

Simplified Speech #121 – May catch up between Andrew and Kassy

Episode description

In today's Simplified Speech episode, Andrew and Kassy are back with another catch-up session. In today's episode, Kassy talks about her spring break trip and Andrew updates us on his adventures in obtaining his driver's licence.

Simplified Speech is a great series for intermediate learners. Tune in to hear natural English conversation spoken at a slightly slower speed than our Chatterbox series.

Fun fact

In Canada, about 27 million people, or 73% of the population, have a driver's licence. In South Korea, about 32 million people, or 62% of the population, have one. This fact makes sense since South Korea is much more densely populated and connected by more robust modes of transportation than Canada.

Expressions included in the study guide

- Tourist trap
- Fast friends
- The highlights
- To take something to heart
- On your end
- Discombobulated



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. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hello there, everyone. My name's Andrew.

Kassy: And I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Hello there, friends. Welcome back to the Culips English Podcast. Today, we have a Simplified Speech episode for you. If you're not familiar with what that is, well, let me explain. Simplified Speech is the Culips series where we have completely natural English conversations that are clear and easy to understand. And we hope that by studying and listening to this series, you can improve your English listening and speaking skills.

I'm joined today by my cohost, Kassy. Hey, Kassy, how's it going?

Kassy: I'm doing great Andrew, and you?

Andrew: I'm doing pretty well, as well. And we are going to catch up today, Kassy. This is the third installment of our kind of new episode theme where we've just been updating listeners on our daily lives and chatting about what's going on with us day-to-day.

We'll get into all of our updates here in just a moment. But before we do, I want to give a shout-out to one of our listeners from Germany, Maya, who left us a five-star rating and a kind review on Apple Podcasts. Maya wrote, "Amazing podcast. I always learn interesting and useful vocabulary here. And the awesome part is that I can do this while I have a great time listening to you guys. Thank you for all this amazing content, smiley emoji." So, Maya, thank you for that comments. And listeners, if you want to get a shout-out here at the start of a Culips episode in the future, we would be happy to do that. What you have to do if you want to hear a shout-out is to leave us a five-star rating and a nice review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts and we'll try our best to make that happen.

There is a study guide for this episode available on our website, Culips.com. In the study guide, you'll find a transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations and examples and so much more. It's a great way to study with us and we highly recommend it. It's available for all Culips members. To become a Culips member and grab the study guide, just visit Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

OK, Kassy, let's get caught up.

Kassy: Sounds good.

Andrew: The last time we talked, Kassy, was a few weeks ago and we took a little break from recording, you and I, because you had spring break. Spring break. So could you tell us what you did on spring break? I'm pretty curious to find out what happened.

Kassy: Yeah, so our school had a 1-week spring break vacation. And I decided to go on a road trip with my friend. And we went to three places. We went to the beach on the northwest coast of Korea for a day and a half. And then we travelled inland to go to some famous **tourist traps** that are famous for Instagram photo ops in spring. There's lots of flowers blooming. Cherry blossoms.

Andrew: Nice.

Kassy: And the last 2 days we hung out in Seoul.

Andrew: All right, so you were all over the place. And you went with some friends?

Kassy: Yeah, I went with two girlfriends. And the two of them had never met before. So I was kind of the one that brought the group together. And I was a little nervous how their personalities would mix. But, oh my gosh, we had such a great time. We became **fast friends**, the three of us. It was so cool.

Andrew: That's great. And, yeah, I've been in that situation before, too, where you've got two friends who don't know each other. You are kind of the one that they both know. And then, yeah, it's kind of like you're rolling the dice, right? Maybe they'll get along and maybe they won't.

Kassy: Yeah, and it's also interesting how, like, your personality can change depending on which friend you hang out with. I feel like when I hang out with the one friend that lives near me, you know, we usually take more pictures and dress in cute girly outfits and drink coffees together. But with my other friend, you know, we love to play board games and be more nerdy. So when you bring those two worlds together, it's just this cool, strange blend of the two.

