

Bonus episode #127 - Special delivery

Episode description

In this week's bonus episode, Andrew shares his experience receiving a surprise care package from San Francisco. While unpacking delicious American treats with his wife, he reflects on his own journey with homesickness in South Korea and how care packages helped him adjust to life abroad. Listen as Andrew humorously describes his weakness for peanut butter cups and why his wife had to become the official "snack manager" in their house.



Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hello, everyone, and welcome to bonus episode number 127 of the Culips English Podcast. How is it going? My name is Andrew. I will be your host and your English study buddy for this English study session. What we do here in our bonus episodes is I tell you some stories from my everyday life. I'm a Canadian who lives abroad in Seoul, South Korea. And I hope that by listening to my stories, you will be able to B.I.G.B. This is the goal of the bonus episode series. B.I.G.B. stands for build your fluency, increase your cultural knowledge, grow your vocabulary, and become a clearer, and more fluent, and better... all of these good words, English communicator. So really, we want to help you level up your English skills. I'm going to do my best to help you achieve that goal. And so, if those are your goals, if that's what you're looking to do with your English, then you're in the right place. And I hope you will enjoy today's story.

Speaking of today's story, I'm going to share with you about a sweet care package that my wife and I received in the mail this week. I'm also going to talk a little bit about what it's like to live in a foreign country and the homesickness that I've experienced in my life. As I reflected back on my years abroad here in Korea, I realized that there were three specific types of homesickness that I have encountered. And so, I'm going to talk a little bit about that and talk about this sweet, awesome, amazing care package that we received in the mail this week.

But before I do that, I want to let you know that there is a 100% free interactive transcript and vocabulary glossary to accompany this episode. You can get them just by following the link in the description. It works great on computer, on mobile, on tablet. And I think it's a really, really useful study tool. So, if you haven't checked out the interactive transcript yet, what are you waiting for? Click that link and take a look at it. Also, if you are a Culips member, then we'll give you a comprehension quiz as well. So, you can test and see how much you are able to understand from this story just by taking the comprehension quiz after you listen.

If you're curious about what Culips membership is, then I highly recommend that you visit our website, Culips.com. That's the place where you can learn all about the benefits and bonuses you'll get as a Culips member. But essentially, guys, if you are serious about improving your English fluency and you need some tools and some materials to help you do that, well, then we've got you covered. As a Culips member, you will get access to so many great learning materials that our team of expert English teachers have developed to help you do that, to help you level up your English.

So that includes things like weekly live speaking classes, our member-only series, the Fluency Files, ad-free audio. So, you don't have to listen to ads like this or announcements like this. You can get right to the important English study content. You'll also get interactive transcripts, helpful study guides, comprehension quizzes and speaking, writing and discussion questions for all of our episodes and more. There are even more benefits and bonuses. I can't talk about all of them right now, but just visit our website. You can learn all of the details and you can sign up and become a Culips member today. And of course, a huge thanks to our member community for supporting the work that we do here at Culips and for learning with us. We really do appreciate you guys. Thank you so much.

And with that being said, I think it's time to get started with this episode. Of course, after you listen, why don't you join us over on our Discord server as well? It's completely free to join because we'll be continuing the conversation over on the Discord. We have thousands of members over on our Discord server and every day we're having really fascinating, interesting discussions. And it feels like just hanging out with friends. Like, I really like how close the Culips Discord server community is. Everybody is super friendly and super nice. And yeah, it's just a lot of fun to hang out over there and to grow our English skills together as a community. So, if you haven't joined yet, just follow the link in the description for this episode. And you can do that. As I mentioned, it's a hundred percent completely free for everyone to do.

OK. Now for real, let's get started with this week's story. As I mentioned, it's about a care package and about homesickness kind of combination of these two things. All right let's

get started with it. Here we go. Enjoy.

If you've ever lived away from home or traveled away from home for a long time, then **the odds are** at some point you've experienced homesickness. I know I've experienced homesickness in the past because I've lived away from my home country for over 10 years. Probably in fact, closer to 12 or 13 years, I've lived outside of Canada. And so of course I know what homesickness feels like. It's not like a real sickness. We just call it that. You don't need to go to the hospital and see a doctor and get some medicine, I suppose. Maybe if it developed into **a full-blown depression**, you would have to, but yeah, for just a light homesickness, like the kind that I've experienced, it's not really something that you need to get treated.

