

Simplified Speech #136 – How was your 2021?

Episode description

For some, 2021 was a lot better than 2020. However, that is not the case for everyone. We're all still dealing with the COVID pandemic. In this episode, the Culips team looks back at some of the highs and lows of the last year.

Simplified Speech is a series meant for intermediate English language learners. This series is designed to help you improve your English skills with interesting and easy to listen to episodes.

Fun fact

The COVID pandemic has disrupted the entire world. Future generations might not fully understand what we went through. On the lighter side, years from now, they might be asking us why the Tokyo 2020 Olympics took place in 2021!

Expressions included in the study guide

- To recentre
- To babble
- A fairy-tale [something]
- Daunting
- A win
- Trouper



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! It's Andrew here and you're listening to the Culips English Podcast. How's it going listeners? Welcome back to Culips.

This is a Simplified Speech episode. And if you're new to Culips, or don't know what Simplified Speech is, let me explain. Simplified Speech is the Culips series for intermediate-level English learners. That features clear and understandable conversations between native speakers and we design Simplified Speech episodes to help you build your English skills and develop fluency faster.

So, I'm kind of alone for today's episode, kind of. We'll be hearing from the other Culips hosts as we go along, but for now, I'll talk to you directly. It's only me. The topic of this episode is 2021. And the plan is to take a look back at this year. The end of the year is a great time for introspection, and gives us an excellent opportunity to reflect, **recentre**, and motivate ourselves to achieve our goals and live our best life in the upcoming year ahead.

So guys, this will be the last episode of the year and what a busy year, it's been here at Culips. We released over 75 regular episodes this year, plus many Fluency Files episodes as well. Fluency Files is our series that's exclusive for Culips members. So, if you're not a Culips member, maybe you haven't heard them, but we also released a lot of those bonus episodes also. And on top of all that Kassy and I also hosted monthly live streams every month this year. And it was great to hang out and interact with a lot of you who viewed and participated in the live streams. We also did a lot of tweaks and upgrades to our website, we launched a bunch of new features, like a comment section, a discussion forum, and we're just about to release a brand new interactive transcripts feature as well, that will make learning with our study guides a much, much better experience and we're super excited about that and we can't wait for you all to try it out. So stay tuned for the announcement about that coming up very, very soon. We even added a new member to the Culips team this year and we were so happy to have Anna join us as the new Chatterbox co-host. Anna's been doing a fantastic job as a host and she's a great teacher as well, and has made a fantastic addition to our team.

How about you listeners? How was your 2021? I think people all over the world had big plans, and maybe for a lot of us, those plans didn't quite work out the way that we had hoped. Many of us believed that in 2021, the COVID pandemic would become less serious and life would return to normal again, but that didn't really happen. We're still living through this pandemic as I record this episode and, of course, all of the limitations and restrictions that it brings. I think I can speak for almost everyone, when I say that I truly hope that next year, life finally starts to return back to normal again and we can start to put COVID behind us and move on with our lives.

Regardless if this year was amazing for you, or if it wasn't quite what you were hoping for, I really want to thank each and every one of you who listened, studied, and learned with Culips this year. We have listeners from all over the world, from all different backgrounds, and all different levels of English ability, from beginner all the way up to native speaker. Believe it or not, there are some native speakers who listen to us as well. Some of you guys are casual listeners who tune in now and again, and some of you are hardcore and listen and study with Culips every day and I have to say that I'm thankful for all of you.

I want to especially thank all the people who went out of their way to support us by leaving a review or a comment or telling your friends about Culips or even by becoming a Culips member. Support from the Culips community is really what keeps us going. And as you guys know, we don't have any advertisements, or sponsors from companies, so we depend totally on the community. And without you all Culips wouldn't exist. So, thanks for all of your help and support over this last year. It's been totally awesome and moving to see. So enough of me **babbling** on here, let's hear from some of the Culips team members about how their 2021s went.

We'll start with Kassy, because she had a pretty good year. During the most recent live stream that Kassy and I did, which by the way, you guys can catch the replay of on our YouTube channel. And I'll put the link to that in the description for this episode, if you want to watch it later. But during that live stream, Kassy rated her 2021 as nine out of ten, which is a pretty high score. So I asked Kassy to summarize her year and talk about some of what she did in 2021. Let's take a listen to what she had to say.

Kassy: I gotta say Andrew, 2021 has been pretty amazing. I got engaged. I got to visit America for the first time in a while due to you know, pandemics going on. And I got my dream job as a high school math and physics teacher, which I'm really loving.

