



ESL Podcast 98 – Winter Weather

GLOSSARY

humid – when the air feels very moist; when there is a lot of moisture in the air

* The weather was so humid that people could feel the moisture on their skin as soon as they walked outside.

climate – the weather conditions of a region or area; the temperature and other weather conditions at different times in one area

* Lazaro wants to move to a location with a warmer climate because he does not like cold weather.

sunny – without clouds; a condition where the sun shines without being blocked by clouds, rain, or snow

* It was a beautiful, sunny day, with not a single cloud was in the sky.

weathercaster – someone who predicts what the weather will be; someone whose job is to determine what the weather will be like in the near future

* The weathercaster said that it would rain on Saturday, but the prediction was wrong and the skies were clear.

forecast – a prediction about what the weather will be; a statement about what one thinks the weather will be in the near future

* The forecast for tomorrow says that the weather will be cool, windy, and cloudy.

fog – a thick cloud or mist; a thick layer of water droplets that make it difficult to see

* The fog outside was so thick that Yoko had trouble watching where she was going.

drizzling – light rain; a small amount of rain

* There was some light drizzling in the morning, but there were no storms and the rest of the day had plenty of sunshine.

flurries – light snow; a small amount of snow

* The first snowfall this winter consisted of a few flurries but nothing too severe.

blizzard – heavy snow and strong winds; a large amount of snow that makes it difficult to see

* The blizzard was so bad that drivers could not see through the snow and traffic came to a stop.



ESL Podcast 98 – Winter Weather

snowman – a structure made of large balls of snow placed on top of each other to represent the shape of a man

* Scotty made a snowman that was almost as tall as he was, and he used buttons and stones to give the snowman a face.

to freeze (one's) buns off – to feel very cold; to become so cold that one begins to go numb (to lose feeling in parts of one's body)

* It was a very cold morning, and Kanisha froze her buns off standing in line outside the store as she waited for it to open.

to shovel – to scoop snow off the sidewalk or driveway; to remove snow from sidewalks by pushing it off the sidewalk using a shovel (a tool with a large flat end used to move dirt, sand, stones, and other similar material)

* Tristan shoveled the snow off the sidewalk in front of his house so that the rest of his family could walk without needing to step through snow.

to plow – to remove snow from a street or driveway by pushing it off the road with a truck with a large shovel (tool with a large flat end used to move dirt, sand, stones, and other similar material) attached to it

* The truck plowed the snow from the streets, making it possible for cars to travel on them.

sleet – a mix of snow and rain; small balls of ice that form as rain freezes

* The weather was too cold for rain and sleet came down instead.

slippery – slick; when a surface is so smooth that it makes it difficult for people to walk without sliding on it

* The sidewalk was very slippery and covered in ice, causing Maria to fall when she walked across it.

fender bender – a not very serious car crash that causes minor damage, usually when one car hits the back of another car

* Reynaldo could not stop his car quickly enough and bumped into the back of another car, but it was only a small fender bender and no one was hurt.

hurricane – a storm that starts over the ocean before coming to land, bringing strong winds and heavy rain that usually cause a lot of damage

* The winds and rain produced by the hurricane were strong enough to destroy houses in the city.

hard hit – damaged or hurt very badly; affected in a severe way

* Hyon's neighborhood was hard hit by the windy thunderstorms last week.



ESL Podcast 98 – Winter Weather

to scrape – to use a sharp tool to scratch or peel away a thin layer of something

* Gregory scraped the mud off of the window so he could see to drive.

CULTURE NOTE

Winter Babies Versus Summer Babies

According to some researchers, if you are born in the winter months in the United States, you will, “on average” (as a group), do more poorly in life in many ways compared to someone born in the summer months. You will do worse in school, get less education, be less healthy, and die earlier than someone who was born in the summer. This strange fact has been known for many years, yet the reasons for it remain something of a mystery.

A 2009 study reported in the *Wall Street Journal* mention that there have been different explanations proposed by scientists. A popular explanation for many years was that the problem has to do with compulsory school attendance laws in the US. Something that is “compulsory” is required, something you must do. In most U.S. states, you are required to go to school until at least your 16th birthday. This means that if you “turn” (reach the age of) 16 in, “say” (for example), January, you can leave school in the middle of the year. Since people born in winter months can leave in the middle of the year, they will get less education than someone who was born in the summer months and therefore can’t leave school until the year is over. (Note: Schools also have rules about how old you must be to start school.)

