

Simplified Speech #035 – Plastic bags

Episode description

Plastic bags are a major source of pollution. In this episode, Andrew and Morag talk about how people use bags in Kenya, Korea, and Canada. Take a listen and learn some great English expressions!

Fun fact

A centipede is an arthropod with many, many legs—so many that its name comes from the Latin words for hundred and foot. That said, they don't actually have one hundred feet!

Expressions included in the learning materials

- To creep [someone] out
- Chain [store]
- Shoot
- As I understand it
- In retrospect



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: You're listening to the Culips English podcast. To download the study guide for this episode, which includes the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real world examples, and a quiz, visit our website, Culips.com. C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Andrew: Hey, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Morag: And my name is Morag.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Hi, Morag.

Morag: Hey, Andrew.

Andrew: How's it going?

Morag: Pretty good, pretty good, and you?

Andrew: Morag, you just mentioned that there was a really creepy crawly bug in your room.

Morag: I'm not always scared of bugs, and I'm also not scared of rodents or anything. But this one had way too many legs. And it had a raised back with way too many more legs.

Andrew: Ew.

Morag: It was, I don't know what it is, some form of centipede, maybe? But it just **creeped me out** so thoroughly.

Andrew: What's your philosophy on dealing with insects? If a spider or a weird bug comes in your room, are you the type of person that will kill it, or do you try and just keep it alive and let it go outside?

Morag: I take them outside, so I usually will get a piece of paper and a cup and put the cup over them and a piece of paper underneath and take them out. I don't think you need to kill things.

Andrew: Very good philosophy, and I try to do the same unless it's a mosquito, then ...

Morag: Oh no, yeah.

Andrew: Sometimes I'm not too kind towards mosquitos.

Morag: Well, I think that's a little different, because they literally eat you. It's personal.

Andrew: Yes.

Morag: With mosquitos it is personal, so I think that is OK.

Andrew: Yes, I agree.

But, Morag we are going to talk about a completely different topic today. And, actually, I was reading the newspaper and I read an article about plastic bags, plastic shopping bags, and I thought it would be cool to talk about today.

So, what we'll do is a Simplified Speech episode and, guys, if you don't know, the Simplified Speech series that we have lets you listen to 100% natural English conversations. But we speak just a little bit slower than we do in our everyday, regular lives. And a great way to study with this episode, everyone, is to visit our website, Culips.com, and download the study guide. So, if you're interested in really taking your English to the next level, maximizing your time here today that you're spending studying English, go to Culips.com to pick up the study guide.

OK, Morag, so let's get into it here. Actually, the newspaper article that I read was in The New York Times. And it mentions that Kenya, the country in Africa, Kenya, they are going to put new laws in place banning plastic bags. And, actually, it's pretty severe, somebody that is selling or importing plastic bags could face up to 4 years in jail.

Morag: Oh my god.

Andrew: That's pretty intense, hey?

Morag: That's a lot of time in jail for plastic bags.

Andrew: Yeah, now I'm sure this is, maybe, referring to somebody who's dealing with a lot of plastic bags, maybe, like a grocery store manager or something like this. But, still.

Morag: Yeah, I know that sometimes laws are put in place that seem unnecessarily harsh because there's a particular problem that a country or just a place is dealing with. So, **as I understand it**, they have a big problem with too many plastic bags, right?

