like, what should we call this image type? Let's just name it after our organisation. Why not?

And then, and then the PNG stands for Portable Network Graphics. There you go. Um, I've got a bonus question for you, Eli.

What about, um, those images which move a little bit, you know, um, memes, classic memes that we share, uh, through social messaging.

[Eli]

Um, what do I call them?

[Luke]

Well, yeah. So G I F, but how do you pronounce it?

[Eli]

I call them GIFs, but I, I know why you're asking that question because there are people out there, uh, with whom I am bitterly embattled, uh, pronounce it GIF. I'm exaggerating. I have no horse in this race, but yeah.

So I call it GIF. Some people call it GIF. I'm not entirely sure why, what do you call it?

[Luke]

Hmm. See, the thing is that for some reason, I naturally want to call it a GIF, but I should call it a GIF.

[Eli]

Why do you feel that way?

[Luke]

So GIF, don't know why it just seems to come naturally. Don't know why, but GIF is right because it's G, it's graphics interchange format. I think it's that, that's what it stands for.

So the G is for graphics. We pronounce graphics with a G sound, not a G sound. We don't say graphics, it's graphics.

We say giraffe, G, so that might make you think it's G, you know, cause of giraffe and maybe some other words that are G I consonant. Uh, but no, the G stands for graphics. So that's G, so it's GIF for that reason.

[Eli]

Well, I, I applaud your rigour in that. And you know, you have your, you have your tendency, but you see that the lot, the writing is on the wall. The logic says that it should be a G sound, but you know what?

I mean, people should be able to pronounce it however they want. I mean, I think they're, they're both accepted. Um, uh, you know, I know that's, maybe that's a cop-out and I should have a harder take on it, but you know, when you, when you in, in writing this book, you know, you, you, you deepen your appreciation for the flexibility and messiness of language and of the English language and you just kind of enjoy, you enjoy it rather than try to tidy it up.

[Luke]

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I also, I just, I like to believe that we live in a world in which the boat, the two can coexist, that there's just some people who say some people who say Jif and it's all right.

We can, we can make this work. It's okay. This town's big enough for the both of us.

Exactly. Yeah, exactly. Um, pronunciation versus enunciation and that's pronunciation, not pronunciation.

I mean, I don't really get bothered by that error, but I just don't know. I suppose I feel I should point it out. Why am I pointing out if I'm not bothered by it?

Oh, I dunno. But anyway, it is actually pronounced pronounced. It is pronounced pronunciation.

That's the noun. A lot of people say pronunciation anyway. So pronunciation versus enunciation similar, but not the same.

Can you clarify?

[Eli]

Yeah, I love this one. And I think that it is very apt to discuss it in the context of language learning. In fact, and you also point out that to say pronunciation is to mispronounce pronunciation.

So to pronounce a word is to say it correctly. Whereas to enunciate a word is to say it clearly. So one has to do with using the right phonemes.

So the correct syllables and sounds, whereas the other has to do simply with not mumbling. So to give you an example, if I said, oh, what kind of coffee do you drink? I drink espresso.

I would be mispronouncing espresso because strictly speaking, the correct pronunciation of espresso is espresso, not expresso. There's no X there. But if conversely, you said, oh, what kind of coffee do you drink?

And I said, oh, like espresso. I would not be enunciating very well. Perhaps I pronounced espresso correctly, but I mumbled.

I didn't say it very clearly. So espresso is well enunciated, but poorly pronounced, whereas espresso is well pronounced, but poorly enunciated. Mason.

[Luke]

Right, exactly. So for learners of English, obviously, pronunciation is important because, you know, you should probably try to say words in the way that most other people speaking the English language understand them to be said, right? So you should probably be saying London, not London, right?

Because that's not how most people are saying that city name. So if you say, hello, I'd like to get a train ticket to London, please. People might go, oh, right, London.

Okay. So that's pronunciation. But then there's, yes, enunciation is also another thing, which is where you've got to make an effort to speak clearly.

And this is what everyone has to think about, of course. So enunciation, hello, I'd like to talk to you about enunciation. That's clearly enunciated.

Yes. All right, there you go. That's good.

That's useful.

[Eli]

Thanks. And you're right. I think in learning English, you are probably going to be steeped in issues of pronunciation much more than enunciation.

