



All Ears English Episode 221:

When to use 'The' at Thanksgiving Dinner

Lindsay: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 221: "When to Use 'The' at Thanksgiving Dinner."

[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: If you wanna (want to) study in the United States, you need to listen to this episode, so that you can talk to people about it without making this common mistake.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey, guys. Remember your English is a Porsche and if you wanna (want to) keep tuning up your Porsche, if you wanna (want to) know all of the TOP 15 FIXES today, go straight to AllEarsEnglish.com/TOP15. And you can get that in a free e-book right away.

[Instrumental]



Gabby: Hey, Lindsay

Lindsay: Hey, Gabby. What's happening?

Gabby: Oh, not much. How are you?

Lindsay: I'm feeling good. Well here in the US, Thanksgiving's coming up, so I'm psyched.

Gabby: Yeah. Well here in Japan, (um), people don't really... they don't really celebrate Thanksgiving, but Americans in Japan can celebrate Thanksgiving. So, actually, (um), I'm gonna (going to) celebrate here with some of my American friends.

Lindsay: Yeah. Okay. Great. I'm gonna (going to) be doing that too. I'm gonna (going to) be celebrating with my family here in (uh), in Massachusetts. And...

Gabby: That's great.

Lindsay: Have you started cooking yet (f-)? Are you gonna (going to) be, (uh), cooking the turkey this year or is someone else gonna (going to) cook the turkey?

Gabby: (You know), I think that each one of us will cook something and then bring it – sort of like a potluck style.

Lindsay: Oh, potluck. What is potluck?

Gabby: (Um), well when everyone brings a dish.

Lindsay: Oh, right. Those are the best kinds of parties because you don't have to cook everything.

Gabby: Yeah, that's right.

Lindsay: Yeah, I like that.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: I like that.



Gabby: And kitchens are really small in Japan compared with American kitchens. So...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...it's a lot easier if everyone brings a dish to share.

Lindsay: Yeah. So, personally, for me, in terms of my taste, I really prefer fish rather than turkey on Thanksgiving.

Gabby: Oh, yeah.

Lindsay: How 'bout (about) you? Do you prefer fish or turkey?

Gabby: Well, (t-)...

Lindsay: Or something else? Maybe lobster?

Gabby: Turkey is traditional. (Um), I think in general I like to eat fish more. (Um), and I really like the idea of a tofurkey, which is a tofu turkey, which is...

Lindsay: Sounds weird.

Gabby: ...vegetarian.

Lindsay: Well, how does that work? Do you put that in the oven just like a regular turkey or...?

Gabby: I think so. I've never actually had a 'tofurkey', but I would love to try one.

Lindsay: Okay, that's cool. So turkey, (mm). Turkey.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Okay, what else goes into a traditional Thanksgiving dinner even if you're in Japan?

Gabby: Yeah, usually we have sweet potatoes, green beans, cranberry sauce, stuffing for the turkey.

Lindsay: (Uh-hmm).



Gabby: (Uh)...

Lindsay: Don't forget dessert.

Gabby: Pumpkin pie of course.

Lindsay: Well, what do you mean? Apple pie.

Gabby: Really?

Lindsay: Or both, actually.

Gabby: Yeah, apple pie is very American, but I always think of pumpkin pie for Thanksgiving.

Lindsay: Yeah, so usually you have to buy the pumpkin pie mix, (right) you have to buy the mix.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: (Um), (you know), or, you can make it from scratch...

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: ...but (you know)... Have you ever heard of the term 'turkey pants'?

Gabby: No, what is 'turkey pants'?

Lindsay: It's when you eat too much at Thanksgiving and then you put on stretch pants...

Gabby: Ohh...

Lindsay: ...because you can't button your jeans.

Gabby: ...man, that's awful. Oh man.

Lindsay: The typical American style, right?

Gabby: Yeah.



Lindsay: Eat a lot on Thanksgiving, put on your turkey pants and sit in front of the football, (uh), game.

Gabby: And then go to the gym because...

