

# Transcript

Welcome to Easy Stories in English, the podcast that will take your English from OK to Good, and from Good to Great.

I am Ariel Goodbody, your host for this show. Today's episode is the 200th episode of *Easy Stories in English*, so I am going to talk about that, and give a general life update. The transcript for this episode is available to members of *Easy Stories in English Premium*, who also get this episode early. You can join *Easy Stories in English Premium* for just a few dollars a month to get ad-free episodes and bonus content. To join, go to [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Support](https://EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Support). Then you'll get a special feed with all the bonus content, where you can also find the transcript for this episode.

So, Happy New Year! Well, I guess we've already had one episode this year, or two, I don't remember, but this is the first episode I'm actually recording in the new year and I'm cutting it pretty close. When we say we're cutting something close, it means you're doing something just before the deadline. So I'm recording this episode the day before it comes out. So I'm really cutting it close.

Normally I don't cut it close with my recording. Normally I record in advance. But, um, I've been catatonic for the last week or so. I've talked about this a bit in the past. Catatonia is a health problem I have sometimes where I get really tired and can't move or talk easily.

So, obviously, it's not great for recording podcast episodes. I also have a bit of a cold. You probably can't hear it, but if I sound a bit scratchy or hoarse today – 'hoarse' is when you talk like this – if my voice sounds not 100 percent today, that's why.

So, this is officially the 200th episode of Easy Stories in English! And I have been doing the podcast for just over five years! Whoa! So I decided to combine both these milestones into one episode. A milestone is an important moment or achievement. In the past, people used to put stones in the ground every mile.

So a mile is a measurement we use for distance. Um, a lot of countries, most countries now use kilometres, but in the UK we still use miles. And in the past, people would put milestones every mile to mark the distance. So we use the word 'milestone' to talk about an important moment or achievement in your life.

I turned 30 last year. That's a milestone, and hitting 5 years and 200 episodes of Easy Stories in English is absolutely a wonderful milestone, which I am going to celebrate, unlike turning thirty. Just joking!

So, *Easy Stories in English* started on the 1st of January 2019 with the episode *Doggo and Kitty Do Their Laundry*, and it sounded like this...

[clip from *Doggo and Kitty Do Their Laundry*]

Phew! I've changed a lot, huh? My voice, my manner of presentation, everything has changed. My main takeaway from listening to that, my main conclusion, is I sounded really nasal. When you speak nasally, you don't let air out through your nose. This is a nasal voice. And I spoke much more nasally then than I do now.

Of course, as I say this, I do have a cold, so I probably sound a bit more nasal than normal. But still, I think my performance style, my diction, the way I say the words, has all improved massively. And hopefully the stories have improved as well. Although I know that the Doggo and Kitty stories are very popular with you all. So I think I started off on quite a good note. I started off in a good place.

So I wasn't really sure what to do to celebrate the 200th episode. I thought about different things but I wasn't really organised to prepare any big celebration. So we're going to celebrate everyone's favourite way, which is by talking about statistics, woo!

So since I started the podcast, there have been 68 beginner episodes, 69 pre-intermediate episodes, 46 intermediate episodes, and 15 advanced episodes.

Now, if you are very good at maths, you will notice that those numbers don't add up to 200. And I did the count several times, and I'm not sure where I went wrong. The thing is, there are some episodes of the podcast I've released that, uh, don't officially count towards the number 200 because it was an announcement or an episode from a podcast that I was showing to you all. And, of course, there were bonus episodes I used to do on the Patreon, and I didn't count those.

But somehow, still, those numbers don't add up to 200. So, look, the important thing is it's a big number, okay? We don't, we don't need to be precise. This isn't *Easy Mathematics in English*, okay?

So in that slightly uncertain number of episodes I have written almost 400,000 words of stories, which is about five novels. So you know what? When I looked at that calculation, I was really happy, because that essentially means I've written and performed five novels' worth of stories in five years, which is really good. I mean, one novel a year is a good rate of writing for people who write novels, for novelists. So that made me feel really good about myself.

I've recorded almost 90 hours, nine zero hours of podcast. Um, don't listen to it all at once! And the average episode length is around 25 minutes.