Enunciation applies across all languages. It's always simply a matter of good form and communication to speak loud and clear and make sure the other person can hear the words you're trying to say. But then pronunciation gets more into the weeds of a specific language.

How do you kind of articulate these phonemes in the English language? Again, so that you could be understood. I just mispronounced.

I just said understood. I just mispronounced, perhaps poorly enunciated. Understood.

Great.

[Luke]

I think that enunciation is also connected to confidence as well, quite a lot that learners of English might struggle with enunciation too, because you don't feel confident about it. I mean, that

happens to me a lot in French. I will probably not enunciate because I'm not being confident when I speak French.

And I might be pronouncing it basically all right, but because I'm not enunciating and I'm not speaking confidently, it doesn't work. So, you know, if I say, which I don't normally do, that's ordering bread in the boulangerie. I might have pronounced it more or less okay, but because I didn't sort of enunciate clearly, bonjour monsieur, je voudrais, you know, then that might also affect my effectiveness as a communicator in the language.

We're going to end with this one, which is poisonous versus venomous. Poison, venom, poisonous, venomous. I think this is perhaps an important distinction to make just in terms of life-threatening situations, which, you know, this could be the most important one.

[Eli]

That's right. This distinction can save your life. So, poison is when you bite it, and venom is when it bites you.

[Luke]

So, to... Wait, when I bite something, I don't poison it though, do I?

[Eli]

No, but poison... Sorry, say that again. Sorry.

Sorry, I'm just...

[Luke]

No, no.

[Eli]

If you bite something, it can poison you. So, if you bite a poison apple, or if you chop into a poison mushroom, that's right. But let's say that's actually a perfect example, because a snake that bites a poison apple could be delivering venom into the apple while the apple delivers poison into the snake.

So, this is not helpful. We're jumping into the advanced... But...

[Luke]

Yeah. Sorry, everybody. Sorry.

[Eli]

This shows you the... No, this is... I just like your kind of curveball there.

But yeah. So, poison, you would say, is passively delivered. So, you eat something, drink something, touch something, even inhale something that was minding its own business, and the results could be unfortunate.

So, a poison mushroom, some chemical substance you accidentally drink from the medicine cabinet, poison ivy, right? You could brush up against a plant and it rubs on your leg. These are poisons because it doesn't attack you.

You kind of... You went up to it and kind of accidentally had an interaction with it. Venom, however, is when an animal that kind of is feeling threatened or doesn't particularly care for you, decides to kind of inject you with a toxin by a fang or stinger, or some other kind of usually pointy extension of their body.

So, it's active.

[Luke]

So, let's just look at these. There's one exception I can think of, but okay. So, let's say, yeah, a mushroom.

That's going to be poisonous. Chicken that's not cooked properly. And I'm not talking about a chicken that's going to peck you.

I'm talking about eating chicken that's not... That's poisoning. That's food poisoning.

We talk about food poisoning. A chemical spill. Chemicals spilled out of a factory and went into the water and the fish died.

Right? What's that? Poisoning.

The fish were poisoned.

[Eli]

That's, yeah, I suppose you're right. Although I would say with, at least in the example of food poisoning, I don't think you would say it's poison, but you would say poisoning.

[Luke]

That's right.

[Eli]

Again, this is the slipperiness, even caginess of the English language, but poisoning is also a noun, like poison, but you wouldn't say, oh, it was food poison or the chicken was poison or had poison in it. But you could say you were poisoned or had

poisoning. I'm now getting to the point where I've said the word so many times, it's lost all meaning.

[Luke]

I'm sorry. I'm just giving you a flavour of what I have to deal with in the classroom sometimes.

[Eli]

Oh, I'm sure people throw these. Yeah.

[Luke]

Oh God. Because, you know, you'll say, okay, so let's keep it simple. So, poison is when you eat the thing and then it, you know, you then are poisoned by it.

Okay. And venom is when the thing bites you and puts the venom into you. Okay.

Case closed. But then you realise, oh, wait a minute. Yeah.

But then we do, let's look at the most common usage of the word poison. And one of the most common usages of it in the world is when we talk about food poisoning, because this does happen to us quite a lot. Oh, are you feeling all right?

No, I'm not feeling very well. I don't know. I think I might've got food poisoning from that chicken.