Andrew: Hearing about how great Kassy's year was I'm wondering if nine out of ten is too low of a score. Sounds like a **fairy-tale** year to me, getting engaged, going on an amazing trip, getting her dream job. Can you get much better than that? I also asked Kassy if she accomplished her new year's resolutions and goals for 2021. Let's take a listen to how she answered that question.

Kassy: Well, if listeners remember, which I talked about it a lot throughout this year, my main goal, my resolution, was to read 100 books. And I was close, but I did not read 100 books, unfortunately.

Andrew: I have to be honest and say that reading 100 books in a year is a pretty **daunting** goal. Daunting, daunting. I like that word daunting, d-a-u-n-t-i-n-g. When we describe something as pretty daunting, it means that it's intimidating, and we get a little bit nervous or stressed out just thinking about it. For example, cooking dinner for 10 people would be pretty daunting. Maybe traveling to a foreign country where you can't speak the local language would also be pretty daunting. Starting a new hobby, like lifting weights at the gym or learning to play a new musical instrument. Those things can also be pretty daunting. And definitely reading 100 books is a pretty daunting goal, because it's really

difficult to reach that goal, right? Essentially, you have to read almost two books a week, which is a lot of reading. So I'm sure you're all dying to know about how many books Kassy was actually able to read. Of course I was as well, so I made sure to ask her about it.

Kassy: Well, it's not quite the end of the year yet, but I have read at this point 86 books. I almost count it as a **win**.

Andrew: Kassy used a great expression there. She said that she counted reading 86 books this year, as a win. To count something as a win. To count something as a win means to consider it a success. So Kassy's got a really positive attitude, don't you agree? Even though she didn't reach her goal exactly, she's still considering reading 86 books this year a success. And I agree that is a great success, indeed.

A question we get asked often here at Culips is, "Can you recommend an interesting book for me to read?" So since Kassy read so many books this year, I think she's an expert and I wanted to ask her about the book that she enjoyed the most. And here's what she said.

Kassy: Oh, wow, that's a hard question. There's two books that I want to recommend because they're actually Netflix shows, which is pretty exciting. Yeah, the first one is a trilogy, *The Shadow and Bone Trilogy* by Leigh Bardugo.

Andrew: I hadn't heard of these books before, but I googled them and I found out that they are extremely popular. They were on the New York Times bestseller's list on amazon.com's editor's pick lists and of course there's a Netflix series as well. It's a fantasy series, so the language in these kind of books can be a little bit difficult to understand at first, because there are lots of words that we just don't really use in our everyday lives about magic and weapons and war and dragons, and all of these topics that are talked about in fantasy novels. However, reading books like this can be an awesome way to deepen your knowledge of English vocabulary beyond the basics. So if fantasy is a genre you enjoy, definitely check these books out. Kassy had one more recommendation and when I asked her about the second book she'd recommend, she said the following.

Kassy: It's called the *Three Body Problem* by Liu Cixin. Sorry if I'm mispronouncing that, he's a Chinese author, very famous. I'm reading the translated works in English.

Andrew: And, guys, if you've read any good English books lately, please make sure to leave a comment on Culips.com and let us know. I think a lot of other listeners out there would love to know about books to read, and of course, I'd be interested to know as well. Let's move on to Anna now the newest member of our team. Anna joined Culips in June, and it's been so fun getting to work with her this year. Anna's from England, which means that she has a different accent and speaking style than the rest of the Culips hosts, because well, the rest of us speak with North American accents. So Anna has brought the UK accent to Culips and I'm so glad you guys can get to learn from her. Part of becoming a fluent English speaker means being able to understand how all English speakers speak, not just the ones from North America. So I'm really happy that Anna is now teaching all of

us about the fascinating style of UK English. And I talked with Anna about her 2021 and how it went. And here's what she had to say.

Anna: My 2021 was interesting, I have to say it was a little bit stressful. I've learned a lot. So my year was, to be honest, a lot about working really hard. So I've had to do a lot of things. And I've had a lot on my plate, but I feel like I've made a lot of progress, even though actually probably it's been a more difficult year for me than then 2020. But I'm still working hard. I'm keeping going. I'm a **trouper**, so I'm looking forward to doing more things in 2022.

Andrew: Sounds like Anna had a really busy year, doesn't it? I love some of the expressions that she used when answering that question. She said that she had a lot on her plate, which means that she was really busy with work. If you have a lot on your plate, it means that you have a lot of work or many tasks to do. Let's hear Anna say that again a couple of more times.

Anna: I've had a lot on my plate, but I feel like I've made a lot of progress. I've had a lot on my plate, but I feel like I've made a lot of progress.

