

## Bonus episode #072 - Cherry on top

### Episode description

In this episode, Andrew discusses a moment of truth and recounts a comical visit to a local clinic in his neighborhood. Plus, in the vocabulary lesson, he teaches you about the expression, "the cherry on top."

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Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

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**Andrew:** Hello, and welcome to bonus episode number 72 of the Culips English Podcast. My name is Andrew, I will be your host and your English study buddy for today. How is it going with you? I hope you're doing well. And if you were to ask me how I'm doing right now, in response, I would say I'm doing pretty well, but not perfect. In last week's bonus episode, I told you that my throat was a little tender and a little bit sore, and that I didn't want to keep the episode going for too long last week because I was worried about my sore throat turning into a full-blown cold. And well, can you guess what happened? Yes, it did indeed turn into a full-blown cold. So, the time in between now and since I last talked to you has been filled with a lot of coughing, and sniffing, and blowing my nose, and all of those disgusting and nasty things that come along with a cold. But I feel like I'm almost back to my old self. And of course, I'm happy to be here to spend some time studying English with you today.

And what we do here in the bonus episode series is I just tell you some stories from my everyday life as a Canadian living abroad in South Korea. And I've got a couple of stories to share with you this week that I hope you'll find interesting and funny. And of course, the real reason that you're here is to improve your English, so I hope they'll also be helpful in achieving that goal.

And to help you with that goal, we have a free transcript for this episode. It comes in an interactive version or a PDF version, and you can download it and follow along with the episode or check your comprehension after listening to the episode just by following the link that's in the description or by visiting our website Culips.com.

Now, we also make some amazing, helpful learning resources for all of you out there who are thinking about becoming more serious about your English studies. If you're ready to take a big step forward and hit the next level in your English fluency, then I recommend becoming a Culips member. Because when you're a Culips member, you'll get access to

all of the great resources that we make to accompany all of our episodes. Things like study guides with full transcripts and detailed explanations of the key vocabulary and expressions that you need to know to make your English sound natural, plus so much more. We have our Fluency Files series that is exclusive to Culips members. We have a special area on our Discord community that is exclusive to Culips members. We have classes and live streams that members can join as well. So, there are so many tools that you get access to. It's a fun way to improve your English with us. And at the same time, you help support the work that we do here at Culips, making English lessons for learners all over the world each and every week. So, if you're interested in that, then just visit our website [Culips.com](https://www.culips.com). You can find out all of the details, and you can sign up and become a member.

And now, let's get started with this episode in earnest. And I want to kick things off by talking about my moment of truth. Do you know this expression? A moment of truth? A moment of truth is when you can see for yourself if your training, or your practice, or your preparation was useful and helpful or not. So let me give you an example. Let's say you're unemployed, and you're looking for a job. So, you go online and visit job searching websites, and you find a job that looks like it's a great fit for you. So, you apply for the job, and a little while later, you get a call saying that you've been selected for a job interview. Amazing, right? That's a great opportunity for you. So, you want to do your best. You want to really make sure that you really nail the interview so that you can land that job. And to "land" a job means to get the job. So, in order to land that job, then you need to practice and prepare for the interview so you can impress and wow the people who are interviewing you.

So, you get to work, you do your research, you do your practice, maybe even do a mock interview with a friend, something like that. And then finally, it's time for the interview. Well, we would call that interview the "moment of truth." Why? Because we'll be able to see if all of the background research that you did, the mock interview practice that you did if that is helpful and actually landing you the job. If it is helpful, well, then it was time well spent,

right? It's a really good thing that you did all of that prep. So that's what we call a moment of truth, right? And you can apply this to so many situations. A job interview is a great example.

A test or an exam could be a great example. Before you take an exam, of course, you have to study. And then when you're actually in the exam room, ready to begin, that's the moment of truth. Did all of your studying help you? Did it prepare you well enough to do well on the exam? Or did you maybe study the wrong things, or not put enough time into studying, or not learn the material correctly, right? You'll only find out when you do the exam. So those are two examples.

But I have a third example, and it relates to the story that I'm going to tell you now. Because I have a moment of truth coming up in my own life on the weekend, on Saturday. Saturday morning will be my moment of truth because I'll be running in the marathon that I've been training for for the last probably around three months, maybe 10 to 12 weeks, somewhere in there. I don't have a great memory for dates, but I believe I signed up for the marathon in late June, and now I'll be running it here in late October. And if you're a regular Culips listener, I've talked about the marathon a little bit over that training period. And actually, it's something I'm quite passionate about, and I love talking about running. But I really try to shut up and not to talk about it too much on Culips because I think it's one of those niche topics that probably runners like talking about, but other people don't enjoy so much, so I've tried not to talk about it too much.

