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LETTER

English is a
SPORT

Issue
Focus:

**Train Your
English Skill
Like an Athlete**

GREETINGS

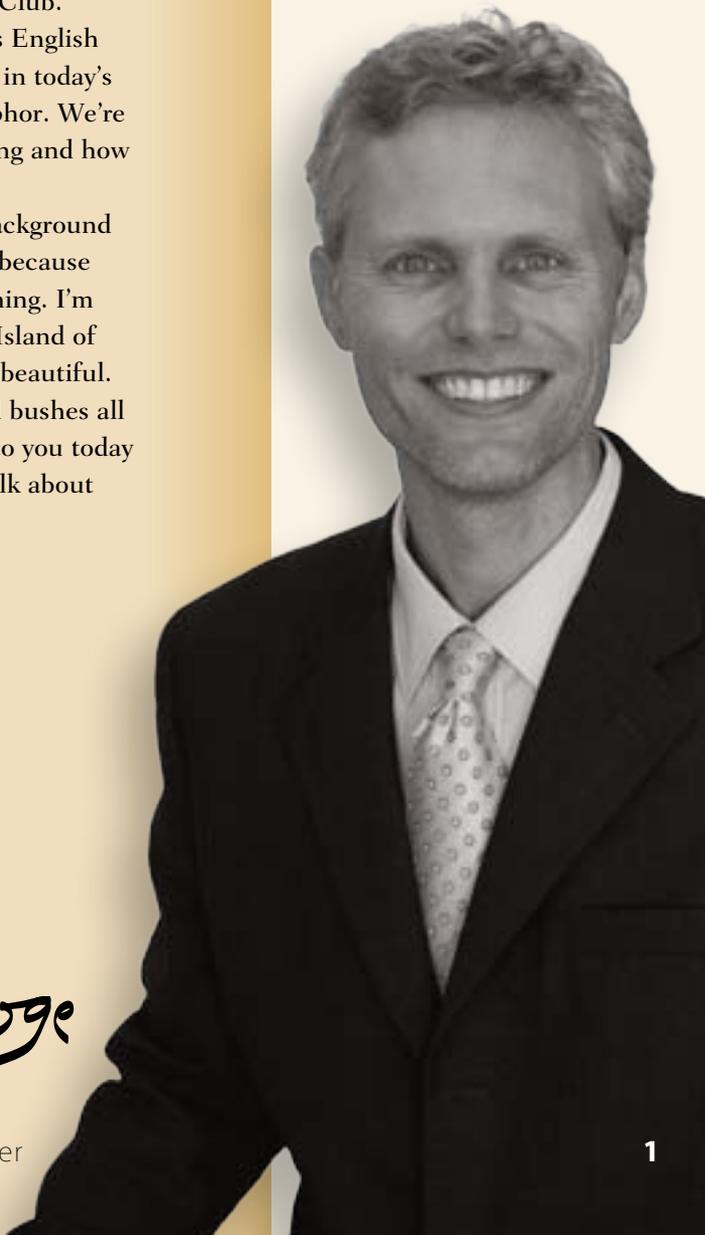
From AJ Hoge

Hello, this is AJ Hoge, Director of The Effortless English Club. Welcome to the Effortless English Audio and Text Newsletter. Now, in today's issue I'm going to discuss a metaphor. We're going to talk about English learning and how we should think about it.

Now, in the recording in the background you might hear the sound of rain because today I am in Hawaii and it is raining. I'm sitting outside on a porch on the Island of Maui and it's raining outside. It's beautiful. There are green tropical trees and bushes all around. It's a nice setting to talk to you today and to teach you today. So let's talk about the topic.



AJ Hoge



English is a Sport

Train Your English
Skill Like an Athlete

by AJ Hoge



First, let's talk about what a metaphor is. A metaphor is a comparison. It's a way of thinking about something that's maybe very complicated and comparing it to something else that maybe is a little more simple or a little more clear. It helps us to understand.

In most English schools, most English classes, most English textbooks, English is seen as being similar to Math. It's taught the way Mathematics is taught. So what do I mean by this? What I mean is that in traditional normal English classes they teach English with formulas, basically with formulas. That's

what grammar rules are. All those grammar rules that you learned, those were just formulas.

For example, to make the past tense you add 'd' or 'ed'. That's the formula. Then oh wait, we have a lot of different words that don't fit the formula. You have to memorize all of those. They call those irregular verbs. Then you

have to memorize all the little pieces of the vocabulary, the individual words. So you're memorizing all of that. You're memorizing these grammar formulas. The idea is then that you can put them all together in other formulas called sentences and in that way you will learn to speak well.