So we do say that quite a lot, but yeah, that's yeah. But we don't say that the chicken was poisoned because if some, if you say the chicken was poisoned, it suggests that someone, some evil person had a little glass bottle with poison in it with a skull and crossbones

on it. And before you ate your chicken, they, they drop, put all this poison all over the chicken like that.

And then put the little, put a little cork in the bottle and then scurried away. And then you're like, Oh, lovely chicken. You know?

Yeah. It tastes totally normal, doesn't it? Yeah.

Fine. And then later on, Oh dear. What's the matter?

I think, I think it's that chicken. Ha ha ha, says the evil person. So that would be the chicken was poisoned.

But, um, normally if it's just not cooked very well and there's bacteria still in there, then you still get poisoned. But we talk about food poisoning. God, I hope everyone's all right.

[Eli]

I hope you, I hope you're not being, uh, mentally poisoned by this complexity, but I think that, um, you're right. And back in the day of, you know, Kings would have poison testers, right? Because people were always trying to kill them and take their, take the throne, take the crown.

Um, so they'd have people test the food for poison and maybe we could just say, right, well, food poisoning, you know, you wouldn't say venom because the chicken didn't attack you. Um, and with its famous stinger, but, but then at the same time, you, you complicate things even further, which is that if someone wants to attack you, they might add poison to the food. So it's in a way that's active like venom, but the person doesn't have biologically, you know, they're not, they're not producing toxins.

Both of them are toxins. But I think venom means that anatomically biologically, the animal produces a toxin for the express purpose of defence or offence. I would say maybe we can be play it safe and say venom is the much narrower category and more precisely defined when in doubt, say poison, anything else that you come across.

Yeah.

[Luke]

Venom is in animals. I don't think there are venomous, are there venomous plants? Do we talk about venomous plants or poisonous?

We talk about poisonous plants. I think it's most, much more common to talk about poisonous plants, like poison ivy, as you said, which is a plant that if it touches your skin, it can sting you. But that is poison.

[Eli]

I think the rare, the one exception I think is there are a couple of plants like the Venus fly trap. And I, I don't know if you would say poison or toxin or poison or venom in this case, but I think there's the Venus fly trap and there's another one. I can't remember what it's called, but there are, I think they're pitcher pitcher plants.

Yes. And, and bugs are attracted to the scent and they fall in. I don't know.

Is that a poison or a venom?

[Luke]

Let's not worry about it. Just don't just never talk. Just listeners just never talk about picture plants and you'll be all right.

[Eli]

Yeah. But animals, I think 99.9%, if not 100% animals.

[Luke]

Yeah. So it's animals. So a snake bites that's venom venomous snake Hornet or a bee or a wasp stings and that's venom.

So venom from a bee, a wasp or an insect scorpion spiders have venom snakes. But frogs, frogs, poison, poison, frogs, you've got poison. And that includes also if someone takes the poison from a frog and puts it on a dart and fires it at you and it hits you in the neck.

That is also poison. Even though it's go is it's going into you. That is still poison.

[Eli]

That's right. Take this book with you when you travel through the Amazon or any sort of, you know, area filled with animals, venomous animals, or where you might, you know, be subjected to a blow dart and look up the book and you might be.

[Luke]

If you're feeling really ill and you don't know how to describe it, just make sure you've always got this book in your back pocket so you can say, Oh, I think I've been, uh, I think it's, it's poison. No venom. It's venom.

Suck out the venom, suck out the venom quick. Okay. Look, we got really, uh, into some very specific areas there.

I hope that I didn't confuse things with some of my tangents. Um, everybody, but, uh, if you're in doubt, you know, you could always get yourself a copy of the book and it's laid out very clearly and simply with lots of others, loads of others, and also lots of nice illustrations. Um, who are the illustrations by?

[Eli]

Uh, her name is Liana Fink and she's wonderful. Okay.

[Luke]

That's nice. So before I let you go, actually, uh, yes, it would be really interesting to get some insights into Canadian English because people always talk about British English and American English as if these are the only two versions of English in the world, you know? Um, but there are obviously lots of other Englishes, um, and yeah, Canadian English.

So people lump it in with American English possibly, but it may in fact have a lot more in common with British English than people might realise. Um, can you tell us a little bit about Canadian English, Eli?

[Eli]

Absolutely. Um, and you're right. We, we often get squeezed out by our two bigger siblings.

