

A Good Long Natter – Transcript

Welcome to Easy Stories in English, the podcast that will take your English from okay to good and from good to great. I am Ariel Goodbody, your host for this show. Today's episode doesn't really have much of a topic. It's just a conversational episode where we have a good long natter. That means a nice long chat.

If you want to get the transcript for this episode, including the PDF, go to EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Natter, N A T T E R.

Oh my goodness, so much has happened since the last conversational episode of *Easy Stories in English!* Last month I was a little bit ill, so I wasn't able to come in and do my usual nattering. If you don't know what natter means, **natter**, N A T T E R, means just to chat a lot, and this episode is going to be a good, long natter, because a lot has happened in the past two months. Oh, so much time. What happened? And I was struggling to choose a topic for this episode. So I just decided to natter on and give you all an update on what I've been up to.

I went to visit a friend in Ramsgate. Now, as you know, I now live in London. I live in South East London, and there's this whole part of the country that I really am not very familiar with. The whole southeast coast is rather new to me. I've been to Brighton. You might have heard of Brighton, it's a very well known seaside town in the UK, but of course there are many other seaside towns here that are very nice to visit in the summer.

So I went to visit my friend in Ramsgate, and to be honest, Ramsgate is not the nicest of the seaside towns, but it was nice to take a walk along the beach. Although to be honest, my friend uses a wheelchair, so it wasn't really the kind of visit where we spent lots of time on the beach and I went swimming.

But we did do some nice shopping and I got some very nice shirts in a shop called Mountain Warehouse. As you might guess from the name, Mountain Warehouse is a shop where you buy clothes for climbing mountains and walking through the forest and all kinds of practical hiking and camping equipment. But they do actually have some quite nice non-hiking, non-camping clothes. And this Mountain Warehouse happened to be having a closing down sale, so I got some very nice shirts at a decent price.

By the way, just before I forget, I think I should do an audio description of what I'm wearing because some of you will be watching on YouTube, but some of you will be listening. And why deprive you of my gorgeous outfit? An audio description is like, you know, they do them for blind people when they go to the cinema. There's a voice that describes everything that's happening on screen, so I'm going to give you a little audio description of my outfit.

So, before you, you see a very handsome non-binary person of 31 years of age, although it's very hard to believe they're so young. Their thick, luscious, gorgeous brown hair is sticking up in the air because they blow dried it today. They're wearing a pair of very elegant glasses. They have a very beautiful, bushy, thick moustache. They're wearing two large earrings that are shaped like a squiggle. This is a squiggle. A squiggle is almost impossible to describe with just words, so if you want to know what a squiggle is, go on YouTube.

And they are also wearing a very gorgeous, colourful shirt, with a stripe of green down the middle, a pink pocket, a nice mustard yellow colour on one side, and then a kind of

technicolour tartan on the other side. Tartan is that Scottish pattern, you know, that they wear on their kilts. And I would call this a technicolor tartan.

So that's my audio description today. And, uh, you don't need to see me to know that I am full of energy today. Uh, I promise I've only had one coffee and absolutely zero hard drugs, but sometimes life is the drug, or I'm the drug, one of the two.

So another piece of exciting news is a bit of a story. So near where I live there is a Co-Op. The Co-Op is one of the big supermarket chains in the UK. Co-Op is short for 'cooperative' because the Co-Op is a workers' cooperative. So basically people who work there become members and then, theoretically, they have some say in how the organisation is run. Workers' cooperatives are unfortunately not so common these days, but I do think they're an excellent idea, although I will say the Co-Op is a pretty overpriced supermarket for the quality of the food they provide. But I'm not a member of the cooperative, so who cares about my opinion?