Andrew: So she had a lot on her plate, she had a lot of work to do but she's made a lot of progress and got a lot of work done. That's awesome. I also asked Anna if she achieved all the things she wanted in 2021. Here's how she responded to that question.

Anna: Oh, absolutely not, no, I never achieve all the things I want to achieve. But I did make a lot of progress with some things. But there's still things on my list that I have to do. So, I need to work on being a little bit more efficient and trying to manage my time a little bit better. But I did do some things, but more things to do. There's always more things.

Andrew: I love this answer because it reminds me of the way that I think about life often as well. There's always more things to do, more lists to make, more goals to achieve, more places to go, more books to read, more words to learn, and so on, and so on, and so on. More, more, more. It's what makes life interesting. I also asked Anna about the highlights of her 2021. Here's what she had to say.

Anna: Running my course for the first time my Confident Presentations course, which was really exciting for me and to do something that I'm really, really interested in. And also just building my things and my channels and going on holiday and going to the mountains a little bit. So there was a couple of highlights. I don't have one but yeah, those are probably my highlights of 2021.

Andrew: Now, if you guys haven't heard Anna's other podcast, especially those of you who are learning English for business purposes, definitely check it out. It's called Anna with two Ns English and it's a fun and helpful business English podcast. I'll put the link in

the description for this episode, so make to take a listen to Anna with two Ns and show Anna your support.

Are you curious about Suzanne too? Sue was gracious enough to talk to me even though she's visiting her family for the holidays in Texas right now. So she didn't have her microphone with her, but we were still able to connect and talk about how her year went. I asked her to sum up how 2021 was for her and this is what she told me.

Suzanne: In a nutshell, my 2021 was OK, it was pretty good. We had to postpone our wedding. But we did more travel, which was totally on our bucket list for this year. And going to France and being able to plan our wedding was really cool, tasting all of the food, drinking the champagne, and seeing the location where we will be married, that was really cool. And we got to come here for the holidays, here in Texas to see my family and my nephew, which was really cool. Getting to spend Christmas together after almost 12 years apart was really, really a highlight.

Andrew: In a nutshell, I love that. That's an expression that we can use when we want to summarize something. So instead of giving us all the details about 2021, Sue just told us a summary. So she introduced that summary with the expression in a nutshell. She said in a nutshell, my 2021 was OK. So Sue has some wedding updates that happened to her this year as well. Oh my gosh, so many wedding things happened to the Culips team in 2021. Of course, I got married, Kassy got engaged, and unfortunately due to the ongoing pandemic situation, Suzanne had to delay her wedding plans until next year. But she did get to visit France and plan her wedding though. And she told us all about that trip in the last Simplified Speech episode, number 135. So if you haven't heard that story yet, definitely go back and check that episode out.

Suzanne and her partner Olivier also got new jobs this year, which is really exciting. And I want to pass on my congrats to both of them for that wonderful achievement. Let's listen to Suzanne describe these brand new jobs.

Suzanne: So, I started working at the university in the theatre department in Montreal. And Olivier, my partner got a new job managing a big team of people working on transportation, mobility, construction, really how the city moves.

Andrew: Now finally, before I wrap up here, I'll quickly talk about 2021 for me. To be honest, it was an awesome year that saw a bunch of huge life changes for me. I got married in May and moved into a new apartment with my wife and our dog Pinky in June. My wife and I both worked from home all year this year because of the pandemic. And actually we continue to both work from home. So that's meant that we can spend a lot of time together and eat lunch together every day, and so that's been really great.

Now all of these life changes meant that I wasn't quite as productive with my personal goals as I had hoped to be in 2021. So for example, I think many of you know that I love to go running, that's one of my hobbies. And last year, I completed almost 3000 kilometers of running. But this year, I only ran around 950 kilometers, which is a huge decrease from

2020. I think that drop is because now that we have our dog Pinky, we have to walk him three or four times a day. And actually he's staring at me right now, everyone, he wants to go outside for a walk. So as soon as I complete this recording, I'll take him for a walk. Now usually after taking him for his walk, I feel too lazy to go outside again for a run. So I guess either way, I'm being active whether I'm running or walking Pinky and I probably walked more this year than I did in 2020. But I guess it's a little disappointing to see my number drop this year compared to last year.