- Andrew: Exactly, yeah, and they're really just bad for the environment, you know?
- Morag: Oh, yeah.
- Andrew: Terrible for ocean life, marine life, and they're just hard to dispose of or recycle, so. This makes sense to me, and I guess I noticed, maybe 10 years ago in Canada, that people started to transition away from using plastic bags.
- Morag: Definitely. Do you use plastic bags when you go shopping, Andrew?
- Andrew: OK, well, first of all, I have to say that my situation in Korea is totally different than my situation in Canada. So, when I'm in Canada, 100% of the time I'm using reusable shopping bags. So, fabric bags. I always use fabric bags in Canada. And in Korea I use fabric bags 50% of the time.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: The other 50% of the time I do get a plastic bag from the store, from the grocery store, and that's because the way that my garbage is set up in my apartment complex is that I can use those bags as garbage bags.
- Morag: Ah.
- Andrew: So instead of buying garbage bags, and the system for how Korea deals with its garbage is way too complex for this episode, but essentially garbage bags are more expensive here, because you're paying a tax.
- Morag: To throw things away?
- Andrew: To throw things away, so if I just use my shopping bag, I can save some money, so.
- Morag: I think that's OK if you are using a plastic bag anyway, there is plastic that has to be used. So, you're at least reusing one, maybe, one time?
- Andrew: Yeah, it's a stretch, I don't like doing it, but I mean you gotta throw your garbage out in something, so.
- Morag: True.
- Andrew: Yeah, what about you in Montreal, Morag? How do you shop? What do you use, paper, plastic, fabric? What kind of bag?
- Morag: I have a number of fabric bags, that I use for shopping, or a backpack, or a combination. Yeah, it's pretty easy to just, you know, grab a fabric bag when you're leaving to go to the store, and they hold more, so, especially grocery shopping. You can just have, like, two big bags for your whole

week, as opposed to having many little plastic bags cutting into your hands. I hate that.

Andrew: You know, **in retrospect**, it's weird why we didn't use fabric bags all along.

Morag: I think it's the convenience factor, right? Because if you're at the store and you can have a plastic bag, it's good if you forgot the other one.

Andrew: Yeah, that makes sense, if you forget it.

Morag: Which has happened to me—every once in a while, I will forget my fabric bag. And then it's good, at least for me, that the stores have plastic because I can still carry my things home. But, I don't know, I think I would be all right if they got rid of the plastic bags 'cause then you just couldn't forget your bag. You'd need to learn.

Andrew: You'd see people walking down the street with their hands filled with groceries, when they forgot their fabric bag at home.

Morag: You'd learn quickly, yeah.

Andrew: Now, in Korea, you can get a plastic bag, but a lot of **chains**, grocery stores, convenient stores, these kinds of places, will charge you a small fee to get a plastic bag. So they're trying, Korea is trying, to reduce plastic bag usage this way by passing the charge onto the consumer, to pay a small tax to get a bag. What about in Canada?

Morag: That's happening here too, probably not everywhere, I know it's more city dependent or region dependent. But there's a lot of places in Montreal, a lot of depts charge for plastic bags. And I know back home in Victoria, BC, there are lots of places that do not give out plastic bags or charge for them. So, I think Canada is following Korea there.

Andrew: Morag, you just said an interesting word, dep, a lot of depts don't give out plastic bags. What is a dep?

Morag: A dep is a very Montreal-specific term. A dep is short for a dépanneur, which is a French word, and it is the Canadian French term for a corner store or a convenience store.

Andrew: If you ever visit Canada and you hear somebody say the word dep, then you'll know that they've lived in Montreal, and you'll know that they are talking about a convenience store.

Morag: Deps are great.

Andrew: Morag, just before we wrap it up here, I have one more question for you.



Morag: All right, **shoot**.

Andrew: And that is, do you agree with this harsh stance that Kenya is taking? To punish people, you know with jail time, perhaps, for using plastic bags.

Morag: Well, if it's the case that they would maybe put someone in jail for 4 years for coming into the country with a plastic bag, I'm not OK with that. But, I doubt that's the case. If it is that they are taking a very harsh stance to try and stop businesses from giving out plastic bags, I think that's OK. It's basically making them illegal, and you'd need to take some kind of a stance to get rid of them, because they're everywhere. And you can't ban them from the rest of the world.

Andrew: Well, Morag, we have listeners all around the world, and I know we have some listeners in Kenya, so Kenyan people, please get in touch with us, shoot us an email at contact@culips.com to let us know what the plastic bag situation is on the ground over there in Kenya. And I'd also be curious to hear from our other listeners around the world, to find out what actions your country is taking, if any, to limit plastic bag use. So, again, guys, just send us an email to contact@culips.com.

Again, our website is Culips.com. That's the place where you can download the study guide for this episode. And it's also the place where you can learn more about Culips and what we do, and also listen to our back episodes, our older episodes. So, please visit the website, and I know you guys are on Facebook, everybody's on Facebook these days, so please visit our Facebook page as well, Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast. Goodbye, everybody.