So, in my case, the kind of homesickness that I've experienced, really it comes and goes for the first maybe year or two years that you live away from home. When I first came to Korea, I would more so than feeling homesickness, I think I would get FOMO, fear of missing out. Back in those days, Facebook was the popular social media site that I used, and all of my friends used. And when I'd go onto Facebook and I'd see photos of my friends hanging out together or doing something fun together, then I felt FOMO. I felt like, man, I wish I could be there too. I wish I could do that fun thing that all of my friends are doing, but here I am halfway across the world, and I can't do that.

So, I would feel FOMO and that was how homesickness felt for me. I also from time to time felt food FOMO. Is that an expression? Food FOMO? I'm not sure if it is, but it is now. OK. Food FOMO. Around the holidays, my family, especially if they posted a picture of their Thanksgiving meal or their Christmas meal. In my home in Canada, we usually eat turkey for Thanksgiving and Christmas. And here in Korea, turkey is not commonly consumed at all. So, it's hard to find turkey. Really, really hard to find, in fact. So, when I would see pictures of the Christmas dinner table or the Thanksgiving dinner table, then I would feel a craving for turkey and some of those traditional holiday foods that I couldn't have in Korea.

And at least when I first came to this country, sometimes we would have like a Friendsgiving, and I would gather with my friends from the USA and from Canada and we would have as close to a Thanksgiving meal or as close to a Christmas meal as we could put together with the items that we could find in the Korean grocery store. But other than that, I have to say, I don't really get homesick very often. I guess the only other times that I've felt homesick is maybe when it's the summer here in Korea and the summer can be very brutal and hot and humid and wet. I would like to describe a Korean summer as being wet because it's so humid and it's also the rainy season, so it rains often.

And that kind of weather just doesn't fit my definition of what a summer is, because in Canada, a summer is just beautiful blue skies, hot weather. Dry weather in my hometown, very dry and perfect time to be outside and doing activities and maybe swimming in a lake or something like that. So, it was a weather shock when I moved to Korea and the summer here wasn't like that beautiful, hot, warm, dry summer that I was used to back home. So occasionally, even now, from time to time, when I'm struggling in the humid Korean summer, I'm like, oh man, I really miss the Canadian summer. But those are the only instances I can think of is like the friend FOMO, the food FOMO, and the weather FOMO.

But that was in the early days of first living in Korea. And I have to say now that is pretty much all gone, and I don't really feel homesick at all. Things have gotten way easier over the years living abroad. Like when I first came to Korea back in the late aughts, I guess it was 2009, I first came to Korea 2008-2009 around there. Like that was a little bit more difficult to live as an expat in this country. Because at that time, we had Skype and we had video calling, but it wasn't very good. It was super choppy and laggy and you would get disconnected all the time. And it was hard to coordinate, like the communication systems just weren't as developed as they are now.

But these days, if I want to talk with my parents, for example, I can just call them on FaceTime and I get them right away. They have an iPad set up and we can FaceTime together, and we get a really high quality, smooth video call experience that looks great and works great. And it just makes it easy in those kinds of situations. I mean, I guess I'm

lucky that in 2008-2009, I had Skype. Like, I think of my... my mom and her parents, my grandparents, they moved from Scotland to Canada, I guess that would have been in the late fifties or early sixties, somewhere around then.

And of course, like think of them, they move halfway across the world from Scotland to Canada. And if they wanted to communicate back with their friends and loved ones in Scotland, then they would have had to write a **snail mail** letter. And that would take, who knows how long, several weeks to a month to arrive and you would have to communicate that way. I guess you could make a phone call, but it probably would have been quite expensive to do at that time too. And I'm sure that wasn't common. Maybe you could send a telegram. I wonder in that time, if telegrams were still a thing, I'd have to ask some of our older listeners to let me know if in the early sixties were telegrams still a thing. I'm not sure.

But yeah, so at least I didn't have it that bad, right? It wasn't that hard to communicate with friends and family back home. Anyways, what I'm trying to say here is that I think everyone who's lived away from home in some capacity has experienced homesickness from time to time. But in my case, thankfully it hasn't been too severe. And maybe one of the reasons why those first few years I didn't experience too much homesickness is because of care packages.