I also had the goal of reading 10 novels in Korean for 2021. For those of you who don't know Korean is my second language and I've been learning it for around seven years now. I live in Seoul and my wife is Korean so learning the language is a big priority for me. I did fall short of this goal, however. I ended up reading six Korean novels this year. Like Kassy, I'm still going to consider this a win. The time I spent reading Korean novels really helped me build my vocabulary and understanding of Korean sentence structure, and I just feel like it really helped develop my overall language skills as a whole. I probably also spoke more Korean this year than any other year in the past. And according to my study stats that, like the nerd I am, I track on my computer, I studied for around 340 days this year. The days I missed were around my wedding and when I was on my honeymoon and some other holidays, so I don't really feel bad about taking that time off at all. Overall, I'm really happy with my language learning progress this year. I say this around this time each year, but the most important thing that will guarantee ultimate success when learning a second language is consistency. If you keep coming back to the language, keep spending time with it daily, the results will come and your fluency will increase. Overall this year, I think I can safely say that I practiced what I preached. And I made a consistent effort throughout the year that I'm satisfied with. My goal for language learning and Korean studies next year is going to be the same. Don't quit, keep going, stay consistent, all of these things. And along the way, I'll make sure to enjoy myself as much as possible by studying with the things that I find interesting, like novels, movies, and of course, podcasts.

So I'm going to wrap things up here, everyone, thanks again, so much for learning English with Culips in 2021. And if you'd like to get serious about learning English in 2022, well, Culips is here to help.

That's all for now. Talk to you next time.

Detailed Explanations

To recentre

Verb

Andrew begins this episode by introducing its topic, the year 2021. As this is an end of year episode, he says it's a good opportunity to reflect on the past year and **to recentre** oneself. **To recentre** means to bring yourself, your emotions, or your life in general back to centre. In this sense, to be centred means to be balanced.

For example, you might have been unusually busy at work and couldn't spend enough time with your family. In this situation, you might want **to recentre** yourself by finding the proper balance between work time and family time.

In Canada and the UK, the spelling **recentre** is used. However, in the USA the spelling **recenter** is more common. Both are pronounced the same way.

Here are a couple more examples with **to recentre**:

Derek: How was your trip?

Paula: It was amazing. I spent most of my time meditating on the beach.

Derek: That sounds amazing.

Paula: For sure. It was a good opportunity for me **to recentre** myself before starting my new job.

Jill: Man, I'm so stressed.

Fern: Because of work?

Jill: Yeah. What do you usually do when you're stressed out?

Fern: I find the best way for me **to recentre** myself is to go out for a hike in nature. No earphones, no music. I always come back refreshed.

To babble

Verb

At the beginning of this episode, Andrew talks about the pandemic and all of the problems that many people have faced this year. However, he says that he's done enough **babbling** and wants to move onto the main part of the episode.

To babble is to speak quickly and too much, generally on an unimportant topic. Of course, the topic of the pandemic is pretty important, so Andrew is just joking when he says he's been **babbling** on too much.

If your friend is going on and on about something that happened and it's really not interesting, you can tell them to stop **babbling**. However, make sure you're friendly with the person, because telling someone they are **babbling** can be taken as an insult.

Here are a couple more examples with **to babble**:

Kurt: I got a big meeting tomorrow. Do you have any tips for me?

Lola: Well, try not to **babble**.

Kurt: What do you mean?

Lola: You sometimes have this bad habit of losing track of your thoughts, and then you ramble on about things that are really off topic. You should look out for that.

Brent: Oh, are you seriously going to invite Charles to the party?

Shelly: Why do you say that?

Brent: He takes up a lot of oxygen. He **babbling** on and on for hours about the stupidest stuff. People end up trying to avoid him all night.

Shelly: I see. I guess I won't invite him then.

A fairy-tale [something]

Adjective

When Andrew asks Kassy about her past year, she scores it a 9 out of 10. She then mentions the many positive highlights, such as getting engaged, going on a trip, and getting her dream job. Hearing this, Andrew says that it sounds like **a fairy-tale year**. **Fairy-tale** as an adjective means that something is wonderful and magical, just like in a fairy tale.

Fairy-tale as an adjective is usually an exaggeration of how good something is. It doesn't need to be on the level of Cinderella meeting her Prince Charming. It can simply mean that things are very good and you are pleased about it.

Here are a couple more examples with **a fairy-tale [something]**:

Daniel: Who's that in that black and white picture?

Greg: That's my grandmother.

Daniel: She's really pretty. And that dress looks expensive.

Greg: I can tell you that she really lived **a fairy-tale life**. She was an actress when she was younger. Then she married into European royalty. She always had extraordinary stories to tell.

Sarah: Who was your first serious boyfriend?

Winnie: That would be Nathan. Wow. I haven't thought of him in years.

Sarah: How would you describe your relationship?

Winnie: It was truly **a fairy-tale romance**. He was so kind. He always bought me flowers. We often went out to nice restaurants and on amazing trips.

Sarah: What happened?

Winnie: Unfortunately, real fairy tales don't last. He moved half-way across the planet because of his job. It was a sad couple of years where the relationship slowly fell apart.