Morag: Goodbye, everybody.

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Detailed Explanations

To creep [someone] out

To creep someone out means to make someone feel uneasy or possibly scared. In this episode, Morag talks about finding a bug with many legs in her room and how **it crept her out**. Reactions to bugs are often associated with this expression. You can say those bugs give you the creeps.

Andrew also referred to it as a creepy crawly bug. That expression can refer to creatures that creep along the ground (like worms) or ones that crawl (like spiders and insects). You can call those types of scary creatures creepy crawlies. Similarly, you can say that the tingling feeling you get under your skin when you're scared or disgusted by a bug is because the bug made your skin crawl.

People or situations can also **creep someone out**. When encountering a strange person who leaves you with a sense of discomfort, you can say, "That person really **creeped me out**." Walking down an empty street at night is a situation that might **creep you out**. Also, someone who has that effect on you or on other people can be called a creep.

Here are a couple more examples with **to creep [someone] out**:

Bowe:	My girlfriend was watching a reality show on the National Geographic channel yesterday. It was about people camping out in the wild and having to live off of rainwater and eating bugs and stuff. So disgusting!
Van:	I know! I can't watch those shows. They make my skin crawl.
Bowe:	I know! It creeps me out that she's so interested in that kind of thing. I think she wants to take me camping with her. I'm not going!

Beth:	That guy over there has been standing across the street and looking over here for 20 minutes now.
Cate:	That's weird.
Beth:	I try not to look over, but he keeps on staring. It's creeping me out.
Cate:	Wanna change tables?
Beth:	Yeah, I don't want to be sitting around, ogled by some creep all day.

Chain [store]

In this episode, Andrew uses the word **chains** when talking about grocery and convenience stores. In this context, he is using the word **chains** to mean **chain stores**. A **chain store** is a store that has many locations and shares the same ownership. Think of a metal chain, which has a series of buckles linked together to make one unit. **Chain stores** are linked together like that.

You can talk about different types of **chains**, such as restaurant **chains**, bookstore **chains**, or supermarket **chains**. Individual store locations are often called franchises. If you want to say the opposite of a **chain store**, you can say a stand-alone store, an independently owned shop, or a mom-and-pop store. A mom-and-pop store implies that it's a family-owned, single-location store in which the owners themselves work.

Note that there is a difference between a **chain** and a brand. Take a company like Nike. They have a brand of products that can be found in many stores, but they also have Nike stores. Those Nike stores would make up their **chain stores**.

Here are a couple more examples with **chain [store]**:

Brian:	Wanna go grab a coffee?
Deke:	I don't know. I'm not into coffee shops all that much—they're kinda boring. All these chain coffee shops look the same. They all want to be Starbucks. It's not very inspiring.
Brian:	No, no, this place is cool. It's a mom-and-pop shop. It's from the 70s, so the design is pretty, umm, groovy.
Deke:	Sure, then, let's check it out.

Nora:	There are so many new restaurants popping up on Wellington Street. We should head out there for dinner.
Beth:	I'd rather not.
Nora:	Geez, you're so unadventurous! Why do you always choose a chain ?
Beth:	Well, you always know what to expect, and they're cheaper. I don't want to go to a new, expensive restaurant that turns out to be awful!
Nora:	Fine. You go to McDonald's; I'll go to the Cambodian restaurant.

Shoot

At one point in this episode, Morag says, “All right, **shoot**” after Andrew suggested he ask one more question. In this context, Morag is telling Andrew to go ahead with his idea. She is consenting. The expression is linked to the idea of taking a shot at something. If you are taking a shot at something, you are making an attempt.

The expression **shoot** can stand alone. However, it is often accompanied with a word of agreement, like “OK, **shoot**,” “Yeah, **shoot**,” or “Sure, **shoot**.”

Adding a subject to this expression would sound funny. You can’t say “Sure, you can **shoot**,” “I will **shoot**,” or “Is it OK if I **shoot**?” when wanting to ask a question.

Here are a couple more examples with **shoot**:

Lyle:	I really can’t decide what to do this weekend. It’s going to rain, I don’t have the car, and my friends are out of town.
Nate:	Do you wanna know what could really be fun?
Lyle:	Shoot.
Nate:	There’s a new indoor mini-golf place near where I live. Let’s go there.
Lyle:	Oh. I thought you said it would be something fun.
Nate:	You’re a killjoy.