Andrew: That's great. That's great. Oh, I'm happy you guys all got along well together. So I'm sure you had lots of fun. But is there a moment or two that were **the highlights** of the trip for you?

Kassy: We went to Nami Island, which is a famous island here. And I didn't know this, but there are a lot of animals on that island. We saw ostriches, peacocks, and bunnies. And I thought it was the cutest thing. We took so many pictures with the bunnies.

Andrew: So we should just break this down a little bit for people outside of Korea who are listening to this. Nami Island, it's not an island in the ocean, right, Kassy? It's—where is it exactly? It's near Seoul somewhere.

Kassy: Yeah, it's in Gyeonggi-do, which is the region outside of Seoul, maybe an hour and 20 minutes outside of Seoul. And it's just a tiny little island on a river. So it only takes you, you know, 15, 20 minutes to walk from one point to the other or to the end.

Andrew: Yeah, I've never been there myself. But I know it's a popular tourist destination. And I've seen on Instagram some pictures of ducks and other cute animals. I remember a duck or a goose, specifically, one of my friends visited Nami Island and took many pictures of that bird. So I knew there were animals there.

Kassy: Yeah, I can say, though, that while I had a good time, and I liked the animals, Nami Island is one of those places that I was definitely deceived by by Instagram. Because when you look at the Instagram pics, it looks, you know, out of this world amazing. But when you go there, I mean, it was quaint. It was nice, but it was not fabulous like you see in the Instagram pictures.

Andrew: Yeah, Instagram can be deceiving. That's why what I like to do, whenever I see some place that looks cool on Instagram—you know, you see, like, a really amazing picture, maybe it's a cool cafe or a restaurant or something—is I always search the hashtag and look at all the hashtags and try and find the crappy photographers, people who are about my skill level of photography and see what their pictures look like. And I think that's like, oh, that's what it will really look like when I go there.

Kassy: That is a good idea, actually. I will **take that advice to heart**.

Andrew: Yes. Use the hashtags to your advantage.

Kassy: OK, well, Andrew, how about **on your end**? What's new?

Andrew: Yeah, so it's been a little while since we talked last time. And I have an announcement to make about my thrilling saga about getting my driver's licence here in Korea. I know that I've been updating people about this on Culips for feels like a year. And finally, I got my driver's licence. So I'm happy to announce that I did my final test, I passed. And I am the proud owner of a driver's licence again.

Kassy: Congratulations.

Andrew: Yeah, thank you. So once I received my learner's licence, and I had to prepare for the final test, as I mentioned before in an earlier Culips episode, the process to get a licence here, you have to do a paper test. And then you have to do a functions test on a closed course, which I failed the first time and then passed the second time. And then finally you have to do a road test with the instructor. So after you pass the second stage, then you can get your learner's licence. And when I had my learner's licence, it was time to prepare for the road test.

And I learned that here in Korea, there are two options that you can do to prepare. You can go to a driving school and learn with an instructor and actually do the road test at the driving school as well. That is one option. And the other option is just to wing it and go for it yourself, to prepare for yourself. And I of course chose the second option, the wing it option.

Kassy: How did it work out?

Andrew: It—because it's cheaper and because I feel like I already know how to drive. I took driving school classes in Canada, and the rules between Canadian driving and Korean driving are pretty similar. There are some differences, but 95% of the rules are the same. So I felt like I would be OK with just winging it.

And it's really interesting, this system that they have here, Kassy. I don't know if you know about this, but when you do your driving test, you go to the driving licence centre, you meet the person who will, I guess, judge you, it's almost like they're a judge, right? They're evaluating you. And they give you an iPad. And it says, like, press the button. You have to press the button. And it randomly, almost like a slot machine, will come up with an A, B, C, or D. And this is one of the four courses that you have to drive. So there are four options in the area that you can take. And you have to memorize them, because the driving instructor won't tell you where to go.

Kassy: What?