Daunting Adjective

At one point in this episode, Kassy reminds listeners that one of her goals for 2021 was to read 100 books. Andrew thinks that was a pretty **daunting** goal. **Daunting** means that something is intimidating or overwhelming. In this case, the goal of reading 100 books isn't impossible, but it is pretty intimidating to think of.

Daunting is often paired with goals or tasks. If a difficult hike is a bit frightening to you, it is a **daunting** hike. However, **daunting** doesn't just describe things. For example, you can face a **daunting** opponent while playing sports.

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

Jacob: What's that pile of paper on your desk?

Emily: This is all the editing I have to do before Monday.

Jacob: All of that before Monday? That's quite the **daunting** task. Do you need any help?

Emily: Actually, I could use some help. Thanks. But be forewarned, you might not sleep all weekend!

Vernon: Have they released the schedule yet? Who do we face in the second round?

Lyle: It looks like we're playing against the Tigers.

Vernon: Oh, no. That's such a **daunting** team. I don't think we've beaten them in a few years.

Lyle: I know. I think we should focus more on ourselves and less on them. We're really going to have to go back basics and remember what makes our team successful.

A win

Noun

Even though Kassy did not read the 100 books she wanted to, she did manage to go through 86 of them. Because reading 86 books is a pretty good accomplishment, she still counts her effort as **a win**. In this sense, **a win** is a good outcome. It doesn't mean that there was a competition and a winner and a loser. It means something good happened and you are happy about it.

In a similar situation to Kassy's, Andrew only read 6 out of the 10 Korean books he planned to read. However, he's pretty happy with having read those 6 books, so he considers it **a win**.

This expression is pretty versatile. For example, you can also say **think of it as a win** or **take it as a win**.

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

Monica: How was your race? Did you finish in the top 5 like you wanted?

Silvio: Unfortunately, no. I finish in 7th.

Monica: That's too bad. What was your time?

Silvio: Two hours and 15 minutes.

Monica: Doesn't that beat your personal best?

Silvio: Yes, it does. So I consider that **a win** at least.

Cherry: Did you hear about Laura?

Phyllis: No. What happened?

Cherry: Her contract at work wasn't renewed. Things have been going from bad to worse with her.

Phyllis: Yeah. She really needs **a win**. I'll give her a call and see if I can cheer her up. I may even know of a job opportunity for her that might change her luck for the better.

Trouper

Noun

Near the end of this episode, Anna mentions how 2021 was probably more difficult for her than 2020. But Anna will continue going forward because she says she's a **trouper**. A **trouper** is someone who has enough experience and intelligence to persevere through difficult situations. A **trouper** literally means a performer who is part of a troupe, like an acting troupe. Older members typically have a lot of experience and can handle all kinds of situations skillfully. And if someone is sick, the rest of the **trouper**s still have to continue on.

It is increasingly more common for people to spell this expression as **trooper**. A **trooper** is a kind of soldier. In that sense, a soldier is also someone who can go through difficult situations and do their duty.

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

William: Wow. I'm exhausted. How much farther do we have to cycle?

Yasmine: Only about 50 kilometres.

William: Only 50? I don't think I can make it.

Yasmine: I've been riding with you for years. I know you're a real **trouper**. There's nothing you can't do.

William: We'll see soon enough.

Kenny: I know you have a lot of work to do, but do you think you can do me a small favour?

Beth: Sure. What is it?

Kenny: Can you write a few quick emails to the buyers in Germany and France about this month's sales?

Beth: Sure. No problem.

Kenny: Really? It's not too much?

Beth: Don't worry about it. I'm a **trouper**. I'll get it done.

Quiz

1. What does to babble mean?

- a) to talk too much
- b) to talk loudly
- c) to talk about interesting things
- d) to talk too slowly

2. If you are a trouper, you are someone who _____.

- a) likes to try new things
- b) can persevere through difficult situations
- c) is part of the army
- d) can act well

3. Yes or no? You need to fully achieve your goal to consider something a win.

- a) yes
- b) no

4. What does it mean to recentre yourself?

- a) to find balance in your life
- b) to drive in the middle of the road
- c) to go back to a recreational centre
- d) to push yourself to go further in something

5. What does it mean if something is daunting?

- a) it is fun
- b) it is laughable
- c) it is intimidating
- d) it is easy to do

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. How was your 2021 compared to 2020?
2. How do you deal with someone who keeps babbling on?
3. Do you consider yourself a real trouper or not? Give an example to support your answer.
4. What was the last daunting task you had to do? How did you deal with the situation?
5. How do you recentre yourself?

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

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