But one interesting thing that did happen to me is ever since I moved here, when I started going into the local Co-Op, there was someone who worked there who was being very friendly with me. You know, at first he complimented my hair. He said, Oh, I like your hair. And I said, Oh, thank you. And you know, every time I came in there, we chatted a bit. Uh, we got to know each other a bit, and I felt, you know, some flirtatious vibes. I felt like he could be flirting with me, but I didn't want to assume, because sometimes, people are just being very nice, and it's part of their job, and you don't want to be the creepy person who assumes that there's some kind of romantic interest there, when there certainly isn't.

But in this case, there was, because one day I walked into the Co-Op and the co-worker of this lovely man came up to me and said, You're Ariel, aren't you? Um, you know, my co-worker? Well, he actually really likes you. He's got a bit of a crush on you and he wanted to ask you out, but he's very shy. He asked me to ask you out on his behalf.

Uh, so I gave her my phone number. She passed it on to her colleague. And we went for a date. We went for some drinks. And it was a very funny story. You know, it kind of really felt like something that happens only in romantic films and not in real life. Unfortunately, I think perhaps we are not the most compatible people. We are not the most well-suited people. Um, we only went on one date. Oops.

But the whole experience was, was fun. It was interesting. I am going to remove the name. I said the name originally, but that's not very, I don't, I don't want him to watch this and feel very embarrassed, so I'll cut the name out. You know what I'll do? I'll make a sound now. I'll go, beep! Beep! And then I'll just cut that over his name. Oh, so professional, Ariel.

Another thing I did is I tried stand-up comedy for the first time. Now, I think stand-up is one of those words that's pretty much the same in every language, but if you don't know, stand-up comedy is a form of comedy where you stand up before an audience, and you have a microphone, and you tell jokes. So it is kind of like the rawest, most direct form of comedy. Stand-up is very popular in America, I think it originated there, but it's also very popular in the UK, and I think these days many countries have stand-up.

Now, as well as being the rawest form of comedy, it's probably one of the most scary kinds of performance you can do. Because with stand-up, if you do badly, if you bomb, then you could have a very, very awkward, uncomfortable few minutes. Or even longer, potentially. Because laughter is really one of the most basic, crucial forms of social approval, right? So if you get up on stage and tell jokes and nobody laughs, it's kind of like the social equivalent of someone just punching you in the face again and again.

Um, fortunately, I didn't bomb. My stand-up actually went very well, but I'm not going to tell you the story in detail because I actually recorded a podcast with another ESL podcaster

where I tell this story in detail, so I won't spoil it. But look forward to that. In a few months time, you'll get to hear the story of me doing stand-up.

At the time of recording this podcast, I've done three stand-up sets, just five minutes each, so nothing too dramatic. And I'm doing more in the coming weeks because I really enjoy it. Now, I have to say, normally when I perform, I don't get very nervous. I don't get stage fright, which is that thing where you get really nervous before performing. I usually get nervous about two minutes before I go on stage. But with the stand-up, oh, I get so nervous. My stomach churns and I get really shaky. But let me tell you, nothing compares to the validation of getting those laughs. When I go up and I tell jokes and people laugh, oh, it's like drugs directly in my veins. I've never injected drugs in my veins, so I guess I wouldn't really know how that feels. But I imagine it's similar.

Another thing that happened that you may well know about is I got a horrible stomach bug. Yes, that was why last month I wasn't able to do one of these episodes, because I was ill. And it was a horrible combination of a stomach bug and constipation. So a stomach bug is when everything wants to come out, and constipation is when everything wants to stay in.

So as you can imagine, this is quite an uncomfortable combination to have. And I was in a lot of pain, and I couldn't sleep, and I had to go to hospital to get some medicine. But then I recovered and as you can tell now, I feel much better, I'm living my life again, I'm full of energy. Almost took my eye out there with my earring. And I'm taking risks, as you can see.

I also went to see the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition with my mother. I love spending time with my mother. I've officially reached that age where my mum has just become a friend to me. I suppose that's not a universal experience, but I love my mum.

