

Chatterbox #15 – Introducing Moheb Soliman

Transcript

Maura: Hello, everybody. This is Maura, and I have a friend here with me. Say hi.

Moheb: Hello.

Maura: That's Moheb and he's a new addition at Culips. Actually, we're going to start a writing course at Culips soon, right?

Moheb: That's right.

Maura: Yeah, and so Moheb and I have been working on that together. So, we thought we'd give you a Chatterbox podcast so you could get to know him a little bit more. So, this is your Chatterbox podcast about Moheb, and if you want to see the transcript, or more explanations or quizzes for this episode, go to our website, Culips.com, become a member, and check out the Lipservice. Now, let's get started. Let's get to know Moheb. How's it going? How are you today?

Moheb: I'm doing great.

Maura: Good. So, can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Moheb: Well, my name is Moheb and I'm new here to Canada. I'm actually originally from Egypt, from Alexandria, but I moved to the **United States** when I was a kid, and I lived in a few different places in the **United States**. I lived in Oklahoma and Ohio, and I went to school in New York, which I really loved, and, you know, I spent some time in Michigan and California. I've hopped around.

Maura: Yeah, for sure. So, how old were you when you came to the **U.S.**?

Moheb: I was just six years old.

Maura: OK, so do you remember it at all?

Moheb: You know, being six years old, I knew how to speak Arabic and, you know, I remembered my family's homes and uncles' houses and everything, but my experience, really, of Egypt is more kind of a family experience. You know, when I moved to the **U.S.**, I didn't know how to read or write Arabic and that's

something I kind of haven't really **picked up** yet. So, you know, I have kind of an interesting relationship with it.

Maura: So, do you know how to speak Arabic still?

Moheb: Yes I do. I still remember it, because, again, you know, when you're with your family, even if you're in a new country, you still kind of **keep up** those kinds of relationships.

Maura: That's cool. I didn't know that.

Moheb: Yeah.

Maura: Cool. So, do you have an accent when you speak Arabic? Because you clearly don't have an accent in English.

Moheb: I don't. I'm lucky enough not have an accent in either of those two languages.

Maura: That's pretty cool, I think, to be fluently bilingual in two languages. It's really lucky.

Moheb: I just need to learn the reading and writing part in Arabic and then I'll be great, I'll **be set**.

Maura: OK, cool. So yeah, you said you lived in Ohio, Oklahoma, New York ... was it New York City?

Moheb: Yes.

Maura: OK. And Michigan too. What was your favourite place?

Moheb: Well, you know, I have a really **soft spot in my heart** for the Midwest, but I really enjoyed New York City. Yeah, it was really fun.

Maura: OK. Yeah. Well, I've only been to New York City once and I thought it was amazing, like most people do. But what is it like to live in New York City?

Moheb: It's, I would say, really, really busy and really crowded. I think everything that you experience when you go as a visitor are true when you're living there, but because you're there longer, I think you can kind of, you know, get some of the more quiet experiences that are there. Just being able to step out of your house and walk for hours. I mean, that's really one of my favourite things that I did there—is just go walk around and see different parts of the

city and how the city changes **every other block**, you know, you move into a new part of town. I think that's a really nice part of living there.

Maura: Which part of New York City did you live in?

Moheb: I lived in Queens in Astoria. Where, in fact, there is a huge population of Greeks and Egyptians.

Maura: So, we just talked a lot about America and you being American and different places there. Now you're in Canada. How did you come here?

Moheb: Well, it was really straightforward: I really was **sick of** my job, I wanted to go back to school.

Maura: OK.

Moheb: And I found a really, really fantastic education program in Toronto.

Maura: OK, so it was really all about school.

Moheb: That's right. Now let me say also that I've always really loved Canada. I have a lot of relatives in Montreal, actually, so I have been visiting Canada for a long time, as a kid.

Maura: OK, so you knew Canada a little bit too.

Moheb: Yeah, just a little bit.

Maura: OK, so you moved to Toronto. How long did you live there?

Moheb: Just a couple of years.

Maura: OK. Did you like it?

Moheb: Yeah, I did. I like Montreal a lot more though.

Maura: Interesting. Toronto and Montreal have a little bit of **rivalry**. They try to compete to be a more interesting or cultural place.