Andrew: Yeah, it's not like they're, like, "OK, turn left turn, right here." They don't tell you that information. There is a little GPS that doesn't give you a visual, but it will tell you, like, turn left in 30 metres, turn right in 20 metres. But, I mean, you're driving in a pretty big city, here in Seoul, and there are many cars, there's a lot of traffic and the GPS isn't very reliable. I think if I just trusted the GPS, I would have failed, probably, 'cause it's not giving you enough information quick enough to make safe driving decisions.

So every driving centre, what they do is they will film the A, B, C, and D course and they upload videos to YouTube that you can use to memorize the course and memorize all of the different maneuvers that you have to do. Each course is designed, you know, so that you have to do a U-turn, a left-hand turn, a right-hand turn, all of the different manoeuvres that you need to do.

So I just studied all of those videos very intensively. I woke up early every day for like 2 weeks and just watched YouTube driving videos again and again and again. That was my morning routine for a couple of weeks. And through watching these videos, I learned that there are driving practice centres that you can go to here in Seoul that are almost like arcades. They look like video game arcades, but they're to practice the driving test. And you can go there and say, oh, I'm doing my driving test in this part of the city and they will load up a simulation for you to practice with.

Kassy: So it's not a real car. It's like getting in one of those, you know, like, toy cars in the arcades and then running through the video?

Andrew: Yeah, essentially. It's like you sit at a desk but the desk chair is a real car chair, the front of the "car," I say car in quotations because it's obviously not a real car, but it has a real car steering wheel, real car pedals. There are three massive video displays in front of you. So even when you look to the side, if you look left or look right, you are still seeing the video screen. It's like a complete field of vision display. So it's a really accurate simulator, to be honest.

I went there and I did a few hours of practicing. I did the courses over and over on the simulator. So I felt like, yeah, I'm going to do this test, I'm going to be very confident. And it was a really strange experience after driving on one of these machines for like 3 hours. Once I stopped and got out of the VR, like, world, I felt really dizzy and **discombobulated**. Like my eyes had adjusted to being in this simulator. And then when I got out it was, it was strange, but—

Kassy: Ah, you were like on sensory overload.

Andrew: Yeah, something like that. Anyways, so I felt confident and I memorized all of the courses. I knew about all the special rules that you have to follow just from watching these YouTube video clips. And then finally it was my test day. I went to the driving test place, did the test, passed, no problems. And now I have my licence. So the saga is over finally.

Kassy: I heard a lot of people fail the, you know, road test the first couple of times. So the fact that you got it on your first try is pretty cool.

Andrew: Yeah, well, when I went to the driving simulator school—I don't know what to call it, the driving simulator place—the guy who was running it, he asked me like "Oh, when are you doing your licence test? And where are you doing it?" And I told him, and he was like, no, don't do it at that place. It's really hard. You should switch to this other area. And I'm like, really? Are they that much different? He's like, "Yeah, trust me, don't do it where you planned to do it." So I said, ah, OK, all right, well, you probably know more than I do. I'll trust you.

So I made a phone call, I changed my appointment to this other place that he recommended, another area of the city in northern Seoul. And I was a little bit, like, ah, this kind of sucks, because now I have to watch all the YouTube clips again and memorize new courses, like I had already memorized the four for the southern part of Seoul that I was going to do the test in. But I trusted this guy and took his advice. And then when I started watching the YouTube videos for the northern Seoul area, all of the YouTube comments were like, never do your driving test here. I just failed. This area has the highest failure rate in the country. Like, if you're reading this, cancel your driving test and move to a different area.

Kassy: Who do you trust?

Andrew: Yeah, there were like all these different comments, warning you not to do it there. And there were even some comments like that were really funny. Like, if you get the middle-aged woman with the aviator sunglasses as your driving evaluator, like just keep it in mind that you're gonna fail right away. She never passes anyone. So I had all this in my mind, like, oh, I hope I don't get the middle-aged lady with the aviator sunglasses.

