

Simplified Speech #137 – Kassy’s board game club

Episode description

Board games are a fun way to spend an evening with friends. In this episode, Kassy talks with Andrew about her board game club and shares how it helps her meet new people, despite the pandemic.

Simplified Speech episodes feature two native English speakers having clear, natural and easy to understand English conversations about interesting topics, like board games with friends. By listening to Andrew and Kassy chat and following along with the transcript and study guide, you can improve your English listening skills and increase your vocabulary.

Fun fact

In 2008, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Scrabble, two skydivers in Florida played a short game... 13,000 feet in the air! They built a special wooden board with adhesive pieces that stayed on the board while they were in the air.

Expressions included in the study guide

- That’s the right idea
- To dwindle
- Revolving door
- Beast of a [something]
- A renaissance
- To branch out



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.

Hey there, friends. Welcome back to Simplified Speech, the Culips series that features clear, natural and easy to understand English conversations about interesting topics. Today I'm joined by my co-host, Kassy. Hello Kassy. Could you let us know what we're going to talk about today?

Kassy: Hey there, Andrew, and hi listeners. Sure. So I thought we could talk about my new board game club in today's episode.

Andrew: Board game club. OK, I'm intrigued. Kassy, do you mean board games like Scrabble and Risk and Monopoly, those kinds of games?

Kassy: Yeah, kind of, **that's the right idea** at least.

Andrew: Well, I'll let you clarify in just a moment. But before we get started with our conversation, I want to let all of our listeners know that there's a study guide and transcript available for this episode for all Culips members on our website Culips.com.

Kassy: Yes, and guys, the study guide is an awesome way to learn English with this episode. Inside the study guide, you'll find explanations and examples of difficult vocabulary, a comprehension quiz, and some prompts that you can use for speaking and writing practice. So visit Culips.com and become a member and get that study guide.

Andrew: We also want to give a shout-out to one of our listeners from Busan here in South Korea, named Jo, and Jo left us a great review and a five-star rating on Apple Podcasts. So in the review, Jo wrote, "I've been listening to your podcast for so long. God knows how long! However, Simplified Speech number 130 was the funniest one I've ever listened to. I don't really comment much on any podcast, but this was so good. And I laughed a lot when Kassy mentioned losing her hair and Andrew said, 'Welcome to the club.' What a good joke. I'm glad that Kassy is fine, though. Thank you for what you've done for English learners. It's extremely great." Well, Jo, thank you for that great review. And especially thank you for laughing at my comment. Kassy, you know, I think there's no

greater compliment that anyone can pay me than to say that they think I'm funny. I really love that and I enjoyed reading this review as well.

Kassy: Me too. Thanks, Jo. I got a chuckle out of it, too. And thanks to everyone out there that has been telling their friends about Culips, subscribing to us on their podcast app, and leaving five-star ratings and reviews for us on Apple Podcasts. All of these things help Culips to grow and help more people around the world to connect with us and improve their English. So keep up the good work.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. OK, so Kassy, now let's start talking about your board game club. And maybe to begin with, you could just kind of tell us about what it is exactly. What do you mean by board game club?

Kassy: So a board game club is where the members meet, and each of us brings a board game that we have in our house. And we'll just take turns introducing the rules and playing them together.

Andrew: OK, so this is like a regular thing, a regular occurrence? You meet up with the other members of the club every week or once a month, something like that?

Kassy: Yeah, so this is pretty amazing. I've been part of a board game club for over two years now. But little by little, our numbers have been **dwindling**, because people have left Korea or left our city. And we were down to two members, me and my one friend.

Andrew: OK. Yeah, so just to explain because this might be interesting for some of our listeners. It's kind of a weird situation that you and I are in Kassy, because we are foreigners living in South Korea and naturally we have many foreigner communities, groups of English speakers in the country kind of hangout and get together and there are a lot of different clubs and activities. Like I know you used to play or maybe you still play, I'm not sure if it was affected by COVID, I'm sure it was, but you are on an ultimate Frisbee team, if I'm remembering correctly?

Kassy: But we haven't played since COVID.

Andrew: Haven't played since COVID. So that was, that was a mixture of Korean people and foreigners. But it was started by the foreign community in Korea, I think. There's different clubs and activities around the country. But one of the problems with this is because many of the people that join these activities, they come to Korea maybe to work or to study, and they stay for one or two or three years, but then they go back home. So there's this constant **revolving door** of people joining and people quitting. And it keeps things interesting. There are always new people and new faces at different meet ups, but it can be hard to maintain a group. So Kassy, your board game club **dwindled** down to only two people. I imagine it's not very exciting to play a board game when you only have two players.