Lindsay: And then go to the gym...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: But only for like a day or two and then give up.

Gabby: Ah. But then, but then, you make a New Year's resolution, which I'm sure we'll talk about and you go back to the gym for a couple of more weeks in January.

Lindsay: For a couple of more weeks. Exactly.

Gabby: Well, cool. So, yeah, should we talk about our, (um), our TOP 15 today 'cause (because) it's a Tuesday.

Lindsay: Yes, today is a... the last, Number 1, right...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...of our TOP 15. So this is it. Finally, we have arrived at Number 1.

Gabby: That's right.

Lindsay: And this is the big one guys.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: This is one we see all levels still confusing.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: The difference between when to use 'the' and when not to use 'the'.

Gabby: Yeah, exactly. So, it can be confusing, (um), but, we're here to give you some guidance. We just were talking a bit about Thanksgiving, but we wanted to not only talk about Thanksgiving as, (you know), something fun



in American culture to celebrate, but to give some examples of when to use 'the'.

So I don't know if you caught any time that we, we were using 'the', but actually, (you know), it's a good way to train yourself, (uh), to, to understand when to use 'the'. If you focus on it a little bit and, and next time you hear a conversation, or if you want to replay our conversation from the beginning, just really focus and try to pick out when you hear the word 'the'...

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: ...or when you don't hear the word 'the'. And one of my...

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: Oh, sorry. One of my students used an article and she would highlight every time she saw the word 'the' because she wanted to train herself, (uh), about when to use 'the'. And it's not...

Lindsay: Yeah, that's the... Sorry, Gabby go ahead.

Gabby: No, sorry. It's not enough just to memorize the rules, right. We're gonna (going to) give you guidance with the rules, but you have to practice and you have to see how 'the' is naturally used.

Lindsay: Yeah, and this would be a good time to go over and grab your transcript from this episode. So go to AllEarsEnglish.com/conversations. And if you wanna (want to) use the transcript, you can do just what Gabby's friend, (uh), (uh), student does by underlining when we use 'the' and we don't use it. That would be a really good time to use the transcripts.

Gabby: Yeah. Great. So let's, let's share some guidance, (um), about when to use 'the'. And you might notice when we used it. (Like), when we were talking about – I think we, we talked about 'the' turkey, or (uh), 'the' ingredients. So this is, this is a time we're talking about a specific item, right? So...

Lindsay: Yeah.



Gabby: ...we have in mind specific ingredients that we're going to need for Thanksgiving. So...

Lindsay: Yeah. Do you have the turkey?

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Do you have the pumpkin pie mix?

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: Right. Not just any ingredients, but specifically Thanksgiving ingredients, right.

Lindsay: Yeah, exactly.

Gabby: So, this one, it, it can be tough to tell, I think, if you're talking specifically or generally, but if you think about it, are you focused in on one topic, or are you talking within the context of something like Thanksgiving, then you might be able to use 'the'.

Lindsay: (Uh-huh). Yeah. And then I asked Gabby in contrast, when we would drop 'the'.

Gabby: (Uhn).

Lindsay: Right, I asked her, "Do you like turkey?"

Gabby: (Uhn).

Lindsay: Do you like pumpkin pie. (Right), I'm not talking about a specific pumpkin pie.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: I'm not talking about the pumpkin pie that's in her, her refrigerator right now.

Gabby: Yeah.



Lindsay: I'm talking about pumpkin pie in general.

Gabby: In general...

Lindsay: So that's who...

Gabby: ...yeah.

Lindsay: Yeah, so that's really the core thing to remember.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Is it general or is it specific. When it's general we drop 'the' and when it's more specific, a specific item...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...we use 'the'.

Gabby: But now imagine that you're coming to my Thanksgiving dinner and you're sitting down at the table and we've just started eating. Then I might ask you, "Hey Lindsay, do you like 'the' turkey?"

Lindsay: (Mm). So that's not about turkey in general.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: That's about Gabby's specific turkey that she brought. And I would say, "Yeah, it's pretty good. It's a little dry though."