Kassy: Did you, Andrew?

Andrew: No, I didn't. I got a nice older guy. But then I thought about it after, like, who are the kind of people that would actually take the time to write a comment like that on YouTube? It's like probably some bitter people who failed once or twice, and they're just, like, frustrated that they failed the test, right? All of the people that pass the test are not going to go back to the YouTube comment and then write a comment, like, never do it. They're just gonna move on with their lives. So I didn't take those comments very seriously. And I think the driving instructor at the simulator place gave me a solid piece of advice, in the end.

Kassy: Well, all I can say is, after all this time and all your hard work, congratulations.

Andrew: Thank you. It's so funny. Like, I teach first year university students and we've commiserated together about getting our driving licences at the same time. I have several students going through the process right now. And we've kind of bonded over that. Which is hilarious to me because they're all, like, 19 and 20 years old, and I'm 36. But, yeah, I did it. I don't have to do it again.

Kassy: Yeah, you can bond, you know, get closer relationships with your students. And then also, it's a great way to practice English in the classroom. It's a win-win.

Andrew: Yeah, it's great for them, I think. So, yeah, now the next step is just trying to save up enough money so that I can finally buy a car sometime.

Kassy: And then you can take your soon-to-be-wife and dog Pinky on lots of cool trips.

Andrew: Yeah, that's really why I want a car. I'm not interested in driving day-to-day. Like, I live within walking distance of my workplace. You know, Seoul is a huge city and everything is conveniently accessible through public transportation, or just walking. There are—everything you need is very close by. So I don't really need a car for day-to-day things. But, yeah, you know, on a weekend, if I want to get outside of the city, maybe go to the mountains or the beach or something, that's really why I would like a car. So, yeah, that's the next step. And hopefully it happens sooner than later. It's already been a long journey here.

Kassy: You'll have to update us when you finally get the car. I'm curious to see which, you know, car you pick.

Andrew: Yeah, we'll see. We'll see about that. And for sure, I'll keep you updated. So, Kassy, thank you for listening to my whole driving story. And thank you to all the Culips listeners for tuning in to this episode, as well. We hope that it was fun for you to hear about our updates. And, again, if you want to continue hearing this kind of content, just let us know and we can keep doing it. So far, the response to this kind of update episode has been positive. So we're gonna keep going for now until you guys tell us otherwise.

So we'll leave it at here for today, everyone. If you enjoy listening to Culips and if you learn a lot with us and find us useful for improving your English, then we would really appreciate it if you could support us. Now, there are several ways that you can do that. The best way is to become a Culips member. It's good for us and it's good for you. It encourages us to keep going and working hard here to make English lessons for learners all over the world. And, **on your end**, you will get some amazing benefits such as unlimited access to our study guide library. We make study guides for each and every Culips episode, and you will be able to access them through a PDF file or even on your mobile device, your phone or your tablet. We have study guides for them, as well. You'll also get an invitation to our monthly livestream for Culips members, as well as access to our Fluency Files series, which is only for Culips members.

But that's not the only way you can support us. You could also tell your friends who are learning English about Culips. You could follow us on social media. Or you could leave us a five-star rating and a nice review on your favourite podcast platform.

Take care, everyone, and we'll be back soon with another Culips episode. Goodbye.

Kassy: See ya.

Detailed Explanations

Tourist trap

Noun

A **tourist trap** is a place that was created to attract and provide entertainment for tourists. The food, entertainment, and souvenirs found in **tourist traps** are typically overpriced. Famous **tourist traps** include places like Times Square in New York and Niagara Falls in Canada. While these locations are interesting to see, there are many shops and sellers looking to lure in travellers and have them spend as much money as possible.

Here are a couple more examples with **tourist trap**:

Frank: Wanna go to the Eiffel Tower tomorrow?

Ryan: Why are you guys going to that **tourist trap**?

Frank: It's the most famous thing in France. We want to check it out while we're here.