So, the Royal Academy of Art is basically the most eminent and important arts institution in the UK. They have lots of painting exhibitions there, sculptures, all kinds of visual art, basically. And every year they do their summer exhibition where any member of the public can send in a piece of artwork, and they create a huge collection of the best artwork, and then anyone can go and view all the artwork and buy it, actually.

So it's very interesting. There were about 1700 pieces on display, so it was quite overwhelming, actually. By the end of the exhibition, you're absolutely exhausted. And there's all kinds of visual art. There's paintings, there's drawings, there's photography, there's video art, there's sculpture. Oh, anything you can imagine.

And I have to say, um, it wasn't as good as I expected. I guess my mum had made it sound like really great, but obviously because anyone can send in artwork, and also because I think visual art is quite subjective, your opinion varies a lot based on your taste, it was a mixed bag. I felt like they showed a lot of really safe, boring artwork at the beginning, and they left all the interesting stuff to the end, but by the time you get to the end, you're quite tired, so you can't appreciate it so much.

But one thing that makes it quite different from other art exhibitions is this. I'm holding up a little book that is the Summer Exhibition List of Works. So this book has a list of all the artworks with their names, and their prices. Because as I said before, you can go up and you can buy any of the artwork in the exhibition, or you can buy a print of it.

And when you're looking around, you know which artworks have been purchased because they have little red stickers on them. So you can easily see which artworks are the most popular, which have been purchased the most, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, the ones that get purchased the most are usually the cheap ones. But, believe me, there are some very expensive pieces of art there. Uh, this one is 15000 pounds, can you imagine? Um, 4800 and so on. But the ones that sell are usually between 20 and 100 pounds.

And this was fascinating to me because normally the art world has this thing about, you know, hiding the financial side and not talking about the finances and the money. But this was a really interesting exhibition because the financial side is front and centre. It is very visible for everyone to see. So I quite appreciated that as a change of pace from the usual art world. And I definitely got the feeling, looking at some of the pieces of, I could do this, so maybe next year I will send something in to the summer exhibition. Who knows?

Another rather interesting experience I had was I went to a restaurant with my brother called Dans Le Noir ? 'Dans Le Noir' is French for 'In the Darkness'. And indeed, this is a restaurant where you dine in complete darkness. You go in, they give you your guide, your waiter, who is a blind person, and you put your hand on their shoulder, and then they guide you into this completely dark room, this pitch black room. You sit down and you have a menu, but you don't know what you're eating until it arrives, and obviously you're eating it without seeing it. And then afterwards, they show you pictures of all the food you ate.

So we had a five course taster menu, which was very interesting. The food was good. Honestly, I was expecting to find the whole experience quite overwhelming, but it was kind of the opposite. It was very relaxing. And by the end I did want to fall asleep. I was also expecting that maybe some of the food would be really hard to identify based on taste alone, because I know that food does taste different if you can't see it. It can be harder to tell what it is. Like I've played this game before where you blindfold someone, you cover their eyes, and then you feed them food and see if they can guess what it is. And one thing that people seem to never be able to guess is tomatoes.

In this case, there was only one food item that I really struggled to identify, and that was the apricot that was in dessert. We had these lovely baked apricots, I think, but they really didn't taste like apricot. I thought it was, like, passion fruit or dragon fruit or something. It tasted really different. And it turned out that they had cooked the apricot with rosemary, which is a herb, and that completely changed the flavour profile and made it very hard to tell that it was an apricot.

Another interesting side effect was you're sat quite close to other people and you kind of just end up talking to your neighbours because you can hear them. I guess normally if you could see them, if you didn't make eye contact with them, you wouldn't start a conversation. But here, because you can hear everyone you have to. The other thing is it's quite hard to eat the food. You end up doing a lot of like leaning over the plates or just picking it up with your hands, and pouring the water is always quite a risky experience. It's quite difficult. But yeah, it was a really fun experience. And if you ever get the chance to try something similar, I would recommend it. I know there's this thing called dark therapy, which is a bit more serious where you go and stay in a completely dark hotel for several days. I would love to try that, but as a small taster of that experience, I think this was rather lovely.