So, I remember back to my first year here in Korea, I was a recent university graduate, and I came to this country for the first time. A couple of times, like around Christmas and my birthday, my family, my parents, and my sister. And I have a brother as well, although I have to say, I don't think my brother was too involved in the sending of these care packages and that's OK. That's not really a brother-to-brother type of thing. At least in our relationship, I don't think we need to send each other care packages, but let me explain what a care package is. Maybe as the name implies, you can guess, but it's just sending you some small little items from home to show that you care about someone, to show that you miss someone, and to make them feel more comfortable and less homesick.

So definitely around Christmas and my birthday, my folks and my sister would send me a

care package. And in that care package, there might be a little handwritten note or letter and usually some food items. We call them non-perishable food items. Of course, I talked earlier about missing turkey, but it's not like my parents could send a turkey in the mail, right? That would be ridiculous. Even a frozen turkey or something. Yeah, wouldn't work. It would be totally rotten by the time it arrived. So, they would send me usually some candy and maybe some instant food. There's a kind of food in Canada called Kraft Dinner, or we usually call it KD and it's just an instant kind of macaroni and cheese and sometimes they would send me that in the mail and that was nice, a little taste from home.

And I'm trying to think what else they would put in there. Sometimes my mom would put maybe a little package of coffee or hot chocolate. I remember getting some hot chocolate, instant hot chocolate packages that you could just mix with water and make in a mug. And yeah, just some little things like that, maybe even a book or I don't know, anything from home. OK. This is what a care package is, is when you send some little products, something that somebody may be missing. And yeah, when you receive them as the receiver, when you get them, you feel like, "Oh, my friends and family back home, they miss me. They're caring for me in this way." And it's really nice to get a care package.

And yeah, I remember in my first few years, got to say, my parents don't do this anymore. Well, I shouldn't say that my mom does send me Christmas and birthday gifts, but not really these elaborate care packages anymore. But in my first few years living in Korea, they were really instrumental, important in helping me not feel homesick.

OK. Well, fast forward to the present day. I'm done talking about history. We're talking about the present day. And this week, my wife's friend who I'm going to give a nickname, let's call her Jane. OK. Jane, for the sake of this episode, we'll call my wife's friend, Jane. We got a care package from Jane, and it was amazing. And I'm going to tell you all about this care package right now.

So, my wife's friend. I've actually never met Jane before. I've heard so many stories about her but haven't officially met her before. And that's because she doesn't live in Korea.

She's a Korean, but she lives in San Francisco, I believe, or around there, somewhere in California in the San Francisco area, let's say. I'm... I think it's a suburb of San Fran, but I can't remember exactly the San Francisco area. And some of the things that I've heard about Jane, I mean, it just sounds like, you know, I think everybody's got one of those friends who's like the perfect friend who's really smart, who's really talented, really accomplished, just really good at everything. And it's like the perfect person.

OK. Those are the stories that I hear about Jane is that she is just a really, really amazing, awesome person who kills it at everything that she does. And yeah, she moved with her husband, and they have a baby as well. And they left Seoul, and they live in San Francisco. And I guess they've been there for a while, probably before I met my wife, because otherwise probably I would have met Jane at some point if she still lived in Seoul. But yeah, so they've been living in California for several years. And I guess this week or last week, Jane's husband came back to Seoul just to see friends and family and spend some time here hanging out.

And when he came, he brought with him this care package. And so, yeah, Jane's husband brought this box to us this week and we opened it up. Actually, my wife opened it up because I had no idea that we were even getting this care package. But then one day I was just working on my computer and my wife said, "Hey, Andrew, come see what's in this box." And I was blown away. It was amazing. It was jam packed full of really delicious treats and goodies and snacks and everything that you could imagine from the USA.

And so obviously I'm not American. I'm from Canada. But because the countries are so close together, like I grew up just a couple hours' drive away from the American border, it's pretty close. We do share a lot in common and a lot of American products are sold in Canada and **vice versa**. And yeah, that's actually one of the fun things about being a Canadian and visiting the States or probably vice versa, being an American and visiting Canada, is that when you go to the grocery store in the other country, most things are the same, but there are some things that are different and finding and exploring those different products is really cool.