Ryan: I'll pass. I can see the Eiffel Tower in pictures. I want to eat my way through every delicious restaurant I can find in Paris.

Janessa: What's your favourite way to travel?

Emily: I actually love to live the local experience when I travel. I try to avoid **tourist traps** as much as possible and go where locals like to hang out.

Janessa: That sounds interesting. What kind of places do you normally find?

Emily: You know, hole-in-the-wall restaurants with horrible decorating but amazing food, dive bars, little-known swimming holes, that kind of thing. I usually meet some really cool people in each place, too.

Janessa: Cool. Maybe I'll try that next time I take a trip.

Fast friends

Noun

Fast friends are friends who are extremely close and loyal to one another. Fast in **fast friends** comes from the word steadfast, meaning loyal and unwavering. The term **fast friends** can also be used to describe people who meet and bond very quickly. Often it takes awhile to form a deep, lasting friendship, but every so often you meet someone with whom you automatically click and you become **fast friends**.

Here are a few more examples with **fast friend**:

Derek: Cora, meet Tyler. We've been **fast friends** since our army days.

Cora: Ah, you guys served together in the military?

Derek: That's right. He saved my life a time or two.

Sara: Oh my goodness! Denice, I think it's fate that we accidentally bumped into each other last week. We were destined to be friends.

Denice: I know, right? Who knew we would've become such **fast friends**? I feel like I've known you for years.

Sara: Same here.

Trevor: How long have you known Reggie?

Janet: We first met when we were in middle school.

Trevor: Wow! So you've known each other for a long time.

Janet: Yeah, but I can't say we were **fast friends**. We were in the same class in middle school but we didn't actually start hanging out until after we graduated from college.

The highlights

Noun

The highlights of an event or time period are the most interesting or memorable parts of it. For example, a fireworks show might be **the highlight** of someone's New Year celebration, and the birth of a baby is **a highlight** of a couple's life.

Here are a few more examples with **the highlights**:

Roger: How was the game last night? Give me **the highlights**.

Allen: Well, we got crushed 10-2, but McKinnon made an amazing goal in the second half.

Roger: Wow, it wasn't even close.

Allen: Yeah. Timmons was out with the stomach flu or something, so we were missing our best defensive player.

Caroline: You just got back from New York, right? How was your trip?

Bethany: Amazing! New York was everything I dreamed it would be.

Caroline: What did you do? What did you see?

Bethany: Well, I went to the usual places, of course: Times Square, Central Park, Rockefeller Center. And **the highlight** of the trip was definitely the Broadway show I went to see. It was simply perfect.

Seth: The concert last night sure was amazing!

Georgia: It was so good!

Seth: What was your favourite part?

Georgia: For me **the highlight** had to be the second encore. I thought the concert was over after the first encore, but then the band came back onstage to play some more. That was unbelievable!

To take [something] to heart Idiom

To take [something] to heart has two common meanings. The first meaning of **to take something to heart** is to pay a lot of attention to something. For example, in this episode, Andrew gives some good travel advice and Kassy says that she will **take it to heart**. In other words, Kassy believes that Andrew gave some solid advice and she will be sure to remember it in the future.

The other meaning of **to take something to heart** is to be deeply affected or upset by some news or criticism that you receive. For example, someone who just got a college rejection letter might **take it to heart** and believe that they weren't smart enough or talented enough to get into that school.

Here are a couple more examples with **to take [something] to heart**:

Noah: Ugh. Tessa and I are fighting again. I don't know what to do.

Oliver: OK, listen up, buddy, and make sure you **take this advice to heart**. Women are always right. Even when they're wrong, they're right.

Noah: That doesn't even make sense.

Oliver: It makes absolutely no sense, but the faster you come to accept it, the happier you'll be.

Sophia: How did your meeting at the gallery go? Are they going to showcase your work?

Ava: It went horribly. They told me, and I quote, "Our gallery is not interested in your coffee shop art." Can you believe that? They called my paintings coffee shop art. I'm so embarrassed!