But I've been doing a lot of running regularly over this training period of 10 to 12 weeks. And now, finally, it's my moment of truth. And I have to test and see if all of the training and preparation will help me to reach my goal, and to finish the marathon in under three hours and 30 minutes. So, if you recall from when I talked about the marathon and my goal for the marathon, in that earlier episode, well, that is the goal that I'm trying to do three hours and 30 minutes, and I'll be running the marathon alongside my buddy, Jimmy.

But as you can maybe hear in my voice right now, and as I told you earlier, I am not 100% right now, although I am feeling a little bit better, I've been sick.

So, there's a kind of funny story that I wanted to tell you about visiting the hospital here in Korea, or perhaps technically, I should say clinic. In the Korean language, they use the word hospital to talk about really big hospitals, and also kind of smaller clinics. Whereas in English, we use the word hospital just for the very big hospitals. You know, where maybe you would go if you were in an emergency and had to take an ambulance. Or if you were to deliver a baby, or if you were to have major surgery or some treatment for a big, serious disease, that would be a hospital. But if you're just like me, and you have a cold and you're coughing and wheezing, that kind of thing, then you would go to a clinic, so I should be careful with my language. I didn't go to a hospital, I went to a clinic. And so, let me tell you the story about that because at least I found it quite amusing.

And I should preface this story by saying that naturally, my personality is a little bit stubborn, or maybe resistant to going to a clinic or going to see a doctor when I feel sick. Although my wife, on the other hand, is always telling me to go see the doctor if I feel a little sick. Usually, I'm like, "Yeah, no, I'm OK. Like, I'm not going to die. I'll be fine." And I always put it off for as long as possible. And usually, most of the time, I am fine, and I don't need to see a doctor or anything like that. So, it's OK. So that's my natural personality. And this time when I got sick, it was the same way, OK? I think I know exactly where and how I got sick. Because as you guys know, I work at a university, and I teach some classes there. And it's just that time of the year. The season has just changed from summer to fall, and many people are having a hard time adjusting to that. And there's like a cold bug going around. And I was working with a group of students a little while ago, and half of them were coughing their heads off throughout the class. I could just imagine the germs flying through the classroom. And I knew that I was going to get sick. And hey, that's what ended up happening. I did get sick.

And like I said, usually in this kind of situation, I wouldn't go to the doctor because it's just a minor cold. But this cold was a little bit different because when I would lie down and go to sleep, then once I fell asleep, I would cough a lot and that would wake me up, but it also woke my wife up as well. And so, my wife was really the one that was like, "Andrew, you gotta go see your doctor, this coughing is driving me crazy." And also, because I was coughing at night, that means that I wasn't sleeping well at night. And if you don't sleep well, then it's hard to recover when you're sick, right? Sleep plays such an important role in helping us feel better. So, there was that. And then the cherry on top was when I looked at my calendar, and I realized that this marathon is coming up really, really soon. The last thing that I want to do is to run a marathon with this cold.

And in fact, it's been a little bit difficult training over the last week and a half or so because I've been sick. I've still been going outside and running, which is probably not a good thing to do if you're in this situation, you should probably just rest and relax until you feel better. But I feel like I don't have time to rest and relax. If I rest and relax right here at the very end of my training, then maybe I won't be prepared for the marathon and all of that running that I did, all those hours of training in the hot weather, in the rain, at night, in the morning, uphill, downhill, you name it. All of those hard hours of training that I've been doing over the last 10 to 12 weeks would be in vain. And it would almost be like I would be flushing those hours of training down the toilet. So, I've been out there running still. But obviously, it's probably not a great idea to do that. And I've noticed that I've been unable to run with the regular speed and intensity that I do when I'm feeling healthy. My legs and everything just feels sluggish when I go out running right now.

So, because of these things, because I was keeping my wife up at night, because I was keeping myself up at night, and because I have this marathon coming up at the end of the week, so I decided to go to the clinic and get some medicine from the doctor, so I can get better as soon as possible because time's a-tickin'. And the race will be happening before I know it. So, that was that, I made up my mind, "Let's go see the doctor."