Another thing, I went and saw a film called *Orlando: My Political Biography* (I got the title wrong!), which is a French film by the director Paul B. Preciado. Now, I was really excited about this film because Paul B. Preciado wrote this very strange book of queer theory in the 80s called *Countersexual Manifesto* that's very bizarre and has a lot of really interesting stuff even today. So I was expecting something very experimental, very weird.

It's based on the novel *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf, which is a novel about a nobleman where halfway through the book he turns into a woman. He wakes up and he's turned into a woman. So it's one of the earliest kind of transgender novels. And I love Virginia Woolf. Her writing style really inspires me. And *Orlando* is an amazing book. So I had high hopes for this film, which is basically a loose adaptation of *Orlando* using trans and non-binary actors.

But I have to say, it was quite a disappointment. You know, it was not radical at all, I would say, or compared to Paul B. Preciado's other work, it didn't feel very radical. Uh, it felt quite repetitive. It had a very loose structure, which I think made it a bit boring in parts. Um, I thought it was okay. But I had much higher expectations.

But it is an interesting film, and if you don't know much about Orlando the novel, about Paul B. Preciado, if you don't know much about transgender politics and experience, you'll probably enjoy it a lot more than me.

Recently there was also LGBTQ+ Pride in London. You probably have heard of Pride. I would be very surprised if you hadn't. London Pride is one of the biggest Pride events in the world, and I was going to be marching with people from queer churches around London, a lot of people from my church were going as well, and I got there, and we were preparing to march, and I was just so overwhelmed. It was so loud, there were so many people, it was really sunny and hot. And there was my least favourite thing, which is overlapping music.

You know when one person's got a speaker and it's playing one song, and then there's another song playing from somewhere else, and the two songs are kind of clashing and overlapping, and it's horrible. And I was just too overwhelmed.

So I went home, but I made the mistake of passing through Soho on the way home, which is the gay district in London, and it was so, so busy, unbelievably busy. I have never seen that many people out in London before. And at one point, I went into a Co-Op to get some food. If you remember, Co-Op is a supermarket.

And in this Co-Op, they had a DJ. They had a DJ DJing in a supermarket. That's how crazy it was. And then I went to a bubble tea shop and I got some bubble tea and almost had a panic attack. So my Pride was not so fun, but at least I know what to expect next year. So I think next year I'll do something safer, like go to a picnic, where I don't have to engage with quite so many people.

And finally, today – that's right, the chain of 'also's is over, we're talking about the present/the future. Today I'm going to see an Italian film called *La Chimera*, which I read the description of and it sounds very interesting, and I can't really remember what it's about, but when I go to see a film, I kind of like to go in blind, I like to go in not knowing too much about the film, so I don't have expectations or prejudices about it. And I find I enjoy films a lot more this way. In the past, I used to always look up reviews before watching films, and I think that killed my enjoyment a bit.

So I'm going to see *La Chimera* with a friend, and I'm sure it will be lovely. I know I have quite a lot of Italian listeners, so if you've seen this film, do let me know what you thought of it.

So, as my mother loves to say, it's all go! Lots happening at the moment. Lots happening in my life. Oh, it's so rare that I have this much energy, so I'm really glad it coincided with me recording a podcast so I can share all my manic energy with you. Although I fear that maybe I was a bit too much today. And you're all going to listen to this episode and say, Ariel, what is wrong with you? What drugs have you been taking? And I just want to say that the only thing I'm high on is life.

Anyway, thank you so much for listening. I really enjoyed recording this episode, and if you would like to support me, a very easy way you can do it is to go to [EasyStoriesInEnglish.com](https://www.EasyStoriesInEnglish.com) and click the red button at the top that says buy me a coffee. There you can send me three dollars, with which I can buy myself a coffee, a croissant, whatever I really feel like. So I would really appreciate that. Thank you so much. Have a lovely week. Bye.