Some researchers thought that these compulsory attendance laws explained why winter babies did a little worse than summer babies in “academic” (school) achievement. But a 2009 study has found another, more convincing reason: Babies born in the winter come from mothers who are “slightly” (somewhat, a little) less educated, younger, and more likely to be unmarried. Other research tells us that the children of “younger” (especially teenage girls), less educated, single mothers do worse in school and in other areas of life than those who are born to older, more educated, married mothers. (This is a statistical average, of course, and not all children are like this.) So if babies born in the winter have different family backgrounds, this reason may explain their differences in school performance, and not some other reason. A person’s parents’ income, education, and “marital status” (whether they are married or not) can have a significant influence on how well you do in school.



ESL Podcast 98 – Winter Weather

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 98: Winter Weather.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 98. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

This podcast, we're going to talk about weather in the wintertime. Let's get started!

[start of story]

I grew up in Minnesota, where the summers are hot and humid and winters are bitterly cold. Living in Los Angeles now, it's sometimes hard to describe to people how winter weather can be in chillier climates. In L.A. most of the year, the weather is sunny, clear, and warm. In one of my favorite movies, LA Story, the weathercaster pre-recorded his weather forecasts because the weather was the same every day!

Well, that's an exaggeration, because even in L.A., it can sometimes be quite cool in the winter and some areas around the beaches can have dense fog and occasionally drizzling. But that's nothing compared to Minnesota. In winter, they get snow flurries and blizzards, when as much as 3 feet of snow can fall. As a kid, I would build snowmen and make angels on the ground. That part was fun but I also froze my buns off!

And, of course, one thing that Minnesota has a lot of in the wintertime is snow. Sometimes, we get so many inches of snow, we have to shovel and plow our way out of our houses. The worst is when there is freezing rain and sleet and the roads are slippery. Needless to say, there are a lot of fender benders on the road with this kind of weather. Luckily, Minnesota doesn't get any hurricanes that far north, but other parts of the country are hard hit by those every year.

Well, I have to say that it's nice not to have to scrape ice off my windshield in the mornings, but I do miss the white Christmases.

[end of story]



ESL Podcast 98 – Winter Weather

We're talking about winter weather in this podcast. I begin by telling how I grew up in Minnesota and Minnesota is a state in the northern part of the United States – northern and middle. It has a border with Canada. In Minnesota I said, "The summers are hot and humid and the winters are bitterly cold." "To be humid" (humid) – "humidity" has to do with how much water is in the air, so if it's "humid," there's a lot of water in the air and it can feel – make hot weather feel even worst. You do a lot of sweating when it's "humid." "To be bitterly cold in the winter" means to be extremely cold, to be very, very cold. I said I live in Los Angeles now and it's sometimes hard to tell or describe to people what the weather is like in "chillier climates." "To be chillier" means to be colder. If you say, however, "It's chilly in here" you mean it's cold – it's a little cold. So, "chillier" here means "more cold." "Climate" is just describing the weather, the type of weather that you have in a particular area. In L.A., I describe the weather as "sunny, clear, and warm." "Sunny," of course, means the sun is out all the time. "Clear" means there are no clouds in the sky. "It's sunny and clear;" there are no clouds, just the sun.

One of my favorite movies is "LA Story" and it's about a weathercaster, someone who works on the television who tells what the weather is going to be like. This weathercaster falls in love, of course, with a beautiful woman and it's a very good movie about Los Angeles and the people who live here. The weathercaster "pre-records" his weather forecast. "To pre-record" means you record in advance. It's not live. Normally, of course, television broadcasts – the news, for example, is live. The person is talking at the same time that you are watching it. "To pre-record" is to record something before that, and because the weather is always the same in Los Angeles, the joke in the movie was that you could record the weather forecast in advance, "pre-record" them and not have to be in the studio. A "forecast" is, of course, is a prediction about what the weather is going to be like, the "weather forecast."

I said that even in L.A., it could be quite cool in the winter and the beaches can have "dense fog" and occasionally "drizzling." "Cool," you know already as being lower temperature. "Fog" is when you have -- it's basically like a cloud on the ground and it's water, lots of water, in the air, so much so that you can't see. A "dense fog" is the same as a "thick fog," meaning it's very heavy. it's very difficult to see more than a few feet, That would be a "dense (dense) fog (fog)." "Drizzling" – "to drizzle" means it is raining but it is raining very lightly, so a light rain, not a lot of rain coming down, would be a "drizzle" as a noun or "to drizzle" as a verb. "Drizzle" is spelled (drizzle).

In Minnesota, however, in the wintertime, we get "snow flurries and blizzards". A "snow flurry" is when the snow is falling but there's also some wind and so it's a little difficult to see when you have snow flurries. A "flurry" is (flurry) and the



ESL Podcast 98 – Winter Weather

plural, we normally use the plural in talking about weather, “flurries” is (flurries). A “blizzard” (blizzard) is when there is so much snow – so much snow that you can barely see in front of you, so a lot of snow – it’s a “snow storm” really, with lots of wind and snow coming down. I said that as a kid, I would build “snowmen” and make “angels” on the ground. A “snowman,” you probably know, is when you take snow, when you roll it up, usually into two or three big balls, a big ball, a medium ball and a small ball, and the small ball on top is the head of the snowman and you put things like a carrot to make the nose and something dark, maybe some stones or something that you would put in for the eyes and so forth, and, of course, you put a hat on top of the snowman. And we would make snowmen in Minnesota all the time. “Angels” is something we would do as children when it was snowing and right after it would snow. Often, the children go outside and they lay down with their back against the ground and then they take their arms and their legs and they move them up and down and what happens is you get -- if you stand up, what you see is something like an artistic angel (angel). An “angel,” of course, is a spirit, if you will, from heaven or from above, and many times, they’re depicted or they are drawn by artists as having big arms and these big legs, so we would make something up that would look like a typical angel picture on the ground. It was a lot of fun.

I also said that “I froze my buns off.” “To freeze your buns off” – well, first of all your “buns” (buns) is an informal slang word for your bottom, your rear end, your butt (butt) what you sit on those are your “buns.” A mother who’s angry at their son or daughter might say, “Get your buns over here,” meaning get yourself over here. The expression, “to freeze your buns off,” means that you’re very cold, that you’re extremely cold, not just your buns but your whole body. Anyway, in Minnesota we had so much snow, I said, that we had to “shovel and plow our way out of our houses.” “To shovel” (shovel) means – well, it’s a noun and a verb. A “shovel” is something that’s a long stick and at the bottom there is a piece of metal and you use a shovel to dig a hole but you can also use a “snow shovel” to move snow out of your way. And that is a verb as well. “To shovel” is to use the shovel. A “plow” – again, this is a noun and a verb (plow). “To plow” usually is what happens when you have a big truck and in front of the truck, there’s a big piece of metal and that metal pushes or moves the snow off to the side of the road so that people can drive on the road. That truck is called a “plow,” as a noun, but the verb is “to plow,” that’s what the “plow truck” or the “plow” does.

I said that the worst in Minnesota is when there is “freezing rain” and “sleet.” “Freezing rain” is what it sounds like. The rain comes down but it doesn’t freeze until it hits the ground so there is all this ice on the ground. “Sleet” is a combination of rain – freezing rain and snow. “Sleet” is spelled (sleet). I said the roads are often “slippery” when there’s a lot of sleet. “Slippery,” of course, means



ESL Podcast 98 – Winter Weather

that you can slip, that you can fall. It's hard to stand up or it's hard for cars to stop because they slip on the ice. "Needless to say," I said, meaning it's obvious. "Needless to say," obviously, "there are a lot of fender benders on the road." A "fender" (fender) is the front part of your car. It's like – sometimes called close to the bumper, the very front of the car, and if you hit another car, you have a car accident, you're probably going to damage the fender. And a small car accident is called a "fender bender" (bender), two words, "fender," "bender." It means a small car accident, not a serious one.

I said Minnesota doesn't get any "hurricanes" and a "hurricane" is what they call, in some places, a typhoon. A "hurricane" is a large storm and we unfortunately had a couple of big hurricanes here in the United States recently, in New Orleans, for example. I said that some parts of the country are "hard hit" by hurricanes every year. "To be hard hit" means that they are seriously affected that they cause a lot of damage – "To be hard hit." Finally, I said that, "I am glad I don't have to scrape ice off my windshield." "To scrape ice" is when it's cold, and there's -- particularly when there's freezing rain, there's going to be ice on your car. And the front part of your car, the window -- the front window of your car that you look out of is called "the windshield," all one word, "windshield." And you, of course, have to take a piece of plastic or metal and you have to get rid of the ice and that would be "to scrape," to remove something that is very strongly attached to the surface. I said that I do miss the "white Christmases," meaning the Christmas time, December 25th, when you have snow outside. The traditional, almost romantic version of Christmas is that it's a "white Christmas," and that's the kind of popular image of Christmas. Of course, in Los Angeles, we don't have any white Christmases.

Now let's listen to the story again this time at a native rate of speech.

[start of story]

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ESL Podcast 98 – Winter Weather

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[end of story]

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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