Um, not unlike, you know, speakers of English in Australia or New Zealand, South Africa, but, but I think Canada, especially, uh, by our kind of neighbours to the South, we are, uh, kind of fused with

them and sometimes our idiosyncrasies are forgotten. Um, so I think the biggest, uh, kind of category to point out would be spelling. So we are famously and a bit confusingly a real hybrid between British and American spelling, but I think this would be the area in which our British, uh, kind of heritage shows up most.

So we're probably, our spelling is probably a little more British, skews more British than American. Um, the biggest examples would be, uh, we, we have kept the O-U's and the R-E's, uh, that the Brits also have. So words like colour, honour, favourite, we keep the O-U, um, whereas Americans do not.

They just, uh, they drop that U. Um, and then we also keep the R-E spelling of words like centre and theatre, um, again, something Americans do not do. So we're very British in that way.

And then we also, uh, however, rather, um, we end words like realise and analyse and theorise with a Z, uh, like Americans, but we call it a Z like the Brits, uh, whereas Americans call it a Z. So, uh, those would probably be the two big categories. There are a couple others, um, words like catalogue and analogue.

We, we kept the U-E at the end, whereas Americans, they ended just with a G, uh, which always looked strange to me. Um, uh, but then we say aluminium like Americans. Um.

[Luke]

Yeah. Cause we say aluminium.

[Eli]

That's right. That's right. So that's a spelling and pronunciation difference.

Um, we've, we, we went team America with that one. And then, um, words that like counsellor, I think as in C-O-U-N-C-I-L counsellor, um, an American, I believe would end it I-L-O-R, whereas a Brit would have I-L-L-O-R. And so words that end in an L that then are extended with a suffix like that, uh, Brits double up on the L and Canadians usually do too.

But that's one where, uh, it does depend on the word or even both are accepted. So Canada in Canada, spelling is a bit of a mess, um, or at least a bit of a hybrid. Um, then in vocabulary, I would say our, um, uh, lexicon is very, is, is more American, um, with a few exceptions, but I would say one, um, one term that is ubiquitous in Canada.

There are a few, but a very common word that is ubiquitous in Canada, everybody knows it and uses it, but virtually no one that I know outside the country knows it or uses it is the word toque. And that is our word for a winter cap or a beanie. What would you call it?

A beanie?

[Luke]

I'd just call it a woollen, a woollen hat, a woolly hat, a woolly, a woolly hat. That's what I've always called it from childhood, a woolly hat. My mom would say, you know, if you've got a woolly hat, if you've got your woolly hat, woolly hat.

[Eli]

Gotcha. Okay. So yes, I mean, uh, in Canada where winter is fierce and famous, uh, we, uh, need our woollen caps or woolly caps.

Um, and we call them toques and that is spelled, uh, surprisingly T O Q U E. And it is spelled that way because it derives from French Canadian. Um, so yes, we call it a toque in America or in the United States.

Uh, they typically call it a beanie. I believe in some places they might call it a watch cap. Um, but, uh, in, in Canada, no one calls it a beanie.

And, and frankly, we, we look on that word with, if not scorn, at least, uh, a frosty squint because toque we're proud of our toques and we love our toque, our toques. Um, and, and that's a word that I think I will carry with me to the grave.

[Luke]

Um, I'm afraid that I have heard people in the UK calling them beanies. And I think that's probably, it's like that American style woolly hat. If you call it a woolly hat, that doesn't sound very cool.

Um, and beanie, I suppose is a bit more cool. Not that it's that cool, but I'm afraid we're not saying toque, toque, I'm afraid. But so people say like, my brother has a beanie, he will wear a beanie and he'll talk about his beanie.

And I'm like, what? You mean your woolly hat? Um, yeah.

So yeah, beanie is used. It's like, you know, a lot of stuff from the United States does obviously get exported everywhere.

[Eli]

Well, you know, if, if this podcast, if we could see this as the kind of inner chamber of, of like, if we've popped open the hood of the English language and we could make a few changes, I want to make a vote for calling it toque. I think it's a nicer sounding word. Beanie to me doesn't conjure.

It makes me think of a bean bag kind of sagging off the back of your head. I don't like that at all. Toque.

Um, I think it's a beautiful French Canadian word, uh, with a kind of distinct spelling. Um, and, and I think I'll call it that even at the risk of being misunderstood. Um, the other, the other probably even more famous, um, Canadianism in our vocabulary is the tag eh, uh, spelled E H.