But that's enough about me, now here's a fun statistic about all of you. My five biggest countries, in terms of listeners, are, in order from biggest to smallest: Turkey, Germany, China, Poland, and Vietnam. So, merhaba, hallo, 大家好, cześć, and chào!

Now, those five countries still only make up 39 percent of my audience. You're all very international. So I'm quite privileged, I feel very lucky, to have such a diverse audience.

But given that Turkey is my biggest country, I keep thinking I should do some kind of '*Easy Stories in English goes to Istanbul*', some kind of Turkey trip. I don't know, I could also visit Germany, Italy, Poland. What do you think? I've, I've talked about this idea before and I almost don't want to mention it here because I feel like then there's an expectation that I'm actually going to organise it.

The thing is, organising a big event in a different country where I potentially don't speak the language is stressful and scary. So, if any of you have ideas on how to do one of these events... Maybe, you know, you can provide support in setting it up. If any of you, I don't know, happen to own a convention centre or something like that in Istanbul, please let me know! Okay.

In the five years of doing the podcast, I've also made YouTube videos, I've done live streams, and [I published a collection of short stories from the podcast. Actually, I published four collections. They're just all the same stories, but in different levels.](#)

I'm very proud of my books. And apparently all of you are as well, because the books have sold very consistently since I released them in 2021, so thank you so much. And if you have bought one of the *Easy Stories in English* books as a physical book, please do email me a picture of you holding it because it makes me so happy. Someone sent me a picture of the book with their baby because they read the stories to their baby and that made me very happy. You can email me at [Ariel@EasyStoriesInEnglish.com](mailto:Ariel@EasyStoriesInEnglish.com).

So thank you all for an amazing five years and here's to the next five. Woo! Five more years! Five more years!

Okay, so what's been going on in my life? Well, mostly a lot of stress, but also some good things.

So I moved to London in December 2023 and if you've been following me for a long time I think I've talked about this. I have wanted to move to London for a long time. One, I think it's a beautiful city with loads of interesting culture. Two, I have a lot of friends here. And three, it's really just a great place for me to network artistically. Networking is when you meet people who work in your field and you make connections and maybe work with other people.

And I felt very limited living in Devon in the countryside. Uh, there weren't any local people I could really work with in terms of language teaching and performance in the way I wanted to do it. Now, of course, I do a podcast so I can reach out and network with people online, but I'm trying to do more stuff in person because I enjoy it a lot.

And I think also because I do all this stuff basically in my bedroom by myself, it's really easy to get stuck in patterns and not think very creatively and not be very original. So I'm always looking for ways to expand my creative practice, to explore new ideas, to work with people. And I have to say, I was a bit worried before I moved that maybe this networking wouldn't work out, but I've already done my first performance! Yay!

A few weeks ago, I performed Queer Tales for Queer Folks. Uh, queer means like LGBT+. So this was an improvisational storytelling night in, wait for it, a sauna! What? So a sauna is a traditional Finnish, um, bath, I guess. They're like these wooden huts that they heat really, really hot and you sit in the sauna until you get really hot and you sweat a lot, and then if you're very brave, you can go out of the sauna and dive into a cold pool of water. This is called a plunge pool because you plunge into the cold water.

And there is a lovely little community sauna here in London called [Sweheat Sauna](#), where I did queer storytelling! That's right, I stood in the sauna and told stories and tried not to melt.

So I know statistically the majority of you listening are not in London, you don't live in London and it's probably quite expensive to visit London. But I will be doing Queer Tales for Queer Folks at Sweheat Sauna every month. So if you are in London, or you're thinking of making a trip to London, [follow me on Instagram at @arielgoodbody](#) to find out when the next one is.

And in fact, unless anything changes, the next Sweheat Sauna Queer Storytelling Performance, uh, gig, fun, party time, woo thing, will be on the 23rd of February. So, if you are going to come and you're a podcast listener, please do message me because it would be so cool to have you there.