Unfortunately, we know this is not the case because that's not really how English or any language really works. That's why you struggle with speaking English when you learn in the traditional way. See, the problem is that they're thinking of English as an academic almost Mathematical-type of subject with lots and lots of clear rules, clear patterns, clear formulas, but English is not a subject like Math. English, in fact, is much more like a sport such as football.

In America we say soccer, but the rest of the world calls it football so I'll call it football. The rest of the world wins today; we'll call it football instead of soccer. In America football is a completely different sport, so be careful if you say football in the United States. That means American football, which is more like rugby or something. So in America we say soccer, but today we'll call it football, international football, soccer, and that's how we should think about English.

If you think about football, there are no formulas. When a player is playing football, playing soccer, they're not doing a lot of different formulas that they memorized. It's not formulaic, we would say. 'Formulaic' means formula-like. So soccer and sports in general are not formulaic. You

This is something else about football, about soccer; it's constantly changing all the time. If you have the ball in a soccer game, in a football game and you're moving and the other player or players are coming at you from the other team, you have to make decisions very,

A **metaphor** is a comparison. It's a way of thinking about something that's maybe very **complicated** and comparing it to something that maybe is a little more **simple** or a little more **clear**.

can't just memorize a bunch of formulas and then perform the sport well. It doesn't work that way. Instead what you need with football, with soccer, are skills. You actually have to perform them, so it's not formulaic.

English also is not formulaic. Yes, there are patterns and yes, of course, there are certain ways we say things that are acceptable and that sound good and other ways which don't. Just as in football there are certain ways of kicking the ball or moving with the ball or defending that will work and that are acceptable within the rules of the game, you can't use your hands for example, unless you're a goalie, but still it's not a formulaic activity. Instead, rather, it's very fast moving and fast changing, right?

very, very fast. You can't think about a lot of rules and things that you memorized. It's constantly moving and it's changing very, very, very quickly. It's fast, fast, fast, fast, fast, very, very fast, too fast to analyze and think about when you're actually playing it.

English conversation is exactly the same, right? When you're talking to another person or persons, people, then it's also changing all the time. Conversation happens very, very, very quickly, that's why it's so different from writing. With writing, of course, you have plenty of time to think about the writing and if you write something you can erase it and then you can write it differently again, but you can't do that with speaking. It's very,

very quick. It's constantly moving, constantly changing. Conversations constantly are flowing and moving just like in a football or soccer game.

Lastly, football or soccer is very unpredictable. You never really know what the other player or players are going to do. You might think you know, but they can always surprise you. So if another player has the ball and they're coming towards

you, maybe they'll go left, maybe they'll go right, maybe they'll pass it back, maybe they'll kick it over your head. There are many, many things they can do, it's unpredictable. You don't always know what will happen next and, of course, this is exactly the same in English conversation.

When you're talking to someone else you might have an idea of what they might say because of the topic and the situation, but it's very unpredictable still. You really never know what that other person is going to say. They might say something totally unexpected. This is why formulas don't work; you know those memorized dialogues you learn in textbooks. 'Hello, how are you? I'm fine and you?' That's a formula for a con-

Conversations are constantly flowing and moving just like in a **football** or **soccer** game.

versation, but real conversations never happen that way. The other person might greet you in a totally unexpected way.

So soccer players must be able to deal with this unpredictability and as an English speaker you also must be able to do that. You can't handle these things if you try to learn English through formulas in a Mathematical way. So what do you need? What abilities do you need to perform in sport? Well,

think about it. With soccer, with football, you have to perform without thinking or hesitating.

So if you think of your favorite football player, when he's on the field and he's playing and he's in the middle of a game he's not always analyzing everything. He's got the ball, he's not thinking okay, first I will go left and then I will kick the ball with my right foot at a 45 degree angle and I will kick it with moderate force. He's not thinking all of that, right? He's just doing it. It's all happening in his unconscious. It's all happening instantly. He's performing without conscious thinking, without analytical thinking. He's not hesitating. There's no hesitation. His actions just come one after the other after

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the other. He's constantly moving and acting without hesitation. That's what a great football player does and that's also what a great speaker does in a conversation, just any natural speaker.

When you're in the middle of a conversation you're just speaking. The other person says something and you react and say something and you don't hesitate and you're certainly not thinking about grammar rules or analyzing things, because if you start analyzing and thinking you cannot perform. Just like a football player, if they think too much, if they're thinking all the time and worrying about making mistakes then they're going to be a terrible player. The other players are going to go around them and take the ball from them. There's no time for that.

So, number one, you need the ability to perform without thinking and without hesitating. Number two, football players need the ability to adapt instantly. They have to adapt to the situation. Because the situation is always changing and it's unpredictable, they must be able to instantly adapt. Again, there's no time. They have to understand what's happening immediately, instantly, then they have to change their action, change their strategy and adapt to the situation as it changes and this is happening constantly.