But in this care package that we received, most of the products were really quite familiar to me. And that's why it feels like a care package. Like, I guess in my wife's case, from her perspective, it's just a cool package from the States filled with lots of novelties, things that are new to her. But for me, in my case, it's like, whoa, these are the snacks that I grew up eating when I was a teenager and a kid. So, for me, it feels more like a care package. Whereas from my wife's perspective, it's just a really neat gift.

So let me break down and tell you about some of the things that we got in this package. So, first of all, I was super stoked to see this kind of candy called a peanut butter cup. Peanut butter cup. And what a peanut butter cup is, is it is a cup made of chocolate and inside the chocolate is peanut butter. And I've probably said this on Culips before. In fact, I know I have said this on Culips before, and that is I love peanuts. I also love peanut butter. Anything made with peanuts is, it's a weakness of mine. I can't resist.

So, when I saw those peanut butter cups, I was like, "Yes, OK, I'm going to enjoy these." And to be honest, I think you could probably find them in Korea, but here's another thing that I've shared on Culips before. That is when it comes to junk food, I'm really good at not buying it in the grocery store.

I have amazing self-constraint in the grocery store, but weirdly enough, I don't know why this is. Once it enters our home, once it **crosses the threshold** and comes into our home, well, then I have much, much, much less self-control. And so, I saw these peanut butter cups and I was like, "Oh yeah, **it's on**. I'm going to enjoy these."

Let me tell you about what else was in this package. There was almond butter, several different kinds of almond butter. And almond butter, I think is a really popular product. Many different kinds of nut butters, maybe cashew butter, almond butter, peanut butter, etc., etc. There's probably other kinds of nut butters that are popular back in North America as well, but they haven't really **caught on** here in Korea. Haven't really noticed them at the supermarket, maybe in a specialty store you could find them. But yeah, peanut butter sometimes is even hard to find. So almond butter, wow, that's cool. And as I just

said, I love peanut butter, so I'm excited to try this almond butter as well.

There was also tons of different kinds of chocolate and Oreo cookies and coffee from a roastery in San Francisco. So, I haven't tried that yet either, but I'm excited to.

Here's the thing though, guys, this care package was sent to us, but mostly to my wife. You know, Jane is my wife's friend. And it said on the box, it said my wife's name, right? It wasn't addressed to me. So obviously she sent it for us to enjoy, but I can't just go in there and pig out on all of this stuff and **leave my wife in the lurch**. So, we have to share it together.

And as I said, also, I have very little self-control when it comes to junk food in the home. I'll just eat and eat, you know, every time I go through the kitchen, I'll grab one little candy or cookie or something until it's gone. So, my wife has put me on lockdown and she's like, "I will be the one who **doles** it out and distributes it so that you don't go crazy and eat all of this junk food in just a couple of days." So, she's in control. I think that's a good system because I realize my weakness when it comes to these sweets.

And it's not even that I really like sweet food. I don't know what it is. It's more like some instinctual, deep down animal instinct where it's like, you got to get that sugar and that fat in you like to survive in case there's no food in the future. I'm not sure what it is, but I do have a hard time resisting some of those sweet treats.

So anyways, my wife is in charge of the distribution, and she'll let me have one little thing each day. And we've only had this care package here for a few days, but we have gotten into some of the Oreo cookies and some of those peanut butter cups. And I think those... ahhh and some of the chocolate as well. Those are the three goodies that we've tried. And I have to say, I do love them. Don't get me wrong. I think the peanut butter cups, for example, this is like one of the best, most delicious sweet-treats out there.

But I don't know what it is. Maybe it's because I just don't really eat that kind of candy very often anymore. Although I know it could be so delicious, but when I ate it, I was

overwhelmed with how sweet it was. Like I was like, "Oh, I can barely eat this. It's so, so, so sweet." So, I think being away from that kind of candy and then trying it again is really intense. And so maybe it will take me a few days to get back up to that super sweet level, that tolerance of eating super sweet candy. So, I did find it to be very intense, but very delicious. And yeah, I wish the manufacturers would just cut the sweetness in half. I don't know why they have to make it so, so sweet.