And I think it was in the Culips live stream I told this story. So, if you're a Culips member, and you watched our latest Culips live stream that happened a couple of weeks ago, I think I talked about the story with Alina. So, I'll try not to repeat myself too much for those of you who already heard it. But in the live stream, I was talking about visiting the dentist, and I mentioned how recently, my wife and I, we moved to our newly renovated house which is in a new neighborhood from where we used to live. And because of that, we don't really know too many things about this neighborhood. Like when I went to the dentist, I had to find a new dentist and I had to research and find a new dental office in my new neighborhood. And I had to go through exactly the same thing when finding a clinic to go to because I'm new to this neighborhood.

I've never been sick in this neighborhood. I don't know where the doctor's office is. I don't know who the good doctors are. I don't know where the clinics are. I was starting from scratch, starting at zero. So, I did what I did when I was looking for a new dental office. I just went to the map app on my phone and looked for clinics. And I looked at the pins for all of the clinics that were near to my house. And I think I've mentioned this on Culips as well, but one of the things that I really love about living in Seoul is that it's a very densely populated city. And because of that, you never have to go very far to find anything. And within 500 meters or a kilometer walking distance of my house, there are many, many clinics. So, I just found the one that was closest to my house. And I looked at its star rating, because you know, after people visit a business, they can leave a review and write some comments and give it a ranking of one to five stars. And so, it had, you know, like, I don't know, 4.4 stars or something like that. I can't remember exactly, but it was high enough that I felt, "Hey, this clinic's probably totally fine. Like, as long as it's not two stars or something, then it's probably OK."

So, I decided to visit that clinic because it's close to my house and because I'm lazy. So off I went to the clinic, and it only took me a few moments to walk there from my house. And it was on the second floor of a building. So, I went into the stairwell of the building, and I walked up the staircase. And it was a kind of older building. But I noticed as I was going up



the stairs towards the office that the interior looked older as well, like it was almost like I was walking back in time. Now, of course, I've only lived in Korea for around 10 years total, so I can't really say that I'm familiar with the interior decorating trends of the 70s and 80s and 90s because that was before my time. But it kind of felt like I was walking back into 1970s Korea or something like that. So, I thought that was interesting. And then I went into the clinic, and I was greeted by the receptionist. And again, the interior of the clinic was very old school. It was like it hadn't been touched since the 1970s or the 1960s. It was actually really cool for me because, as you know, I love vintage products and vintage things, and everything looked really retro in there. And the receptionist was also kind of vintage. I don't know, is it rude to say that? Because the receptionist was quite a bit older than I was expecting. I don't know, usually when I go to a hospital, the receptionist is maybe 30 to 50 years old or something like this. But this receptionist was quite a bit older, I guess, to be polite I could say she was around the age of a grandma. OK, let's just say it like that. But she was very, very kind, very, very friendly, and took my info and told me to sit down for a moment.

And pretty much like one minute after I sat down, I was called in to go see the doctor. And the doctor that I went to was an E N T, ear, nose, and throat doctor. And that's the kind of clinic that you should go to if you have a cold. So, I went to the E N T. And when you visit an E N T here in Korea, I'm not sure about in your country, but you usually sit on this kind of special chair that they can lean back if they need to look, you know, in your mouth or up your nose or in your ears or something like that. So, I went to the doctor's office, I sat on the chair, and then the doctor came in. And the doctor was also very vintage. He was really, really kind, really, really nice guy. He spoke English, which was shocking to me. You know, when he came into the room, I greeted him, and he greeted me back in English. And I was taken aback for a moment that he was speaking to me in English, but he told me that he can speak English and French and German and Korean and Japanese. So, he's kind of a linguistic genius. And yeah, he spoke English really well.



But he was also maybe, I guess I could say a grandfather. Actually, my wife was with me when I went to the doctor's. And I didn't notice this, but she noticed it on the wall of the reception area in the waiting room where she was hanging out. She said that she saw his medical license. And yeah, probably based on the date from when he got his license, we kind of think that he's probably in his late 80s to early 90s. So, I don't think I've ever visited a doctor that was that old before. And I don't think he's had a foreign patient in a long time before because he was really outgoing, really friendly, really talkative, and we ended up chewing the fat for a long time. He had actually lived in Canada and Vancouver and knew a lot about the area of the world where I grew up and where I'm from. So, we had lots to chat about.