So Canadians are famous for saying, uh, oh, oh, he's really funny, eh? Or, oh yeah, he he's been gone for a while, eh? Um, and eh in these contexts means something like, do you know what I mean?

Or don't you agree? Um, and it's, it's again, very common across all of Canada to the point that we're made fun of it for it. Not unlike the way we pronounce words like about and house.

Um, although while I'm on that subject, I'll just say a lot of Americans say, you say a boot. And no, we do not say a boot. Uh, we say about, which is admittedly different than about, but we're not referring to a footwear.

It does sound different. At least it's not boot.

[Luke]

It's a book. It's say it again. So I would say about, and you would say about, about, about, so rather than, Ooh, and you called it, uh, raised, uh, what, what did you call that again?

[Eli]

It's called Canadian raising. That's the kind of phonetic for this phenomenon. Yeah.

[Luke]

Canadian raising. And I guess this is because I don't know if this is correct, but what, do you know why it's called raising? Is it because you're going up in the, uh, in the phonemic chart, there's the owl sound is sort of like bottom right-hand corner in the diphthong section.

And then if you go up, so you go up, then you end up in the O sound. Um, is that why? Because you're raising you meaning you're going up to the next sound.

I don't know why it's called raising.

[Eli]

So I'm definitely out of my depth here. Um, I'm not an expert in phonetics, but my understanding is that, um, with, with diphthongs, um, and certain vowel sounds, the, the, the sound arc is mapped a bit like a curve, right? So you kind of, if you can picture a little ski hill or a little bump, the ideas, and I think Canadian raising refers to the phenomenon of kind of starting later up the hill.

So, so it's almost like we, we start later and end later on that curve. So if you would say, ah, we, we kind of pick up where you left off

and go, oh, right. So we're, you're going from the bottom to the top of the hill and we're kind of picking up where you left off and going, oh, you know, we'll just go downhill from here.

So, oh, so yeah, if you wanted to do a trip thong and kind of say the whole thing, you know, about, uh, which I don't recommend. Um, yeah, it would sound like you're from everywhere, but we, yeah, we, we kind of, I think the idea is we're going, we're going up the hill. Something like that anyway.

[Luke]

Yeah. Yeah. Just to kind of keep it, um, in layman's terms, let's say, yeah, as we said before the beginning of this conversation, um, yeah, that is a real marker of, of, uh, of Canadian, uh, English that, you know, you hear that in words like house, which you have said a few times and you know, it's, you can hear the way you say it.

And then the a thing, as you said, this kind of tag, this tag that is added on the end is like really typically Canadian. Um, and it's something that, you know, Canadian people are known for. Is it everywhere in Canada or do you find that in certain parts of Canada that that is more common the a adding a.

[Eli]

So far as I can tell, it's pretty widespread. Um, I I've, I've not spent great periods of time in the West of Canada, uh, in Vancouver, for instance, but, um, in Toronto, where I grew up and in Halifax in the East coast, where I've spent a lot of time where I was born, um, a is pretty common. So yeah, perhaps perhaps any Canadian listeners can chime in and tell me whether or not I'm wrong, but I'm pretty sure it's, you know, even we're, we're known for it, but I

think for good reason, it is something we, we say a lot and it's useful.

I mean, it really is. It's, it's like saying, right, but it's even, it's even quicker.

[Luke]

Yeah. So just to demonstrate. So, you know, just stuff like, Hey, this book's really interesting.

Hey, or, um, you know, should we go and get, let's go and get a coffee. Hey. Although I sound like I'm Australian say it too.

Right. So maybe the way I'm saying it sounds a bit more Australian or let's go and get another coffee. Hey, this book's really good.

Hey, it sounds Australian. How would you say that again? Just let me hear a Canadian person say it again.

[Eli]

I think you're totally right. I think the way you just said it is, is more common in, in Australia and New Zealand, uh, where, where it is also common and I think serves a similar, but not identical function because there it's more like, it's almost kind of reinforcing their point. Whereas for us, it's inviting you asking if you agree.

Um, so I'd be like, Oh yeah, he's been a while. Eh? So it's kind of, it's not, it's not a, it's not down.

It's kind of up. It's like, Oh yeah. Yeah.