Now, back to the stressful things! I also went through two breakups recently. I basically went through two breakups while also moving to London, which I don't recommend because it was a lot of stress. 2023 was a difficult year. It was one long term relationship that ended, and one short term relationship that ended.

So, I'm adjusting, I'm getting used to being single again. And I have to say, being single after a few years of living with your partner feels weird. Especially because there was COVID, and then I lived with my partner, and now I'm suddenly single. It's a very different feeling. It's taking me a while to get used to it.

But at the same time, it's quite nice to have that kind of mental space to myself. It's really nice to have my bedroom that I can just retreat to, and it's just my space, and I can decorate it exactly how I want. I've been reading a lot, going for walks around London. I've been studying Mandarin a lot, um, which is really great because I finally have kind of reached lower intermediate level in Mandarin, and I feel like I was kind of at beginner level

Chinese for like 12 years, so I'm glad I finally improved, or rather I'm glad I finally put in the work to improve, and I have even been on a few dates.

That's right, I'm on the market, as they say. If you don't know that expression, we say 'I'm on the market' to mean I'm single and I'm open to dating people. I'm open to relationships.

So... Um, no, I was about to say 'if you're interested...', but no! Professional, private, let's keep them separate, yeah? I'm sure you're all very lovely, but, um, this is not a dating podcast. Maybe it should be.

Maybe we should do, um, you know, those, I mean, I'm kind of too young to have actually experienced this, but you know, in the past they used to do those dating services where you would record a video and then they would send the video on like VHS tapes, like videotapes to people. So people would pay, they would wait to receive these videotapes of introduction videos, and then they would decide who they wanted to go on a date with based on their videos. Maybe I should do the podcast version of that, like, um, podcast dating. I'm not going to do this, by the way, this is... Don't, don't get any ideas, okay?

Well, I'm really, I'm really in a good mood today. I didn't sleep very long, I went to bed really late. And sometimes I find, if I sleep quite badly, or I don't sleep a long time, I just get really silly the next day. So, um, you're welcome.

Another exciting thing I'm doing is I'm organising a teaching conference with a few of my friends. So this is specifically a conference for people who teach using comprehensible input. And if you're like, Ariel, what's comprehensible input? [Go back and listen to the episode \*How to Learn a Language\* where I explain all of the theory.](#)

There are lots of lovely teaching conferences about comprehensible input language teaching in America. There are a few in Europe – I went to one in France earlier this year – but so far, there are none in the UK, so me and my friends decided to fix that. So, our conference is called CI Sleepover, CI meaning comprehensible input. 'Sleepover' is when you stay at a friend's house and sleep there because it's a very relaxed informal event and we're going to all be staying at my friend's family home, more or less, so that's why we're calling it CI Sleepover.

It will take place from the 11th to the 14th of April, and it's going to be an unconference. So an unconference is like a conference, but it doesn't have a timetable, it doesn't have a schedule when you show up, and on the first day, all of the participants work together to design the schedule. So it's a very, like, anarchist, unorganised, creative, free way of making a conference.

So again, I know most of you are learning languages rather than teaching languages, but I do know I have some teachers out there. If you're a teacher, go 'whoop whoop'. Obviously, I can't hear you going 'whoop whoop', but please, if you are a teacher and you are listening to this, please go 'whoop whoop' to show your love.

Sorry, I don't know what's happening today! Anyway, if you are a teacher and you want to come to the conference, or you just want to find out more information, go to [comprehensible.uk](#). That's [comprehensible.uk](#).

So, it's been 5 years and 200 episodes: what are my goals moving forward for *Easy Stories in English*?

First of all, I'm not a huge goals person. I'm not one of those people who comes up with goals every year and works really hard and checks in on their goals every few months. I just don't think it works for me.

But my main goal has been this year to be better at answering emails. And I will say, so far, as I'm recording this, I've done really well. I've checked emails more than half of the days

in January, which for me is very good. So if you've written emails to me in the past and I haven't replied, or I replied like six months later, hopefully I should be better now, so please don't be scared. Please do send me emails if you want to talk to me. I can't promise to reply quickly, but I do want to reply.