But you know, after we are talking for about 10-15 minutes or so, I was kind of like, "Hey, Doc, you know, I'm sick, I came here to get a checkup and to get some medicine and not to hang out and talk." So, he was like, "OK, say ahh open your mouth." So, I did that. I opened my mouth. I said ahh, and he took one quick little look in my mouth and didn't even really ask me any questions. And he said, "OK, I'm gonna write you a prescription and take this medicine for three days and you'll be fine, and you'll be better." And so, I was thinking, you know, that's interesting. Maybe he should have asked me some more questions about you know what my symptoms are? Or why I'm sick or why I'm here, or, you know, my medical history, something like that. But at the same time, I thought he's got many years of experience, like this doctor probably has more experience than almost any other doctor in the city. So, I decided, OK, I'm just gonna trust him. It was only medicine for three days. And you know, he must know what he's doing, right? And my wife agreed with me. She said, "Yeah, let's just trust this doctor. He knows what he's doing. He's been a doctor for a long time."

So great, we got the prescription, we went outside of the clinic. And this is another wonderful thing that I love about Korea is that clinics and pharmacies are always attached to each other. And so, we went down just to the first floor of the building where the pharmacy was, and I got the prescription filled for this kind of cough medicine for three

days. So, I was a little bit skeptical, but I took the medicine for three days. And then after... Well, I still had the same problem, no improvement, unfortunately. And now at this point, I was even a little bit more stressed because that means I was just three days closer to having to run the marathon.

So, I decided instead now to go back to an old hospital in my old neighborhood that I used to go to, and especially this clinic was great when I caught COVID, the two times that I had COVID, I went to that hospital. And I really liked the doctor. So, I thought, I'm not going to roll the dice in my new neighborhood, right yet. Because time is of the essence, I'm just going to go back to my old neighborhood and see the doctor that I'm used to. So that's what I did. And that doctor did a much more thorough checkup. And he told me that I had a kind of sinus infection that had moved down into my lungs. So yeah, not great, but she gave me a bunch of pills to take medicine for that. And ever since taking that, I've been so much better. Pretty much immediately, the coughing at night went away. And that was a huge thing for my wife, of course, because now she can sleep peacefully at night. But also, I've been sleeping peacefully at night. So that's great.

So yeah, I'm feeling better. I'm not 100% yet. And the moment of truth is coming up here on Saturday. This is my last week of training. But actually, the last week, the lead up before a marathon, you don't really want to push it too hard. Just kind of want to taper down your training so that you're in good shape for the race day. So, I'm just going to take it easy this week. I'm not going to do too much training. I'm going to try and relax and sleep well. And then Saturday is the moment of truth for me and for Jimmy. And I feel like Jimmy is going to have absolutely no problems on the marathon. He's been training a lot harder than I have, a lot more regularly than I have. Although I had a training schedule that I was following perfectly for maybe the first six to eight weeks of my training, I had this schedule mapped out, and I was following it perfectly. But then my life got really hectic, and we lost our dog Pinky, and I fell into a kind of depression. And I also got really busy with work. And unfortunately, I wasn't able to follow the training schedule perfectly. Although I was still exercising and still running, I wasn't doing as much as I should have been.

So, I'm a little bit nervous about that. I'm a little bit nervous about not being 100%. But Saturday will be the moment of truth. And next week, I'll be able to report back about whether I was successful at A) finishing the marathon or not and B) hitting the three-hour and 30-minute goal or not. So, I'll give you an update about that next week. But for now, if you could cheer me on a little bit, and maybe on Saturday morning, think of me out there running the race, I think that will give me a big boost and help me to cross the finish line in one piece.

And now it's time for this week's vocabulary lesson.

So, for this week's vocabulary lesson, I want to teach you about the expression "cherry on top." Cherry on top. And we can use this expression in many different ways. There are a lot of varieties. Sometimes you'll hear people say "the cherry on top of the cake," or "the cherry on top of the sundae." Or sometimes we even say "the icing on top" or "the icing on top of the sundae" or "the icing on top of the cake." And all of these variations of this expression, they all mean the same thing. So, what does it mean? Well, English speakers use this expression when we want to talk about something that's already good, that is made even better by something else. And the opposite is also true as well, it could be something that is bad, that is made even worse because of something else.

Now, when I was telling you my story a little bit earlier about having to run in the marathon pretty soon, I used this expression actually. Did you happen to hear that? If not, don't worry, because we're going to rewind right now and go back and listen to that part of the story a couple of more times, because I want you to hear how I used this expression a little bit earlier in that kind of natural context when it just flowed out of my mouth. So, we'll take a listen to that now. And then when we come back, I'll explain exactly what it means. And I'll give you three example sentences that will show you how English speakers use this expression in their everyday lives. So, let's rewind, go back, and take another listen now.