Kassy: Yeah, it's pretty hard. So I decided to create a Facebook post on our local city's Facebook group. And I said, "Hey, guys, I live in this area. We're available this day and this day, who wants to join?" And I was surprised by how many responses I got. I think like 10 or 15 people replied to my original posting.

Andrew: Wow, amazing. So it seems like there are many people out there that enjoy playing board games. By the way, what kind of board games do you play? I made a joke at the top of the episode about Scrabble, which actually is a board game that I really enjoy. I like Scrabble. Scrabble is a kind of crossword game where you have little pieces, and each piece has a letter on it. And you have to try and build a long word. And the longer and more obscure your word is, the more points you can get. That's a game that I usually play with my family. But I also threw some games like Risk and Monopoly in there when I was joking earlier, because those are games that I used to play when I was a kid, but I don't think are too popular for people our age now. What kind of games do you play at your club?

Kassy: One thing I love about our club is how inclusive it is. So usually when we start, when we have our meet ups, the first hour or so we just play simple party games. Like little cute card games or, you know, lying games kind of like Mafia. I don't know if you've heard of that. Every player gets a role card and one player is the murderer and you have to find out who he is. Fun little games like that.

Andrew: Kind of mystery, solve the mystery type of situation.

Kassy: Yes. And games that don't take, one, a lot of thought and, two, a lot of time to learn. So that means when we have new members, they don't feel overwhelmed by you know, like, showing up and just starting this two or three-hour **beast of a board game**.

Andrew: OK, so the first hour is just light and fun, simple games that anyone can play. And then when you really get into it, what games do you play? Are you playing Settlers of Catan? Are you playing Dungeons and Dragons? I don't know. What games are you playing?

Kassy: We've played Settlers of Catan. Catan. Not sure how you pronounce that. Anyway, we play so many games. The Great Western Trail, Castles of Burgundy. A lot of games people who don't play board games might not know. But one of them I really want to recommend is Istanbul. Such a good game.

Andrew: Istanbul. OK. So actually, I'm not a person who plays board games very often as maybe you can tell from me not knowing how to pronounce their names. But Istanbul, what kind of game is it? Are these strategy games? Are they adventure games, like role playing games?

Kassy: The ones I like the best are strategy games. It's a game with a board and lots of little pieces. And usually, you have tokens or money or little red squares that you have to manipulate. And whoever has the most points wins the game, something like that.

Andrew: So how long would it take to play a game like that?

Kassy: It depends on the board game. But usually if you know the rules already, it takes about an hour, 40 minutes to an hour. But if you're trying to learn the game, it could double the time.

Andrew: Right. You got to learn all the rules and ask all the questions and figure out how things work in the game. So, Kassy, these days video games are extremely popular, right? Well, not just these days, but for the last 30 years, video games have been extremely popular, but I'm sensing that there's a kind of board game **renaissance** that's going on. And I know a lot of my friends, not only you, but many of my other friends have these kinds of weekly game nights, and they get together and play different board games. Why do you think board games are having a resurgence? You know, we have these fantastic video games that we could play. But instead, we're resorting to sitting around a table and moving little pieces of cardboard on a board. Why do you think people enjoy playing board games?

Kassy: I think it's that community aspect, that social aspect. In video games, of course, you could have a two player game or, you know, an online game where you're texting or even talking to other players, but is not the same as being at the same table in the same room, you know, seeing each other's faces and expressions. I don't know, there's just something so cool about sitting at a table and being with like, really great friends, but also trying to kick their butt and be the winner in that game.

Andrew: So is that what attracts you to the board game club, is the social aspect and just being around other people and hanging out and chatting with them?

Kassy: Yeah, I think that's the number one thing. And the second thing, I just love board games. It's kind of like your own little world in that board game. I know exactly what should happen, what I'm allowed to do, what I'm not allowed to do. And using those parameters, I can conquer it. It's really satisfying.

Andrew: For a while before COVID hit, I was meeting with some of my co-workers about once a month or once every two weeks, a couple of times a month. And we'd get together and play cards, play poker, and it was really fun. But then once COVID happened, we kind of stopped playing and we haven't really started back up again yet. Although we've been kind of chatting like, hey, maybe we should start playing poker again sometime. And I had never played poker before then, but I found it to be really fun. And although I did lose quite often, it was still just good to like, hang out and share some laughs and just socialize and play cards. Kassy, do you play poker at your board game club, sometimes? I know poker is not really a board game, but it is a popular social game.

Kassy: Yeah, we don't play poker, but I love poker. That's something I'd also love to make a group just for that. But that'll be for another day.