I don't know if you've ever tried the North American style candy before, but it can be pretty sweet and intense. So yeah, that's an adjustment, but it's still delicious and I'll still eat it. But I do think my wife is right in being the moderator and just giving me a little bit each day because at this age, at 40 years old, I can't **go nuts** on the sweets, right?

Anyways, guys, that's the story that I wanted to tell you this week. A big shout out and thank you to Jane for sending my wife that gift, that care package. It was very, very well received and we've been enjoying all of those sweet treats and almond butters and coffee as well. So yeah, thank you so much for that. It really was awesome to get.

And of course, a big thank you to you, my dear listener, for tuning in and making it all the way to the end of this episode. Congratulations on completing a study session with me today. I think you did a great job. This is what you need to do to build your fluency. You need to spend time with English. You need to get the language into your brain. And if you made it all the way to the end, that's what you did. You're on the right track. Keep going, OK? Keep going.

Now, I want to share with you this week's completion code. You can leave a comment on our YouTube page, on our Discord community, on our Instagram page with the completion code, which will be: "Care." I think that's a fitting completion code. Don't you think? Care. So, write an example sentence or just write that word "care" and that will signal to me and signal to our entire Culips community that you did it, that you finished this episode.

Well, everyone, **I've worked up an appetite**. Maybe I'll have to go ask my wife if she can share one of those chocolates or cookies with me, but yeah, I'm going to take off now. So,

everyone, please take care this week. Happy English learning as always, and I'll catch you in the next Culips episode. Bye-bye!

Glossary

1. **The odds are:** A way of saying something is likely to happen or be true. In this episode, Andrew says "the odds are at some point you've experienced homesickness," meaning it's very likely that people who live away from home feel homesick. *Example: The odds are you'll need a jacket today since it's going to be cold.*
2. **A full-blown (something):** When something reaches its complete or most serious form. In this episode, Andrew mentions "full-blown depression," referring to a serious case of depression rather than just feeling sad. *Example: What started as a small argument turned into a full-blown fight between the teammates.*
3. **Snail mail:** Traditional postal mail service, called this because it's much slower than electronic communication like email. In this episode, Andrew talks about how his grandparents could only communicate through snail mail when they moved to Canada. *Example: I still send birthday cards to my grandmother by snail mail because she doesn't use email.*
4. **Vice versa:** Used to say the same thing applies when you reverse the order of what was just said. In this episode, Andrew talks about how American products are sold in Canada and vice versa, meaning Canadian products are also sold in America. *Example: Dogs often look like their owners, and vice versa.*
5. **To cross the threshold:** To pass through a doorway or entrance, often used when talking about entering a new place or situation. In this episode, Andrew uses it to describe when junk food enters his home, saying once it "crosses the threshold," he can't resist eating it. *Example: As soon as the new students crossed the threshold into their classroom, they felt nervous.*
6. **It's on:** An informal way of saying you're ready and excited to do something. In this episode, Andrew says "it's on" when he sees the peanut butter cups, showing he's

excited to eat them. *Example: When my friend challenged me to a video game competition, I said "It's on!"*

7. **To catch on:** To become popular or widely accepted. In this episode, Andrew mentions that almond butter hasn't really "caught on" in Korea, meaning it hasn't become popular there yet. *Example: That new dance trend really caught on quickly with teenagers.*
8. **Leave someone in the lurch:** To abandon or leave someone in a difficult situation without help. In this episode, Andrew talks about not wanting to leave his wife "in the lurch" by eating all the snacks himself. *Example: My partner left me in the lurch when they didn't show up to help with our class presentation.*
9. **To dole (something) out:** To distribute or give something in small portions over time. In this episode, Andrew's wife "dole out" the snacks to prevent him from eating them all at once. *Example: The teacher doled out stickers to students who finished their homework.*
10. **Go nuts:** To become extremely excited or to do something in an uncontrolled way. In this episode, Andrew says he "can't go nuts on the sweets" at his age, meaning he is too old to eat a lot of sweet food. *Example: The fans went nuts when their team scored the winning goal.*
11. **Work up an appetite:** To become hungry, usually through activity or waiting. In this episode, Andrew says he "worked up an appetite" after finishing recording this podcast episode. *Example: After hiking for two hours, we really worked up an appetite.*

Episode credits

Host and preparation: Andrew Bates

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima