



All Ears English Episode 126:

Does American Optimism Annoy You: 5 Phrases Used by the Optimist

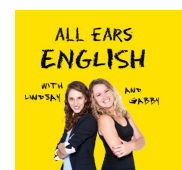
Gabby: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 126: “Does American Optimism Annoy You: 5 Phrases Used by the Optimist.”

[Instrumental]

Gabby: Welcome to the All Ears English Podcast, where you’ll finally get real, native English conversation with your hosts, Lindsay McMahon, the ‘English Adventurer’ and Gabby Wallace, the ‘Language Angel,’ from Boston, USA.

[Instrumental]

Gabby: Hey, guys. We’re holding a live event called the “Key to Connecting with Americans” because a lot of you have told us that you don’t feel confident; you actually feel awkward and you don’t know what to say at professional networking events in English. So we’re here to help you and we’re holding this event to share with you five real natural English phrases that we use every day in professional networking situations. Also, as a bonus, you’ll learn to avoid one cultural mistake you don’t know you’re making. So join us, Lindsay and Gabby, for this free live event on Tuesday, June 10th, at 9 am EST. That’s New York, Boston time. To reserve your spot, go to www.AllEarsEnglish.com/Key, k-e-y.



[Instrumental]

Lindsay: In today's episode, you'll learn how optimism shows up in American English in five phrases and you'll learn where Japan, China, Italy, and other countries fall in their comfort with unclear situations.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey, Gabby.

Gabby: Hey, Lindsay. What's up?

Lindsay: Feeling great.

Gabby: Awesome.

Lindsay: Are you an optimist?

Gabby: Am I an optimist? I would say yes. I tend to look on the bright side. I tend to be a positive person. Yeah.

Lindsay: Okay.

Gabby: How 'bout (about) you?

Lindsay: I think I'm definitely – I would not be an entrepreneur if I were not an optimist.

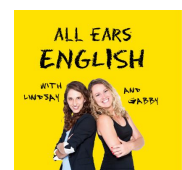
Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: There's no way. I wouldn't be doing this podcast if I were not.

Gabby: Good point. Yeah, because we hope, we, we want you guys to, (you know), love us as much as we love you.

Gabby; Hope it goes well.

Lindsay: Yeah, we think this podcast is gonna (going to) work out. It's gonna (going to) make a difference in the world, but – so this is something that we wanted to talk about today. It seems like a lot of people, not everyone, but



it seems like a lot of people in the US tend to lean towards optimism more than pessimism.

Gabby: Well, yeah. And there's (kind of) a stereotype of Americans that we tend to be over-the-top enthusiastic...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...quite optimistic about things, (um), not only optimistic in our outlook about what's going to happen in the near future, but also in the way that we respond to things like "Oh, my gosh Lindsay, you did such a great job (um)..."

Lindsay: Yeah, exactly.

Gabby: "...like brushing your hair this morning," or something like, something very simple.

Lindsay: So this is in our language, right?

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: So what are those phrases that we use?

Gabby: Sure.

Lindsay: For example we might say, "Oh, well, look on the bright side."

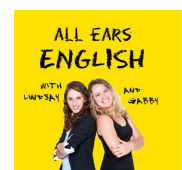
Gabby: Yeah. I think I said that in the beginning, (right). I tend to look on the bright side. I tend to be a positive person or stay positive.

Lindsay: Right. For example if you came to me and you said, "Oh, things aren't going so well at work, (you know), I'm messing up." I might say, "Oh, Gabby stay positive. Come on, you can do it."

Gabby: That's right.

Lindsay: Chin up.

Gabby: Chin up.



Lindsay: Oh, my gosh. What else do we say?

Gabby: (Uh), there's some -- like a connector "Well, at least..." (You know), so let's say you came to me, (right), and you said, "Oh, I had a bad day." I say well, "At least you're in good health."

Lindsay: Right. Or, you know. Or, "At least the day is over."

Gabby: Yes. There you go. More connected. My mind is all over the place. I'm like, "Well, if your health is good, everything's good, right?"

Lindsay: No, that's great.

Both: And...

Gabby: Yeah, there's another phrase. (Um), it's (kind of) longer: "to see the world with rose colored glasses."

Lindsay: (Mm).

Gabby: So you see everything through this lens of positivity.

Lindsay: Yeah, absolutely. So optimism, what is that about?

Gabby: (Mm).

Lindsay: So these -- we know that, that culture reflects language, language reflects culture and I'm sure you guys have definitely noticed when you've come to the US that Americans do tend to be optimistic, but there's...

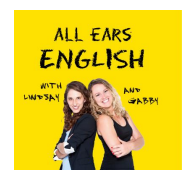
Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: ...also a little bit of research behind this.

Gabby: Right, right. It's really interesting, (uh), we wanted to talk about how your, your optimism is connected with your comfort with ambiguity.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: Ambiguity means when you're not certain of what's going to happen. Or it's an unclear situation.



Lindsay: Yeah. So there was a Dutch (research-), researcher, and his name was Hofstede and he's a, he's done some work in the field of cross-cultural relations and intercultural relations and he did a study, (um), where he measured uncertainty avoidance. What is uncertainty avoidance?

Gabby: (Uh), where you do not want to be in an unclear situation or you want to be in a clear situation...

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: ...to take out all those...

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: ... negatives. So you really, really want to be in situations where everything is black and white and it's very clear what to do.

Lindsay: Right, you're not okay with ambiguity.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: Right. So, now, before we go into these numbers, we're going to give you guys some numbers and tell you what he found in his study, but we first want to say that (um), Hofstede's work is really criticized in this field.

Gabby: (Uh-huh). Because it was one study and...

Lindsay: It's one study and people, especially, criticized his work because we know that we can't put a number on a country and make it that simple.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: We can't make this blanket statement by saying, "Okay, all Americans are optimistic."

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: "All Japanese people are not." We're not saying that. We're just sharing a little research just to bring this in, a new element to the podcast.

Gabby: Something to think about.



Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: Food for thought.

Lindsay: Okay. So let's see where different countries fall based on our listeners. We have – (uh), so, for example, if we start at the top, (um), a country, one of the countries that's the most, has the highest uncertainty avoidance score would be Japan...

Gabby: Okay.

Lindsay: ...with a score of 92 and then we go down to France.

Gabby: Okay. So in general, what, what we learned from Hofstede is that the Japanese and the French would like clear situations.

Lindsay: That's what we learned from Hofstede.

Gabby: Okay.

Lindsay: It might not be true; we'd love to hear from you guys and let us know what you think, what your reaction is to this information.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: Then we have Brazil with a score of 76.

Gabby: (Mm-hm).

Lindsay: And then we have Italy with a score of 75.

Gabby: Yeah, almost the same.

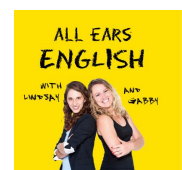
Lindsay: (Uh-huh). Moving down to China with 30.

Gabby: Interesting.

Lindsay: Okay, where does the US fall? What do you think?

Gabby: Well, what -- would I guess?

Lindsay: What would you guess?



Gabby: You already showed me the answer.

Lindsay: So the US got a score of 46.

Both: Okay.

Gabby: Kind of in the middle.

Lindsay: And the very bottom would be Singapore.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: So that would imply, based on his research, that Singapore has the, the least uncertainty avoidance, so (they are) the most comfortable with ambiguity.

Gabby: Right. So what, what we're trying to connect here, two ideas, is that if you are comfortable with ambiguity, you're going to have a positive outlook, you're going to be optimistic, right? It's okay, "I don't know what's going on. I have no idea what's going to happen, but I believe that tomorrow's going to be a good day."

Lindsay: Yeah, exactly.

Gabby: Actually I saw in your, in your research Lindsay, that Jamaica...

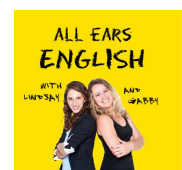
Lindsay: (Hm).

Gabby: ...was right above Singapore. So Jamaica had a score of 13. So Jamaicans are very comfortable with ambiguity and maybe you guys know that song, {sing} "Don't worry..."

Lindsay: {sing} "Be happy."

Gabby: That's optimism right there.

Lindsay: That's interesting. That's interesting. So again, (the-), these are just numbers. We're not trying to make blanket statements, but it is interesting to think about isn't it?



Gabby: Yeah. So when you're in an unclear situation with English and with communication and you're, as we would say, "freaking out" kind of slang...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: ...(um), think of this Jamaican song, right...?

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ..."Don't worry, be happy." [crosstalk]

Lindsay: And also, and also the point is when you're in the US to understand that there's always a reason behind these, (uh), phrases that Americans use, (right)?

Gabby: (Uh).

Lindsay: It, it has been found that Americans do often tend to be optimistic. And what, what's -- we have one great quote about optimism, maybe we could finish with. So, you want to read that Gabby?

Gabby: "The pessimist complains about the wind, the optimist expects it to change. The realist adjusts the sails."

Lindsay: Oh, so the "realist." That's interesting. Okay.

Gabby: Yeah.

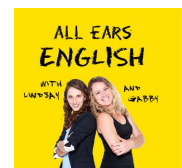
Lindsay: All right.

Gabby: Maybe we should, we should say -- (you know), we've been talking about optimist the whole time. (Um) a realist is someone who just takes real information and works with that. The pessimist is someone who expects the worst to happen. So this quote -- I think is -- this quote is really saying that the best idea is to be a realist...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...so somewhere in the middle.

Lindsay: And I think different days, we're different people, right?



Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Some days I'm optimistic, some days I'm pessimistic. I'm just not that simple.

Gabby: Right. Right. Absolutely. But there's something to say about the realist adjusting the sails, (right). So you can, you can be very optimistic about tomorrow, but if you see that something's not working and maybe you could improve it, why don't you adjust what you're doing.

Lindsay: Take action.

Gabby: That's right. And that quote was by William Arthur Ward to give him credit.

Lindsay: Excellent.

Gabby: Great.

Lindsay: Thanks guys.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: If you wanna (want to) put your ears into English more often, be sure to subscribe to our podcast in iTunes on your computer or on your smartphone. Thanks so much for listening and see you next time.