Andrew: Kassy, I know that you're good at math and you're also very competitive. So I think I might be a little bit afraid to play poker against you. I feel like you are probably a pretty good poker player.

Kassy: I don't know about that, Andrew.

Andrew: Spoken just like a true poker expert would say before they take all my money.

Kassy: We'll play some time. We'll see.

Andrew: All right. All right. Sounds good. Kassy, we're gonna wrap up the conversation here in a moment. But before we do I have a couple of more questions to throw your way. And the first is about all of these people that wanted to join your club. Is it open to anyone? Do you just let anyone who shows interest join the club? Or do you have some kind of screening procedure? Or like a questionnaire that people must fill out before they're allowed to join?

Kassy: Nope. It's open to anyone who wants to come. And we had a pretty diverse group. We've had two meetings so far for my new club. And we have people from Korea, from Spain, from the US, from Canada, from Saudi Arabia. Yeah, it's been really cool to get to know new people, new cultures.

Andrew: Yeah, that's amazing. And did you meet some new friends this way as well?

Kassy: Yes, that's the main thing. I don't know about you, Andrew, but I found it very hard to find friends since the pandemic hit.

Andrew: Yeah, I just don't have any time to hang out with friends anymore. So I see my wife all the time, which is amazing. I see some of my old friends very occasionally. And when we all have time in our schedule to hang out, I'm pretty satisfied with that. But yeah, I have to be honest, I don't think I have met many new people since the pandemic started. I completely agree with you.

Kassy: Yeah, we actually talked about that at our first meeting. We're like, so what do you usually do in your free time? And most members were like, yeah, I chill out at home, everybody's at home, we don't go out. And I think that's one of the saddest outcomes of this pandemic. But hopefully, now that we're reaching that new normal, we can start to slowly **branch out**, even if it's just small groups.

Andrew: Yeah, it's very encouraging that things are starting to return to normal. And actually, Kassy, I think you may have just shared a fantastic language learning tip with everyone, and maybe you didn't even intend to. And the tip that I have for listeners is that

these groups, like Kassy's board game group, they exist in every country. There will be groups of English speakers in every country. There will be an expat community in almost every country around the world. And if you look in the right places, you can find and join these groups. And Kassy, I imagine that you speak English in your board game group, right? That's the language you're speaking?

Kassy: Exactly, yes.

Andrew: But you said you have some South Korean people that are members and people from other countries. So what I'm trying to say listeners, is that if you're living in a country where you think it's difficult to find English speakers, there's no one that I can practice with, there are opportunities like social groups, where English is the main language. And I think, as I said, every country around the world will have English speakers living and socializing in those countries, you just need to know where to look. And maybe this could be a fantastic way to practice your English in a fun setting that's not focused on language learning, right? It's just focused on socializing and enjoying yourself with other people. But one of the good results is that you could improve your English at the same time. So just a tip that came to mind that was inspired by your story here Kassy that I think maybe some of our listeners would like to know about.

Kassy: Yeah, I think it's an excellent idea. I've actually even joined a Korean board game club once for that very same reason. I can tell listeners, it's not easy the first time or two, don't give up.

Andrew: I think that's good advice, for most things, right? If things are easy from the start, they're usually not very fun. And the pleasure sometimes comes from persistence and sticking with it.

Well, anyways, Kassy, thank you for sharing your story with us. And I think we'll wrap up here. Listeners, congratulations on making it to the end of this episode. You just got a fantastic dose of English listening practice in today, so you can be proud about that. And if you enjoy listening to Culips, and you find us helpful for building your English language skills, then we would love it if you could support us, and there are many ways that you can do that. The best way is to sign up and become a Culips member on our website, Culips.com. But that's not the only way. You could also tell your friends who are learning English to check us out. You could follow us on social media, such as Instagram and YouTube. Or you could subscribe and rate and review us on your favourite podcast app. Our email address is contact@Culips.com. And if you have a suggestion for a future episode, or would just like to get in touch, feel free to email us, we do love hearing from you. We'll be back soon with another brand new episode and we'll talk to you then. Goodbye.

Kassy: See ya.

Detailed Explanations

That's the right idea Idiom

That's the right idea is used to emphasize the main point of something or to say you understand. In this episode, Andrew asks Kassy what kind of board games they play at her board game club, like Scrabble, Risk, or Monopoly. She says **that's the right idea**. She's telling Andrew that he is right, that those games are the type of games they might play. Saying "kind of" means those games are the type of games they play.

You can also say **that's the right idea** to encourage someone who is learning something new. This expression lets them know they're doing it the right way or are on the right path. For example, let's say you're teaching your friend how to bake. When they're mixing the ingredients, you might say **that's the right idea** to let your friend know they're doing the right thing. In this situation, you could also say **you have the right idea**.