Moheb: Agreed.

Maura: But Montreal is pretty cool.

Moheb: That's right.

- Maura: We like Toronto too.
- Moheb: Yes, we do.
- Maura: Of course.
- Moheb: Yes, we do.
- Maura: OK, so how long have you been in Canada?
- Moheb: Well, I think it's probably coming on three years now. I moved to Montreal in September. So I've spent, you know, some time here, but I haven't really figured it all out. I'm still new.
- Maura: You're still getting to know the city.
- Moheb: That's right.
- Maura: So, of course Moheb, I have to ask, since you are American, what are some differences that you've seen between Canada and the **U.S.**? It's a big question for Canadians and Americans, I know.
- Moheb: There's a lot of similarities and I think also a lot of differences. I think one of the differences that everyone sort of talks about is that Canadians are very friendly and open and I think that I've found that to be very true.
- Maura: OK.
- Moheb: So, I've really enjoyed that. You know, it was easy to make friends and find friends here.
- Maura: Yeah, I find that actually Americans are really friendly. I think Canadians are polite, but sometimes they can be very quiet and Americans talk to everybody.
- Moheb: I think that you're right. That is a very big difference actually: *polite* versus *friendly*. Yeah.
- Maura: Exactly. Both positive things.
- Moheb: Very much.

- Maura: OK, cool. Any other things that you've noticed that are different between Canada and the **U.S.**?
- Moheb: Well, you know, **off the top of my head**, I think that the colour of the money in Canada. You know, Canadian money is very colourful ...
- Maura: Right, right!
- Moheb: And **United States** money is all green.
- Maura: Yeah.
- Moheb: So, that really makes a big difference.
- Maura: For sure. I mean, when I go to the States, it's hard to tell the difference between the money. I mean, you have to search for the actual number. But here, it's faster.
- Moheb: I admit, I admit, I prefer the coloured money more.
- Maura: Yeah.
- Moheb: But one more thing about money. Here you've got **twoonies** and **loonies** and in the **United States** we don't have that, we have dollar bills. So I find that I spend more money here because I just think it's a bunch of change in my pocket and I'm willing to let go of it faster.
- Maura: Exactly.
- Moheb: Very smart.
- Maura: Yeah. So the **loonie** is the Canadian slang for our dollar coin.
- Moheb: That's right.
- Maura: And then the **twoonie** is the slang for the two-dollar coin.
- Moheb: That's right. It took me a while to remember that. I kind of thought it was a little funny to say those words, but I got used to it.
- Maura: They are pretty funny words, actually, and if you check out the Lipservice I'll explain the origin of those funny words in Lipservice. All right, Moheb, that sounds good. I think now our listeners know a little bit more about you and hopefully some of you will be interested in taking the writing course.

Moheb: That's right.

Maura: Thanks a lot. This has been the Chatterbox podcast. Don't forget to go to our website, Culips.com: C-u-l-i-p-s.com. Thanks a lot. This has been Maura ...

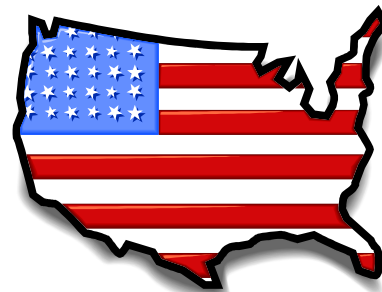
Moheb: And Moheb ...

Maura: See you later.

Detailed Explanation

United States

Moheb is from the United States. There are many ways you can say the name of this country. For Canada, there is only one way to say it: *Canada*, but there are lots for the United States of America. See? There's another one!



- United States of America
- United States
- America
- US or U.S.
- USA or U.S.A.
- The States

Hop around

Moheb moved around to different states in the U.S. as he was growing up. *Hop around* is like a cute slang way to say that you moved a lot. It can mean to move to a new city (like it does in this case), but it can also mean that you move around a room quickly.

A *hop* is literally a kind of short, little jump. Rabbits hop. And people might hop when they are dancing or playing a physical kind of game.

To hop around is to spend time in one place and then move to another, usually not spending too much time in one place. You can hop around at a party, talking to different people. You can also hop around at an exhibition to look at different artists. You can hop around to different jobs, if you move from one job to another and only stay at the jobs for a short time.