[Luke]

It's like, so this, for me as an English teacher, this falls into the category in my mind of tag questions. So tag questions are just a really, really common, important part of spoken English, uh, where you, you, you add, you've got a statement that's not a question and you add a tag on the end to turn it into a question. And so it's normally done with the auxiliary verb and the, um, the, the subject of the sentence.

Right. So for example, uh, this book is really good. Uh, isn't it?

Okay. Um, this cop, yeah, isn't it? And that's doing the same job.

Right. And then in terms of, and so you've got, isn't it? Um, and then all the, all the different possibilities.

So, um, you like cheese, don't you? Right. So, um, so the auxiliary verbs, you've got, you know, be, uh, have and do.

Yeah. So, so you've got tag questions with, with, uh, with those. So, uh, be, you, you, you, you are Canadian, aren't you?

Um, this is good coffee, isn't it? Uh, have. So with present perfect tense.

So, uh, you've, you've, you've finished, haven't you? Um, and you've, you've done this before, haven't you? And then do for, um, uh, for just main verbs without a, uh, an auxiliary verb attached to them.

So things like you like cheese, don't you? You know, in the same way that we use do or don't to conjugate negatives questions with

just verbs, just what I call main verbs, not auxiliary verbs. So that's when we don't do or don't also in the past did, uh, didn't.

So, uh, you, you know, you've been living in London for two and a half years, haven't you? Um, you arrived two and a half years ago, didn't you? Right.

So anyway, these are tag questions. And so in terms of pronunciation, yes, they can go up or they can go down. And, uh, the ones that go up is when you're, you're not sure you need confirmation.

So, uh, this is the, this is, this is Luke's English podcast, isn't it? You go, yeah, it is. Don't worry.

Yeah. So you need confirmation. And then if it's going down, you're basically, you're basically sort of compelling someone to say yes.

So this is Luke's English podcast, isn't it? You go, yeah, yeah, yeah, it is. Yeah.

So, so going down, yeah. Going down at the end is basically inviting agreement. Right.

So that's what you said about Australian English. It's like, this is really good. This coffee is really good.

Hey, so that's a going down. So it's inviting agreement and basically the other person has to go. Yeah, it is.

It's really, really tasty. Whereas if you're going up, it's that you sound less sure you need confirmation. Um, is this, this is, this is my coffee, isn't it?

Yeah. Yeah. Don't worry.

That's your coffee. Yeah.

[Eli]

That sounds right.

[Luke]

So my question is how is A used? Do you tend to go up or down in Canada?

[Eli]

And, and, and I wonder why we go up, I think, but we, it is to, uh, it's to see if the other person agrees to kind of reconnect with them and see if they're following along or, or if they disagree. Um, I think it's, yeah. When you offer an opinion on something like, Oh, this is, yeah.

You take a sip of coffee at maybe you go to someplace, you think the coffee is not going to be very good. And then you take a sip. You go, Oh, that's pretty good.

Eh? So I almost think it's, it's a bit maybe offering a surprise opinion. Maybe there's been a turn of events.

You go, Oh, this is pretty good. Eh? Like I didn't think it was gonna be, but it is.

What do you think? Um, so I don't, I don't know. I mean, I think these types are pretty versatile and probably serve a variety of, of overlapping functions, but, but it's something like, don't you agree?

Know what I mean? Um, but I think inviting, inviting, drawing attention to it a little bit more. Um, but yes, you're right.

In terms of intonation, it's different than the Australia, which, which I think you're right. It kind of goes down. It's more like, Hey, we go, Eh?

[Luke]

Just where, if I'm just working on my Canadian impression, I've got to go, Eh? At the end. So, um, so like, uh, this, this book's really good.

Eh? No, I still sound Australian. Cause I'm going, Eh?

Like an Australian.

[Eli]

I was pretty good. I thought it was good.

[Luke]

Yeah. Really?

[Eli]

Yeah.

[Luke]

I first noticed this. I first noticed that there was this film. I don't know what it is, but I caught it on TV once.

Um, and it was Rick Moranis and someone else. And they were playing these really sort of typical Canadian characters, um, from some sort of fairly remote town, I think. And they were going around and every single thing they said, they added, Eh?

At the end. And I was like, wow, what's going on here? I must've been, I don't know how old I was.