When you're in the middle of a conversation you're **just speaking**. The other person says something and you react and say something and you don't hesitate and you're certainly not thinking about the grammar rules or analyzing things, because if you start analyzing and thinking, you cannot perform.

You can see how this is very similar again, to a conversation because it's unpredictable. The other person might say something unexpected, you need to be able to adapt to that. You have to be able to immediately react to something totally unexpected and without hesitating to give a reply or say something appropriately back to them.

That brings us to the third ability that great football, great

soccer players need and also great speakers, truly great soccer players improvise. They improvise. "To improvise" means to think of a new and creative action immediately. It means to creatively adapt. Not just adapt, but to do it in a creative way, to be able to do things without a big plan. You can just instantly make those decisions and you can do so in a creative, appropriate, effective way.

Great football players, if you think of the really great ones, the really good ones, they can do amazing things and they're not planning all of that. They didn't plan that before the game. If they're moving through the defenders and then they do some incredible kick and some incredible strike and they score a goal, they didn't plan all of that beforehand. They're adapting. They're improvising constantly, creatively adapting without thinking, without hesitating. That's exactly the kind of skill you also need in English speaking.

You're in the middle of a conversation, let's say you're at a party, two, three, four people you're speaking to and they're all giving input. They're all saying things. They're telling jokes. They're laughing. They're telling stories. Sometimes they're serious, sometimes funny. You have to be able to improvise and adapt in the middle of all of that. You can do that in your own language,

but with English, if you studied in the traditional way, that can feel very difficult, but it's only because they taught you English in a Mathematical way, in a formulaic way.

You need to learn English the way football players learn to play football, something that is more unpredictable something that will teach you how to improvise and adapt and perform instantly with English. So how do you do that? Well, there are a couple of things. Number one is you must totally master core skills, fundamental skills. See, that's what great football players do, right? They don't try to learn every single super advanced little technique for every possible situation because they know they can never plan for every situation with some kind of formula, with some kind of special technique. No, rather what they do is they focus on fundamental skills, passing skills, dribbling or moving

skills, defending skills, etc.

The second part of this is they practice those deeply. They practice those same skills again and again and again. They started learning those skills maybe 15 years ago, 20 years ago, if they're professional players. Even after 15 years or 20 years they're still focused on the same core fundamental skills.

Every day they're still practicing them and trying to improve them. They're still trying to improve how to make a better pass, a better cross, whatever. Even the great ones are doing this; especially the great ones do this.

See, with the Mathematical way of learning English, learners frequently are always trying to learn the newest little super advanced grammar point or the most complicated vocabulary possible. What you should be doing if you want to be a great speaker, is you should be day after day after day focusing on



the same fundamental skills, still listening to and learning the past tense. For example, still listening to, reading and practicing the most common everyday useful vocabulary so that you can use it faster and faster so that you can improvise and adapt with that vocabulary and with those fundamental basic grammar skills.

Of course, in The Effortless English System that's exactly what our lessons are designed for. They're designed for deep learning of the most important fundamental skills. Yes, you do get some advanced grammar sometimes and yes, you do get some advanced vocabulary sometimes, but the core of it, the main part, is deep, deep learning and practice constantly to improve your fundamental skills so that you can perform. I don't care if you can do well on a test. I don't care if you've memorized 1,000 grammar formulas. That's not important. I care can you actually perform in real conversations.

Can you adapt instantly. Can you perform without thinking, without hesitating and, especially, can you improvise. Can you creatively use English in real conversations instantly, quickly, automatically? That's what I want for you.

Especially our mini stories and our point-of-view story lessons, those especially are designed for that deep learning of those core

fundamental skills. That's where you learn to improvise. That's where you learn to adapt and to perform and use English creatively and automatically. That's why it's called Effortless English. You have to spend some effort

It will feel more effortless and, most importantly, as you get better your speaking will feel effortless.

listening, of course, to the lessons and listening to English sure, but it should feel fun and interesting. It shouldn't be boring.

If you're not using textbooks, if you're using Effortless English or other things that are interesting, you should enjoy it. It will feel more effortless and, most importantly, as you get better your speaking will feel effortless. You'll improvise creatively. You'll perform without hesitating. It will feel automatic. That's what you need. So, learn English like a football player. Don't memorize formulas. Instead, practice skills and learn skills deeply so that you can actually perform well.

To learn more about Effortless English Lessons or just about The Effortless English System, visit EffortlessEnglishClub.com.

I am AJ Hoge, Director of Effortless English Club and I will see you again. Have a great day, bye-bye.

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