Pick up

There are so many ways that we could use *to pick up*. The way that Moheb uses it might be different than the ones you know. Moheb uses it when he talks about picking up reading and writing Arabic. In this case, *to pick up* means to learn in a casual way or by experience. *Pick up* is often used to speak about learning languages.

Here are a couple examples with *pick up*.

Harry: I picked up some Spanish when I was travelling in Spain last summer.

June: And this is how you fix a door that doesn't close properly.
Oliver: Thanks for showing me that. I am picking up some carpentry skills thanks to you.

Pick up can be used in a bunch of other ways. The most literal meaning of *to pick up* is to take or lift up something from somewhere below, like the ground or floor. But remember, there are lots of other ways to use it too, including going to get someone at another location or to search for an attractive partner at a bar.

Keep up

To keep up something means to continue or maintain it. We can also simply say *keep* or *keep on* to mean continue. In this case, Moheb says that his family still keeps up some traditions. So he means that after coming from Egypt, his family still continues to practice Egyptian traditions in the United States.

Here are some examples with *keep up*.

Teacher: Good job, Kevin. Keep up the good work!
Fiona: Keep up dancing. You were really good at the show yesterday.
Bob: I started running every night.
Charlie: How long do you think you will be able to keep that up?

Just like *pick up*, *keep up* also has some other meanings too. *To keep up* can also mean to try to stay equal with someone else, like, "I can't keep up with him because he is so fast."

Set

Like *pick up* and *keep up*, *set* is a word that can have a variety of meanings too. If we use *set* as an adjective to describe a person, like Moheb does, it means that the person is ready and prepared. Sometimes we know what they will be ready for, other times it just means ready for the future in general.

In this episode, Moheb's example speaks about the future in general. After he learns to read and write in Arabic, he will be ready for the future where he might need to read and write Arabic.

Let's look at a few more examples with *set* meaning *ready*.

Karly: Once I finish my report then I am set.

Clay: Are you ready for the trip?
Andy: I am all set.

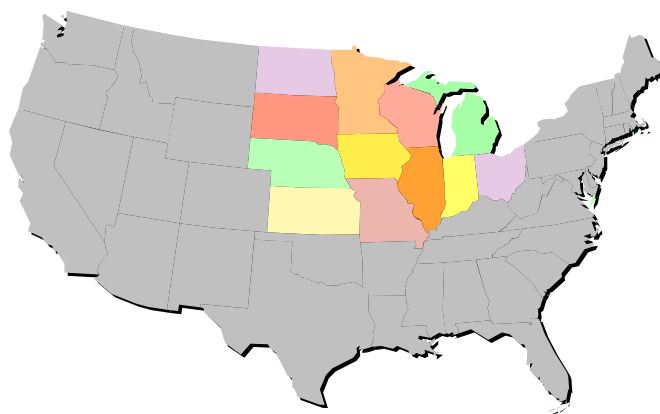
Sheila: I am set for school in September.
David: So you bought all the supplies you need?

The first examples with *to be set* were general and the second two examples were about being ready for specific things. When we say what we are ready for, we say *to be set for* something, just like in the third example.

A soft spot in my heart

A cute little expression for you! We can say that we have a soft spot in our hearts or simply a soft spot for something that we love or have sentimental feelings about. Moheb has sentimental feelings for the Midwest.

This is a map of the area in the United States referred to as the Midwest (or, the Midwestern United States). The coloured states in the middle are part of the Midwest.



Here are some examples with *a soft spot*.

Ivan: How do you feel about Sylvie now?
Patrick: I will always have a soft spot in my heart for her.

Eric: I will always have a soft spot for his music.
Bernard: Yeah, he made some great albums.

Every other block

Every other is used to talk about things in sequence. The best way to explain this is to give you an example. If we say that Johnny works every other day, it means that he works one day and then not the next. So, Johnny works Monday, but not Tuesday, and then Wednesday, but not Thursday, and so on.

As another example, you could say Molly travels every other week, meaning that one week she travels and then the next she doesn't, and so on.

Ben needs to delete every other row in the chart. He needs to delete rows 1, 3, 5, 7, etc.