Although, it's annoying because I was doing really well, and then I had catatonia this past week, I was ill, so because of that I couldn't check my emails, so now I have lots to get through, but you know what? It's gonna work! It's gonna be okay!

Another goal I have is to try and do one of these conversational episodes once a month. So that means there would be three episodes a month instead of two episodes a month. Two story episodes and one conversational episode.

Now, to be honest, this episode almost didn't happen. I was doing really badly with the catatonia and I was thinking, am I actually going to be able to record this episode? So, this goal is already looking quite difficult, but you know what? If I even do, like, a few extra episodes this year, or I do, like, six in the year instead of twelve, I will still consider that a huge achievement.

I also hope these episodes are useful for all of you. I wanted to do something different for intermediate and advanced learners. I think for intermediate and advanced level, sometimes conversation is more useful and maybe more interesting than stories. And at the same time, I wanted to do something for my premium listeners, but I didn't want to leave out everyone else, which is why I decided to do conversational episodes for everyone, but the transcripts are just for premium learners.

Anyway, do let me know what you think. Send me an email at [Ariel@EasyStoriesInEnglish.com](mailto:Ariel@EasyStoriesInEnglish.com).

My third sort-of goal for this year is to focus mainly on beginner-level episodes. As you heard in the statistics earlier, there's like a mostly even split between beginner and pre-intermediate episodes, but the beginner episodes are usually the most popular ones, so I'm trying to focus on them this year.

I think I've also got better at writing beginner episodes. I'll be honest, in the past, some of my beginner episodes were quite difficult. I think I put too much language in them, you know? So I think I've got better at really simplifying them to make them very accessible, but hopefully still interesting to people who are at a higher level.

I do want to reiterate here, I want to state clearly here, that even if you are intermediate or advanced level, it's still really useful to read and listen to beginner-level things because you understand them really well, so you're able to focus more on the language and really noticing and deepening some of the aspects of grammar and vocabulary. So it is really useful to do that. Not that I need to tell you all that because, based on the statistics, you love the beginner episodes, so yay.

I'm also working on another book. I did a survey on the podcast a few years ago, and the one thing most of you said you wanted more of was more books. And for some reason, I didn't focus on that. I mean, to be fair, I did have to have a huge health break from the podcast, but I'm kind of annoyed at myself that I didn't start writing a new book earlier.

I just finished, recently, the first draft of the book. So when you write a book or an essay, you do several drafts. A draft is like a version. And the first draft is usually very rough. You're just getting the ideas out. And then usually it's like maybe draft 5 to 20, where it starts being really good and polished. Although I say that I, I honestly, I don't do loads of drafts. I think maybe this is going to be three to five drafts, this book, and then it's just making small changes.

Now last time I published a collection of stories, but this time this is just one story. It's a longer story and it's a bit different from what I've done before. This is aimed at like A1 complete beginner level. It's basically a book designed for less confident readers. So it starts off with really limited vocabulary and grammar. It starts off very simple, and then very gradually increases in difficulty.

I think in the first draft, there's only like 700 unique words in the whole story, and then those 700 words just get repeated in different contexts. That maybe sounds boring, but the whole reason I'm doing this is I'm trying to make it really easy for beginners, really comfortable, but also fun and interesting.

I think even if you listen to the podcast a lot, but maybe you're just not very confident with reading or you feel like you're slow with reading, this will be a really useful book for you. I also know that some of you are trying to teach English to your children, or maybe you just have friends and family who have zero level of English, they really are complete beginners, and this would be a great present for them.

So, you know what? I'm just going to tell you the working title of the book to keep you interested. When we have a working title for something, it means this is probably going to be the title of the final product, but it may change. The working title is *The Ghost, the Bird and the Bear*. That probably sounds very strange, and to be honest, it's quite a strange story, but I'm happy with it.

I, you know, it's, it's different from anything I've done before, but I think it should be good, and I think you'll like it as well.

Okay, I now want to talk about something that is not happy, it's not fun, but I feel like I have to talk about it. And that's the war against Palestine. I always find it weird talking about political topics on the podcast because this isn't a political podcast, right?