And then the cherry on top was when I looked at my calendar, and I realized that this marathon is coming up really, really soon.

OK, so what I said there was that the cherry on top was when I looked at my calendar, and I realized that the marathon is coming up pretty soon. So, as I mentioned a little bit earlier, we can use this expression when we're talking about a bad situation that is made even worse by something else. And that's the kind of way that I use this expression, right? I already had a bad situation. My bad situation was I was sick. And then the cherry on top, something that made that situation even worse, was that I realized that my marathon is coming up really soon. So, that bad situation of being sick was made worse by something, which was my realization about the marathon coming up soon. Now, I would say that 50% of the time when English speakers use the expression, it's like this in a kind of negative way. But the other 50% of the time when we use it, it's used in a more positive way. And that's actually the imagery of this expression.

The imagery is about dessert. So, you could imagine, like an ice cream sundae, or a piece of chocolate cake. And that kind of dessert is really delicious, right? But we can make the dessert even more delicious by putting a cherry on top of the dessert. So, it's like adding to it and making it even more delicious. So that is like the imagery behind the expression. And yeah, like I mentioned about 50% of the time, we'll use it in a positive way to talk about something good, that's made even better. OK, that's the cherry on top. So yeah, be careful with this expression. Because it could go either way. It's talking about something bad, that's made even worse, or something good, that's made even better. And it's going to depend on the context and the way the speaker is speaking to determine how you can interpret this expression. So now that we know what this expression means, it's time to listen to some example sentences. And like always, I've prepared three for you to check out. So, let's begin with the first one right now. Here we go.

## **Example sentence number one.**

I got a promotion at work, and the cherry on top is that it comes with a raise.

Let's break this example sentence down. In this example sentence, the speaker says that he got a promotion at work. And even better than just getting promoted, it comes with a cherry on top. So that good situation of getting a promotion was made even better by something else. And that's that he's getting a raise, his salary is going up. Amazing. That's wonderful, right? And that's why this expression, "the cherry on top," is the perfect expression to use in this kind of situation when you want to communicate that this good and even better news has just happened to you.

## **Example sentence number two.**

The project was already way behind schedule, and then the cherry on top was that my computer crashed, and I lost all my files.

Let's break this example sentence down. OK, in this example sentence, the speaker is using this expression in a negative way. In fact, he was already in a pretty bad situation. He was working on a project for work, and it was late. And then something else happened that made that bad situation even worse, and that is that his computer crashed, and he lost all of his files. So here he's using this expression to talk about a bad situation becoming even worse by using the expression, "the cherry on top."

## **Example sentence number three.**

She thought her day couldn't get any worse, but then the cherry on top was missing the last bus home in the pouring rain.

Let's break this final example sentence down. Here we go. We heard another usage of this expression in a negative way. Because in this expression, the woman who is the subject of

the example sentence, she thought her day couldn't get any worse. She was having a rough day, a bad day. And then finally, at the end of the day, she was trying to get home. But then her bad day was made even worse. Why? Because she missed the final bus home in the pouring rain. Just even thinking about this situation makes me feel sad. It's like a really depressing kind of image that comes into your mind, isn't it? But it really clearly illustrates how we can use this expression to talk about something bad becoming even worse. All right, everybody.

That brings us to the end. Thank you for studying alongside here with me today, and congratulations on completing an English study session with me. Great job! And now I want to turn things over to you. You've heard what I've had to say here for the last 30 minutes or so. But I want to know about what's going on in your life. I want to know what's new with you. I want to know if you've ever been in a moment of truth. I want to know a situation in your life where something good has become even better, or something bad has become even worse and where you could use the expression "the cherry on top" to talk about that. So how can you get in contact with me? And how can you contact the rest of our wonderful Culips community? Well, you need to join our Discord. We have an amazing community and wonderful discussions happening every day on our Discord server. And if you haven't joined us there yet, then come on. What are you waiting for? We'll be happy to welcome you there. You can join our Discord server for free just by following the link that's in the description for this episode.

So, guys, that's it for me for now, but I'll be back next week with another bonus episode sometime after I finish the marathon, and I'll talk to you then. Bye!

## Episode credits

Host and preparation: Andrew Bates

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