Block was explained in the April 2008 Catch Word episode #27 – *To Cut to the Chase*. A *block* can be used to mean approximately one intersection to another intersection. It is often used when giving directions. For more information, check out the Lipservice for *To Cut to the Chase*.

So, Moheb says that New York City changes at every other block, or every two streets the city changes. In this case, he is using the expression to speak generally.

Sick of

Moheb says that he was sick of his job. Does this mean he was sick or ill? No! *To be sick of something* means that he didn't like it anymore. *To be sick of something* means that you can no longer tolerate something, and you want to stop it.

Here are some examples.

Cathy: I am sick of this bad weather. When will it stop raining?

Nick: Are you going to move to another city?

Trish: Yeah, I might. I am sick of this place.

Joel: I am sick of arguing about this.

Chris: Me too. Let's just stop talking about it.

If you want to use *to be sick of* with a verb, you need to use a gerund (the –ing form) after, like, "I am sick of arguing."

Rivalry

A rivalry is a like a competition between two things. This competition has usually been going on for some time, so a competition in one day is not a rivalry. Sometimes brothers and sisters argue a lot, this is called a rivalry. Montreal and Toronto have a competition to be the better city, this is the rivalry between Montreal and Toronto.

Off the top of my head

Off the top of my head is a true idiomatic expression. This means that you think of something in the moment. You use this expression when you give an idea or try to recall something that you just think of at that time. You have not thought of this before, considered it carefully, or done any prior research.

When we think of an idea in the moment and use the expression *off the top of my head* it also indicates that you are not completely sure of what you say because you have not had much time to think about it.

Here are some examples using this expression.

- Howard: Who should we invite to the party?
Kiley: Off the top of my head, I would say we should invite all our work colleagues.
Howard: Do you think that could be too many people?
Kiley: Maybe you are right. I am not sure.
- Carl: What kind of things do we need for our trip?
Georgina: Well, I haven't really thought about that much.
Carl: Me neither. But off the top of my head, we probably need to make sure to bring bathing suits and towels.

Change: Loonies and Toonies

We use the word *change* to talk about coin money, like cents in Canada and the U.S. We have dollar bills and then we have change. When we use *change* to talk about money it is always plural, but never takes an s, like some change or as Moheb says "a bunch of change."

Canadian coins have slang terms, and most of them are the same in the U.S. Here is a list.

The following terms are the same for U.S. money.

- 1 cent – a penny
- 5 cents – a nickel
- 10 cents – a dime
- 25 cents – a quarter



In Canada, we also have a one-dollar and two-dollar coin. For the one-dollar coin the slang term is *loonie*. This started because the bird on the coin is a loon - *loon* to *loonie*. After that, we got a two-dollar coin. And because the first one was called a *loonie*, the second coin used the number two and created *toonie* – two to *toonie*.

Yes, we have funny words for our Canadian coins!

Quiz (see the answers at the end of this Lipservice)

1. Which form does not represent the United States of America?

- a) U.S.
- b) U of A
- c) The States
- d) The United States

2. How has Moheb hopped around?

- a) He has lived in Oklahoma, Ohio, Michigan, New York, and California.
- b) He knows how to speak Arabic.
- c) He likes basketball.
- d) He likes studying.

3. Moheb says he hasn't picked up reading and writing Arabic. What does *pick up* mean in this sentence?

- a) He doesn't know the Arabic alphabet.
- b) He has never looked at an Arabic book.
- c) He hasn't learned reading and writing in Arabic through experience.
- d) He knows how to read and write in Arabic.

4. Stella: I'm _____ for my trip!

Please fill in the blank.

- a) set
- b) put
- c) sit
- d) pit

5. Greg: I have a _____ for my first girlfriend.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) special spot in my head
- b) small spot in my heart
- c) special spot in my heart
- d) small spot in my head

6. When you think of something in the moment, you think of it *off the top of your* _____.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) head
- b) heart
- c) mind
- d) fingers

7. Canadian one-dollar coins are called what?

- a) Tloonies
- b) Loonies
- c) Boonies
- d) Duckies

Answers: 1.b 2.a 3.c 4.a 5.c 6.a 7.b