Here are a couple more examples with **that's the right idea**:

Joanna: So, to set the clock, click that button there.

Fred: This one here?

Joanna: Yes, the one labelled clock. Hold it down and wait for the numbers to blink. Then click the arrows to adjust the hours.

Fred: Ah, I see now. For the minutes I click this. And then the arrows again?

Joanna: **That's the right idea!** When you're done, hold the clock button again.

Suraya: Hey, welcome! I'm so glad you could make it out.

Kei: Me too! Your place is amazing. You guys sure **have the right idea**, living on the beach like this. Just look at that sunset.

Suraya: Thanks! I'm so happy we moved here. I will always enjoy that view. We'll bring out drinks out on the patio later. Isn't the reflection of the moon on the water just glorious?

To dwindle Verb

To dwindle means to gradually get smaller over time. This can refer to amount, size, or strength. In this episode, Kassy says that the number of participants in her board game club had been **dwindling** over time. On the same topic, Andrew later mentions that Kassy's board game club **dwindled** down to only two people. In both instances, Kassy and Andrew are referring to the fact that a decreasing amount of people are attending those club events.

Here are a few more examples with **to dwindle**:

Kent: If we leave at 2 p.m., we should make it to your parents' place in plenty of time to set up for dinner.

Ayane: But what if we hit traffic?

Kent: Traffic at that hour? Nah, it always **dwindles** down at that time of day. Rush hour won't start for another couple hours.

Ayane: Okay, then, let's leave at 2 p.m.

Esme: How was your day?

Claudia: We were in meetings from the moment we all got online until like, 3 p.m.

Esme: Ugh! That's a long time to be in a meeting.

Claudia: For sure. We were developing new ideas for the major processes and stuff. My energy really **dwindled** by the end of it. I was so tired, I couldn't think.

Thomas: I read in the news today that there's a town just south of here that's like, **dwindling** away.

Lukas: Just south of here? There's not much south of here except farmland.

Thomas: Yeah, I guess that's why the population has decreased by half in the past decade? All the kids are moving away and working in the larger cities.

Lukas: Ah, and they stay there instead of moving back. Makes sense.

Revolving door

Noun

A **revolving door** means that people or things are entering and leaving quickly, rather than staying in place for a long period of time. It's most often used when talking about workplaces where the employees keep changing. It is also used for other situations with a lot of people coming and going. In this episode, Andrew mentions that some foreign workers or students stay in Korea for just a few years and then go back home. In that sense, there is a **revolving door** of foreigners who live in the country.

The term **revolving door** comes from the physical revolving doors. You can see those doors at the entrance of shopping malls, office buildings, and subway stations. These revolving doors both let people in and let people out while rotating.

Here are a couple more examples with **revolving door**:

Annabel: Did you put the help wanted signs up on the front window?

Mark: Yes, I did that yesterday. Why are we already looking for new employees? Didn't we just hire several new people last month?

Annabel: We did. But unfortunately, this store has a bit of a **revolving door** when it comes to keeping people on staff.

Mark: Really? Has it always been like that?

Annabel: Our staffing problem comes and goes. It's something we need to work on as a team.

Ning: Did you hear about the new goalie on the school's hockey team?

Shadya: I did. I heard he's really good. What happened to our old goalie?

Ning: He got injured. It happens to a lot of our school's goalies. I don't know why, but the position is a **revolving door**. It feels like there's a new player every month.

Shadya: Well, hopefully this one will stick around.

Beast of a [something]

Idiom

Beast of a [something] means that someone or something is very strong, skilled, or dominant in its category or for its type. These beasts are often intimidating or overwhelming. For example, if you called someone a **beast of a man**, that means they are a large, strong, and perhaps even intimidating person. This is an informal expression. In this sense, it is more of a compliment for the person, as opposed to the idea of considering the person as an actual beast or animal.

In this episode, Kassy talks about how her board game club starts off with easier games, so they won't be overwhelmed by a two or three-hour **beast of a board game**. The beast in this case is a complicated and challenging board game that might take hours to complete. The game of Risk is a good example of a **beast of a board game**.

Here are a couple more examples with **beast of a [something]**:

Alexis: Have you started the final project yet?

Jiro: You mean that **beast of a project**? The 15-page paper that requires extensive research, 15 or more academic sources, and at least five expert interviews?

Alexis: Yeah, that one. Have you started?

Jiro: It's sad to say, but no, I haven't.

Alexis: I haven't started yet either. Want to go to the library after school?

Jiro: That's a good idea. I'll see you there.