Sophia: Don't you dare **take what they said to heart**. Your paintings are amazing and they don't know what they're talking about.

Ava: You're my friend. You have to say that.

Sophia: True, but I'm not lying. You're really good, Ava, and the world deserves to see your art.

On your end Phrase

On your end refers to the place that someone is currently at. This phrase fragment is used mainly when asking someone how things are going where they are. For example, the sentence, “How are things going **on your end**?” has the same meaning as the question, “How are things going over there?” Or the question, “What’s new **on your end**?” has the same meanings as “What’s new over there?” People use this phrase when they are in a different location from the person they are talking to, so you might hear this question in a phone call or read it in an email.

Here are a couple more examples with **on your end**:

Jerry: Hey, Doug, thanks for calling. It’s been ages since we last spoke. How are you?

Doug: Yes, it’s been too long. I’m doing well. The kids are good, my wife is preparing for a special school fundraiser, and I’ve got nothing to complain about. How about you? How are things **on your end**?

Jerry: Oh, yeah, we’re doing pretty well here, too. It’s getting hot already, though. Last night, I turned on the air conditioner for the first time this year.

Doug: Already? I was still wearing gloves last week!

Cici: Hey, Heather. Just checking in to see how you’re doing with the bachelorette party preparations.

Heather: Things are almost done **on my end**. I’ve picked up the supplies and booked the entertainment.

Cici: Great! I’m finishing the final touches on my preparations, as well.

Heather: Friday night will be a blast. Tara’s gonna love it!

Discombobulated

Adjective

Discombobulated is a fun, fancy way of saying confused or disoriented. For example, in this episode, Andrew says that when he spent too much time using a virtual reality, or VR, headset, he felt dizzy and **discombobulated** when he took it off. In other words, he felt confused and disoriented after taking off the VR headset, because his eyes needed to adjust between focusing on virtual reality and focusing on actual reality.

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

Flora: Have you found out what's wrong with Zoey yet?

Raya: No, she was angry with me about something yesterday and I apologized. I thought we were good now, but today she's totally ignoring me. I have no idea what I did wrong this time.

Flora: Maybe it's not about you. Maybe she's just in a bad mood.

Raya: I don't think so, because I saw her laughing and being all friendly with Vanessa in gym class. Ugh. I don't know what to do. This whole situation is making me feel very emotionally stressed and **discombobulated**.

Flora: Don't take it to heart too much. You know how much Zoey loves to make trouble.

Justin: Dude, that roller coaster was intense! I am so **discombobulated** right now.

Eddie: Totally! How many loops were on that thing—ten?

Justin: The corkscrew was the best part. Kara would have thrown up if she rode with us.

Eddie: Yeah, good thing she decided to sit it out.

Quiz

1. Which question below has the same meaning as “How are things going on your end?”
 - a) have you reached the end yet?
 - b) how are things going over there?
 - c) how are things going in the back?
 - d) are you almost finished?

2. Which of the choices below is one of the meanings of fast friends?
 - a) fake friends who don't really care about each other
 - b) friends who are too competitive
 - c) people who became good friends quickly
 - d) friends who grow apart

3. What is something you probably WON'T find at a tourist trap?
 - a) expensive souvenirs
 - b) tour groups looking at interesting sights
 - c) overpriced restaurants
 - d) lots of local people

4. True or false? The highlights of an event are the most important or memorable parts.
 - a) true
 - b) false

5. Why might someone feel discombobulated?
 - a) they got an A+ on a math test
 - b) their dog just died
 - c) they got lost on the way to a friend's house
 - d) they've just won the lottery

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Did anything interesting happen to you last month? Describe what happened.
2. Do you have a spring break in your country? Where do people usually go during spring break?
3. What is the process for getting a driver's licence in your home country? Have you gone through the process?
4. What is a famous tourist trap in your home country? What attracts people to the place?
5. What were the highlights of the last trip you took?

Quiz Answers

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

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