Dean:	The plans are set for the car wash on Saturday, so be ready for that.
Erica:	Do you mind if I make a suggestion?
Dean:	Sure, shoot .
Erica:	There will be a soccer tournament near our car wash the day after. I think we would see more traffic and get more customers on Sunday instead. What do you think?
Dean:	OK, I’ll see if the parking lot is available on Sunday instead.

As I understand it

In this episode, Morag asks, “So, **as I understand it**, they have a big problem with too many plastic bags, right?” This is a confirmation question, meaning she’s offering her understanding on the topic and wants the other person to say if she is correct or not. Morag sets this up by saying **as I understand it**. She is also leaving open the possibility that she may be wrong.

Essentially, when you are saying **as I understand it**, you are offering your opinion. There are many variations on this idiom. You can say as far as I understand, as far as I know, the way I understand it, and if I understood correctly.

There are also other equivalents that could be said, such as in my opinion, it’s seems to me that, and to my mind.

Here are a couple more examples with **as I understand it**:

Sheila:	In the end, management has concluded that there will be no Christmas party this year because of the new budget. Any questions?
Bill:	Yes. As I understand it , the company has an emergency fund. Can’t we use that money?
Sheila:	Good question, but the answer is no. Management has said that a Christmas party is not an emergency. Sorry.
Bill:	Can we pay for it ourselves?
Sheila:	If you want!

Josh:	Let’s recap. We have no food, only a litre of water, one canister of gasoline, and no electricity. And the rescuers can only come in 2 days?
Mark:	As I understand it.
Josh:	Does the battery in your phone still have any power?
Mark:	A little.
Josh:	Can we please call them again?
Mark:	It wouldn’t hurt.

In retrospect

The idiom **in retrospect** means that you are thinking back on something. Here, Andrew says, “You know, **in retrospect**, it’s weird why we didn’t use fabric bags all along.” In this instance, Andrew is thinking back on something and reaching a new conclusion. Years ago, he probably didn’t think of the usage of fabric bags at all. But, upon reflection, he now has a different opinion on them.

Usually, when saying **in retrospect**, you find yourself changing an earlier opinion because you have thought about it again. In most cases, you can substitute the idiom **in retrospect** with in hindsight, thinking back on it, or upon reflection.

You would usually say **in retrospect** when talking about yourself, but you can also use it when speaking to someone else. For example, you can say, “**In retrospect**, do you think you made the right choice?”

Here are a couple more examples with **in retrospect**:

Father:	You know what? I was thinking about it and, in retrospect , I think your punishment was a little too harsh.
Son:	Really?
Father:	Yes. And if you want to go to the movies with your friends this weekend, then you can go.
Son:	Wow! Thanks, Dad!
Father:	But the next time you break something in the house, don’t blame it on the dog, all right?
Son:	Yes, Dad. Thank you.

Shirley:	Your sound system is off the hook! It’s so clear.
Poppy:	Yeah, but it was crazy expensive. And I had to take it in to the shop a couple of times because there was a bit of a problem with the bass.
Shirley:	Oh, that sucks. But, still, great sound now. So, in retrospect , was it a good purchase or not?
Poppy:	Overall, I would say yes. A bit of a pain, but I’ve had a few cool parties since. All in all, not bad.



Quiz

1. If you tell someone as I understand it, that's because:

- a) you don't remember
- b) you don't understand
- c) you want to tell them the truth
- d) you want to share your thoughts

2. True or false: Franchises are a part of chain stores.

- a) true
- b) false

3. The idiom in retrospect means that you:

- a) will go watch old movies at a local theatre
- b) will think about something in the future
- c) have already thought about something
- d) really like retro clothing

4. True or false: If you are saying shoot to someone, you are telling them it's OK for them to offer their opinion.

- a) true
- b) false

5. Centipedes creep Gregory out. You can say that they:

- a) don't taste good
- b) have too many legs
- c) make him feel uncomfortable
- d) want to go jogging

Quiz Answers

1.d 2.a 3.c 4.a 5.c

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