Conner: Whoa, what is that you're reading? It's huge!

Yin: Oh, this? I know. It's something like four books in one. It's the complete series of books I love that follow a man with telepathic powers.

Conner: That's one **beast of a book**. How are your arms not tired from holding it?

Yin: It's pretty heavy, yeah. Sometimes I need to set it down while I read.

Conner: At least you'll have strong arms when you're done.

A renaissance

Noun

A renaissance is when an interest, trend, or thing that used to be popular starts becoming popular again. It's like when something is having a comeback. Board games are a good example. Andrew says in this episode that there's **a** kind of board game **renaissance** where many of his friends have weekly game nights. Board games were very popular before video games and other forms of entertainment became the most common way to spend one's leisure time. For a time, board games weren't very popular. But now, more and more people are getting together in social groups to play board games again.

When you're using this expression, you can put the thing that's returning to popularity between **a** and **renaissance**, for example, **a** board game **renaissance**, **a** poetry **renaissance**, **a** vinyl records **renaissance**. You can also say that something is seeing or having **a renaissance**, for example, board games are having **a renaissance** or print magazines are seeing **a renaissance**.

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

Flora: Hey, I remember those! We used to play those in grade school. What were they called?

Jackson: Milk Caps. Or Pogs, some people called them, I think. This is the set I collected when I was a kid.

Flora: Oh man, I wish I'd kept mine. Wait, why do you have them here?

Jackson: Because I'm trying to start **a Milk Caps renaissance**! I want people to play it again.

Flora: Oh, I'm definitely interested in seeing that. Come on, let's go ask Carlos if he still has his.

Hajar: Why are there so many people wearing hats in the office lately?

Walt: Hats? Oh, yeah, I guess there are a lot of people wearing hats. That's different.

Hajar: Are hats seeing **a renaissance** that no one told me about? Because I have a few awesome hats at home that I'd love to wear to work.

Walt: Go through your closet and see what you find!

To branch out

Phrasal verb

To branch out means to try something new or to expand one's activities or interests in a new direction. When you try a new game or go out to a new restaurant, you're **branching out**. This phrasal verb is very versatile. It applies to any situation where someone is doing something new, from someone meeting new people to businesses trying new marketing techniques.

Trees are the inspiration for the expression **to branch out**. As trees grow, their branches spread out in all directions and reaching new heights and spaces. To many people, this is what happens when you try something new. When you **branch out**, you experience new heights and explore new spaces.

Here are a couple more examples with **to branch out**:

Evangeline: Did you hear? Demi started her own business.

Ronan: Really? When did she do that?

Evangeline: She quit her job on, oh, I think it was two Fridays ago. Didn't you know that she was going to do this? She's been talking about **branching out** for years. I mean, she's been working for other people for 20 years now.

Ronan: I didn't know that. But good for her. She's really good at what she does, so I think her company will be very successful.

Evangeline: I think so too. Actually, maybe we should call her to do this project.

Tsubame: Where did you want to order dinner from tonight? Our usual restaurant?

Lilly: Hmm... no, I'm getting bored with the usual food. Let's **branch out** and order from that new place that opened up around the corner.

Tsubame: The little place around the corner from the grocery store?

Lilly: Yeah! That one. Do they have a menu online?

Tsubame: Let's check. I've heard good things about them, too. Great idea!

Quiz

1. Which of the following means to try new things?

- a) to barge out
- b) to belt out
- c) to belch out
- d) to branch out

2. What does it means when someone tells you that's the right idea?

- a) you understand the concept
- b) you are standing to the right of something
- c) you need to pick the item on the right
- d) you do not understand the concept

3. Your friend is holding a very large carrot. Which of the following might you use when describing the carrot?

- a) a beat of a carrot
- b) a best of a carrot
- c) a beast of a carrot
- d) a beach of a carrot

4. You've just discovered that your favourite cartoon is having a renaissance. What does that mean?

- a) it's made in the same style as Renaissance paintings
- b) it's becoming popular again
- c) it's unpopular again
- d) it's part of a medieval-themed party

5. Which of the following might be used to describe a band that has a new singer every year?

- a) revolving door
- b) revolving floor
- c) resolving door
- d) resolving boar

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Describe a time when you might have told someone they had the right idea about something.
2. Have you ever been a part of a community or club with a revolving door of members? Did the numbers dwindle over time? Why or why not?
3. Name a few board games you might consider beasts of a game and explain why.
4. As Andrew and Kassy mention, there is a board game renaissance happening right now. What other activities or products do you feel are making a comeback and why?
5. What are some things you do that helps you branch out and meet new people?

Quiz Answers

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

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