Gabby: But yeah, we're talking about *my* specific turkey, not just any turkey. So, it's a specific turkey.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: Great.

Lindsay: Turkey.

Gabby: Yeah.



Lindsay: [crosstalk]. That's funny. I love it. And then there are just some other, (kind of) quick things that you guys should know when it comes to countries...

Gabby: (Uhn).

Lindsay: ...(right). Some countries...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...need 'the', especially the United States.

Gabby: Yes.

Lindsay: So we hear a lot of people saying, "I want to study in US." No, don't say that guys.

Gabby: Oh, no.

Lindsay: You drop 'the', "I want to study in the United States...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...in the United States.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: We want 'the'.

Gabby: Yeah. Yeah, that's very important.

Lindsay: Not all countries of course, right?

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Not all countries take 'the'. (Um), the Netherlands is one other I can think of.

Gabby: Right, the UAE or United Arab Emirates. (Um), anytime you have Republic in the name of a country, which sometimes you can use, sometimes you don't have to use. But we always say, "The Republic."



Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: (Um), what else? The – oh, also, (um), speaking of countries, I just remembered if you're talking about land forms, like the Himalayas, like the mountains...

Lindsay: Yeah, that's a good one.

Gabby: Right, or like the Pacific Ocean, or (you know), big commonly known land forms. Yeah.

Lindsay: Right. Or the sun...

Gabby: Yes.

Lindsay: ...the moon, the earth...

Gabby: Exactly.

Lindsay: ...like the ocean, (right), as you said.

Gabby: Exactly.

Lindsay: (Um).

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: (Uh-hmm).

Gabby: Yeah...

Lindsay: (Umm).

Gabby: ...so big land forms that we, we know about. (Uhn), (like), yeah, you said the earth, the sun and then yeah, if you wanna (want to) talk about countries, (uh), maybe look up a list of countries that use 'the'. (Um), there might be a couple of other ones that we didn't mention. (Um), one thing, one thing to keep in mind when you use 'the', is, (um), whether you have a noun that's, that's like countable or non-countable, (right).



So, (um), let's see. If you have like, (uh), let's see. (Like), we talked about salt versus the salt. We were... Lindsay and I were talking right before the episode to think of some examples and that was a really good one that Lindsay thought of. Like, if I say, "Oh, Lindsay, can you pass the salt?" I'm talking about, not only a specific salt, but I'm, I'm actually saying the salt shaker, right.

Lindsay: (Uh-hmm).

Gabby: It's not like I'm talking about all the salt in the world, I'm talking about the shaker. So, (um), if I say just salt, I, I don't need to, to use 'the'. Like do you, do you eat a lot of salt. Like that's...

Lindsay: Right. So that's not countable, right?

Gabby: Yeah, it's not countable. Yeah.

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: And I...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: ...and I, I feel like I'm getting a little bit (like) grammar-y. Grammar. Stuck in grammar-ish, which is not really what we're about. And...

Lindsay: We are not.

Gabby: ...I think that the, the best guide here is talking about something specific, or something in general, right.

Lindsay: (Uh-hmm). Yeah.

Gabby: And then you'll know when to use 'the'.

Lindsay: Yeah, and I think that you guys can build momentum with All Ears English, by focusing on making one small change with (ea-), each episode, (right). We publish four times a week. So make one small change. So if you make any small change today, stop saying, or start saying, "I want to study in the US," in the US.



Gabby: (Uh-huh).

Lindsay: Okay. Stop dropping 'the' when you say United States and that'll be your small change and then you'll start building momentum with that change.

Gabby: Yeah, exactly. So just remember 'the' United States of America. Why? Because it's 'the' states. We're talking about specific states. We have 50 of them, we're not just talking about any state. We're talking about 'the' specific 50 states of the United States of America. All right.

Lindsay: All right, guys. We hope this was helpful today, and go get started. Go out and practice this with some natives.

Gabby: 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.