I was a teenager or something. Caught it on TV. Who are these characters that are saying, Eh?

At the end of every single thing they say. And I was like, Oh, I worked out. Oh, this is so, this is a Canadian thing.

Oh, okay. This is a Canadian thing. Eh?

[Eli]

Perfect. I think that's perfect. Yeah.

I mean, number one, I'm embarrassed that I, this does ring a bell, this show, uh, or that you're referring to. Um, but I'm afraid I'm, I'm forgetting what it is. Rick Moranis is, is well-known.

[Luke - interrupting]

Oh, hey, listeners. Eh? How are you doing? Eh? I think I kind of worked out what it is, eh?

Okay. That was me attempting to do the accent and I don't know. I've picked it up a bit better, but anyway.

So I just asked Eli or just said to Eli that I noticed this Canadian thing of saying, eh? At the end of everything, eh?

Right. This Canadian thing of saying, eh? I first noticed that when I saw a film on TV, uh, and it was, um, I didn't know what to make of it when I first saw it, but there was these two funny characters and everything they said, they said, eh?

At the end, eh? And, um, uh, Eli can't remember what it is, but I've just worked it out.

It is the film *Strange Brew* from 1983 starring Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas as these two brothers, Bob and Doug McKenzie who basically like to sit around and just be very Canadian. They drink a lot of beer and they're quite funny. And yeah, that's the way they speak, Eh?

Uh, with that very, very typically Canadian, um, thing of saying, eh? At the end of everything. Here's a little clip so you can see what it actually sounds like.

[*Strange Brew* clip]
I'm Bob McKenzie.

This is my brother, Doug. How's it going, eh? Welcome to our movie, eh?

Okay. Our topic is, uh, movies. Okay.

Uh, first off, the difference between movies and TV, eh? Okay. Go to TV.

This is the difference between TV and movies, eh? So? Okay.

Go back to movies. Uh, another topic. Zoom out, eh?

Let's show them how big the screen is, eh? Zoom out. Look how huge it is, eh?

[Eli]

Yeah. I think, eh, to me, I think there's something to this. There has to be a bit of surprise.

Like you didn't think it would be this way or maybe not. It has to be, but that's the, that's the environment. That's the context where it feels most right to me.

Like, so this book's pretty good, Eh? I almost suggest that you wouldn't have thought so. Not that, not that I, I'm sure that's not what you meant, but you feel like, oh, dictionary fine distinctions.

It's pretty good, Eh? Like, it's like, I didn't think it was going to be like, I think when I was thinking of it, a sample example, like I just saw the movie Naked Gun, uh, the remake with Liam Neeson, um, uh, and Pamela Anderson. And I don't think I went in with very high expectations.

And I was like, that's pretty funny, Eh? Like to my friend, right?

[Luke]

Like, because you're going in thinking this is going to be pretty rubbish. Yeah. You know what?

It's a bit like saying actually. Yeah. So it was pretty funny.

[Eli]

Yeah. I think that's a good parallel.

[Luke]

I've worked out the name of the film. It's called Strange Brew. Rick Moranis.

I mean, it's quite, it's quite an obscure film. I mean, that wasn't like a test of your Canadian-ness. Um, you know, apparently it's, I think it's a very obscure film and I've, it's not one I've ever heard anyone talk about, but it's just lodged in my brain as my, oh, that's that Canadians say Eh all the time.

So Strange Brew, Rick Moranis and his comedy partner, Dave Thomas play the characters, Bob and Doug McKenzie, two stereotypical hosers.

[Eli]

That's a, yeah. A derogatory term for a Canadian. Uh, I mean, very, very mildly derogatory.

Um, that's right. Hoser is, is a kind of slightly derogatory slang for Canadian. And then, uh, a more neutral slang for Canadian is a Canuck.

Uh, C-A-N-U-C-K. Um, it's also the name of the Vancouver, uh, hockey team.

[Luke]

The Canucks.

[Eli]

The Vancouver Canucks. Yeah.

[Luke]

Wow. Wow. Wow.

Interesting stuff. I'm going to try and find some clips of Strange Brew now and see if, um.

[Eli]

I'm also going to.

[Luke]

If this was real or it's just some sort of dream that I had when I was 15 or something.