Well, it's easy to say that, but I truly believe that everything is political. We can't avoid politics in our life. And what's happening in Palestine is extremely political and extremely important to talk about. Also, I am a Christian. I've become much more connected with God in the last few years, and I truly believe that it's my duty as a Christian. It's the work I have to do to fight for justice. Jesus didn't die so that Palestinian children could be murdered.

So it's also interesting because I've never seen this much attention on Palestine and Israel. I was very ignorant about it in the past. But about 10 years ago, I started following the situation quite a bit on social media. I learned a lot. I saw a lot of the horrible things that were going on.

In some ways, it's been amazing to see that people care so much and there are so many marches going on, to see public anger at something that for so many years was silent or, you know, avoided and was a really uncomfortable topic for so many people. Of course, it's still an uncomfortable topic for many people.

It's also weird because when I talked about the Black Lives Matter movement on here a few years ago, I gave an explanation of the situation because there was a good chance that maybe outside of America, some of you had just not really heard of it. But with this situation, you, you, you've heard of it, right?

Like we know what's happening. And of course, as I'm recording this, there's just been the case that the South African government has brought to the International Court of Justice. And the conclusion of that case has been very unsatisfying. So I'm going to state my position. I'm going to say my opinion very clearly.

The state of Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinian people. Genocide, G-E-N-O-C-I-D-E, is when people try to systematically kill or destroy another group, whether it be a racial group or an ethnic group or some other marginalized group. In the past, you

know, I could have argued about this topic a lot, but it's clear from the court case with South Africa and the International Court of Justice that, you know, it's genocide, right?

Like it's been shown in international court, but then at the same time, the ruling from the International Court of Justice, what they said was kind of unclear. They said, oh, well, they're acting like it's genocide, which they shouldn't do, they should stop doing it.

But of course, if you follow any of what's happening on social media, you know that the Israeli government has bombed every single hospital in Palestine. They have destroyed every single hospital in Palestine. They have dug up graves. They have destroyed people's houses. They have destroyed historical sites. So it's not a case of, oh, they need to stop or we'll get angry. It's a case of if you don't stop them now, it's already too late.

It already was too late several months ago. Often in the past, when people have talked about this situation, they've wanted to make it about two sides. You know, it's the Israel-Palestine conflict and trying to kind of make it equal. But there there are no two sides here. There is one incredibly powerful side that is supported by the American government, by the British government, that buys weapons from these countries, that is fighting another side which is incredibly weak, which has been weakened and attacked and destroyed for decades.

I'll be honest, um, I also don't really know what to tell you, because you probably know all this, right? And if you completely disagree with me, I'm sorry, I, I was thinking of staying silent about this, but like I said, I think, ethically, I do have to talk about this situation, because I have a platform, I have people who listen to me, and like I said, I truly believe it is my duty as a Christian to do so.

Obviously I encourage you to do research into organisations you can donate to. I encourage you to look after yourself. It can be very painful to see some of the images and stories and videos of what's happening in Palestine. Don't suffer just because you think you have to see those things, you know, you know, you suffering and watching lots of horrible videos isn't going to change the situation.

But if you want a good source of news in English about this situation, [there's a really good YouTube channel called Democracy Now!](#) that does very good news coverage in English about this topic and many other topics. And I don't know, it might be useful. Obviously, this podcast is about learning English, so it kind of links to that topic.

To any listeners I have who are in Palestine, who are from Palestine, who have family in Palestine, to my Muslim listeners, just know that I'm praying for you. I'm sending you the love that I can, whatever that means. And from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.

Oh, okay. It's a very serious note to end the podcast on. It's a very serious place to end the podcast on. But, like I said, everything is political, especially teaching the English language. There's a reason the English language is spoken in so many parts of the world. There's a reason English is the international language, and that's because of the history of colonialism and violence and what's going on in Palestine is just a continuation of those trends.

Anyway, if you would like to give any comments about the podcast, if you want to say something nice, um, if you have any questions, any suggestions, please do email me at [Ariel@EasyStoriesInEnglish.com](mailto:Ariel@EasyStoriesInEnglish.com). Thank you all for your support and yeah, I'm looking forward to five more years. See you soon.

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