

My Wonderful Snowball.

I listen to podcasts nearly every day. Not only do I love the fact that I am learning each time I hear one, but I also(1) love the fact that they are free and accessible. It's interesting to consider(2) the differences between one podcast and another. What makes one better than another? What are the elements of a good podcast? One that I've been thinking about for a while is sound quality. For years, I have used a cheap, skinny microphone that is really basic. It has done a reasonable(3) job, but you can't expect very much from a cheapo(4) product. At times I have been editing, and have realised that the microphone records not only my voice, but also the noise of my dog barking at the cat, my children arguing in the kitchen, or even the general creaking(5) of the house. So, I've upgraded. I went on-line and looked up(6) the company called 'Blue'. I had heard that they make quality microphones. And they do. I ordered a 'Snowball' which arrived just a few days later. I was so excited to receive it; I opened its box like a child opening a Christmas present. It works beautifully, and gives digital quality sound. I'm so glad. And it's so cute! It has a big, round head, and a tripod underneath, like a mini-robot. And it's retro(7) style, so it has personality. It's my prized possession(8), and nobody is allowed to go near it apart from me. It's like my new pet, but a useful one that doesn't bark or scratch the furniture. So I'm motivated to continue podcasting. Good job Blue!

1. 'Not only....but also' is a great sentence structure which enables you to show two ideas.
 - a. Not only does he work all day, but he also cleans homes every evening.
 - b. Not only can you speak commands to the new phone, but also it can lock and unlock your house when you are far away.
2. 'To consider' is a verb that means 'to think about'.
 - a. Consider your options, and then make a decision.
 - b. Consider the differences between the two candidates; one is more experienced, the other is more personable.
3. 'Reasonable' is like saying 'logical' or 'rational'. It also means 'just okay' when you are judging a performance.
 - a. He made a reasonable argument; it really made sense.
 - b. The car's performance was reasonable, but not great.
4. 'Cheapo' is slang for cheap. It also adds the idea of something being poor quality as well as cheap.
 - a. This cheapo can opener broke the first day I got it.
 - b. Don't buy those shoes; they're cheapos and will hurt your feet.
5. 'Creaking' comes from the verb 'to creak' which means to make a noise like an old door opening.
 - a. I heard footsteps and then a door creaking open; who was there?
 - b. I can't play football anymore; my bones are too creaky.
6. 'To look up' means to search either on-line, or in a directory or list.
 - a. I looked up her name in the phone book, but it didn't show her address.
 - b. I looked up the website and bought an item.
7. 'Retro' or 'retro style' means a fashion that is no longer in fashion, but that is considered good taste, or perhaps is coming back into fashion.
8. 'My prized possession' is self explanatory. It is an item you own which you really value. If something

is prized, it is considered as important as a prize even if it isn't one.

- a. My grandmother's books are my prized possessions.
- b. The flowers she grew from seed are her prized possessions.

Join me on my FACEBOOK page at Anna Fromacupofenglish; you're all invited. Do you need an instant download? Get my app in iTunes called A Cup Of English. If you have questions or comments, or need Skyped lessons to improve your English, let me know at acupofenglish@hotmail.com