[Eli]

I love, uh, I think like many Canadians, uh, love to see Canadians mocked, uh, in film. Uh, you know, there's, there's the South Park movie with Terrence and Philip or they're, I guess, recurring characters in that show. There's, um, a funny Simpsons episode where they go up to Canada.

There's, um, uh, perhaps a little more obscure, but an old, very funny TV show called Kroll show with this recurring, uh, sketch around that's making fun of the show Degrassi junior high. And it's just exploding with Canadian stereotypes, but then they make up a whole bunch just for good measure. And it's just so funny.

[Luke]

It's great. It's nice to learn these things when you start to see, okay, so yeah. All right.

So Canada and the United States, yeah. They're like different countries, aren't they? That's right.

That's what I realised.

[Eli]

It's the first fact you need to know. Yes. Um, despite our accents.

[Luke]

So, uh, Eli, thank you very much for talking to us about your book today. I've really enjoyed the conversation. It's been a lot of fun.

Um, and yeah, have, have, have a lovely day. I hope that you enjoy your day in London. Um, and you know, um, yeah, London.

Um, and, uh, yeah, just have a nice cup of coffee. Um, whichever version you choose or just go and get a builder's tea.

[Eli]

I might chase it with some builder's tea. Have a, have a fully caffeinated day. Um, yeah.

Thank you so much. It's been, it's been, uh, it's been great. Uh, thanks so much for having me.

Ending

[Luke]

So there you go. That's the end of that. Thank you again to Eli for his contribution in this episode.

I really enjoyed that. I really enjoyed talking to him. I found him to be a great guest.

Uh, very, uh, clear, very articulate and just a nice friendly person to talk to. Um, I think that we were both enthusiastic about all of that. And I hope that the enthusiasm came across during the conversation and sort of converted into enthusiasm for you too.

Uh, I feel like there was a lot in there. I feel like there was, that was very rich in terms of, uh, not just the, the, the specific things, the specific distinctions we talked about and the details about Canadian English, but also just the, the way that Eli, uh, expressed himself, the way he put his thoughts into words. Um, a lot of bits of vocab for you to notice and stuff.

It might've been a challenging episode because, because it was so kind of detailed and there was some advanced things in there. A lot of that stuff was quite advanced level about subtle shades of meaning and it may have been difficult to keep up with the way the conversation flowed here and there and how it all was so specific. Right.

Um, yes, I think that, um, maybe getting a copy of the book again, here we go. I'm promoting it again, but getting a copy of the book I think could be a good idea because it's very clear and precise and accessible. Um, where our conversation was quite rambling.

Uh, the book is not, it's, it gets straight to the point and it's has a definite focus on clarity and precision. Um, and, uh, as well as

being just interesting and entertaining with, uh, some, some very nice illustrations, um, as well. So, um, I think it's the sort of book you can dip into, um, as well as just reading from cover to cover.

And it will definitely help with your English either by teaching you about specific distinctions in meanings of the similar words, or also because you'll pick up various other bits of language simply by reading it. And I think that generally it will help you to think in the right way about language and the choices you make about how you use English. So definitely a, a good book to give your English a boost.

Um, as I said, did I say this in the introduction? I don't remember. Um, but, uh, if you were a subscriber to Luke's English podcast premium, then, you know, you'll know that this is exactly the sort of thing I do in premium episodes actually is to often highlight subtle distinctions between synonymous words or focus on broadening your vocabulary with lots of examples.

And I do try to clarify, uh, certain, certain details about, you know, some of these really useful words, which might seem quite similar. So I do spend quite a lot of time, uh, doing this kind of thing in my premium episodes. Uh, so if that sounds interesting, you could always sign up teacherluke.co.uk slash premium to get a copy of the book, just search for dictionary of fine distinctions and you'll find it wherever you get your books. There are also some links in the description as well. Okay. All right then.

Cool. Thanks again to Eli. Thanks again to you and leave your comments in the comment section.

I would love to know your thoughts about any of the things that came up in this. Uh, did you learn anything new? Did you forget anything that you used to know?

I don't know if that has happened. Anyway, I'll stop this now because I don't want it to get on. I don't want it to go on forever.

Um, have a lovely morning, afternoon, evening or night, wherever you are in the world. Don't forget to be, um, lovely to each other, have a nice coffee or a cup of tea or whatever it is. And I'll speak to you next time.

But for now, it's just time to say goodbye. Bye. Bye.Bye.