



Real English conversations: Do men prefer real or fake?

Hi! Lori here, welcoming you to another edition of Real English Conversations at Better at English dot com. I will warn you right away: the topic of today's conversation could be considered somewhat provocative: silicone breast implants. So you should listen further only if you are not offended by that topic.

Before we get into the conversation, I have a question for you listeners. You know, I love making these casts to help you learn English. However, transcribing them – particularly writing up the vocabulary notes – is very time consuming. So I would like to know if you learners of English out there actually use the transcripts, in particular, the vocabulary explanations. There is a poll in the sidebar of the website where you can vote. I will leave the poll up until I have enough votes to get a good idea of what my listeners want. You can also email me at info@betteratenglish.com or post in comments on the website or call the voice mail line at 206 250 2283.

Today's conversation is much longer than usual, so I'll shut up now and let you get to it. Enjoy!

Conversation Transcript

Lori: I **have to** ask you: As a man...

Michael: Yes?

L: What is **your take on** the whole silicone implant **thing**?

M: Umm... Do you mean...Do I...Well I don't... [laughter] What a question! Umm, well, aside from the "**enhancement**" aspect of it -- I thought silicone implants...I thought were kind of dangerous. But **as far as the enhancement goes**, I can tell you I once **took** an online survey...

L: Mmm hmm

M: ...which showed a series of pictures of naked breasts...

L: Mmm hmm

M: And you had to click a checkbox and **say** whether they were natural or enhanced.

L: Mmm hmm

M: And I can tell you I got them all correct.

L: OK.

M: Umm, so I, you know, I think they look **fake**. I'm not impressed...with that sort of, that sort of thing.

L: OK. So now if you think about it if you think about, yeah, **men's magazines**...

M: Right, yes

L: ...which I know that, I mean, you're a **healthy, red-blooded man**, you must have some experience with men's magazines.

M: [laughs] How can we **put this delicately**? Yes, I am familiar with these things.

L: Would you say that, the **models** that you see in the magazines, that they [their breasts] are real or fake?

M: Most of the ones that that I see tend to be fake... But I can tell you this: and that...when a model **comes along** who IS natural, they tend to be much more popular...

L: Really!

M: Yes, I think so, but **they're few and far between** because so few people are really **built** that way.

L: Mmm hmm

M: I mean, let's think about it, umm, you know, it's, umm, you know, there are so few people that are, you know, **perfectly proportioned**. But we can see...

L: Well, yeah, you have to be caref...careful with the word 'perfect' as well...

M: Well, I mean

L: Because that **implies** a value judgment.

M: Yes, whatever the current trend is, whatever the latest fashion is. Ummm

M: In the 50s compared to the 60s compared to the 70s -- what they would, I mean I would say "perfect" -- the ideal **shape** for the **Hollywood starlet** kind of **sex symbol**, umm, has changed. I mean, the 50s the **accent** was on the breasts, and it was quite a **voluptuous** look, I mean Marilyn Monroe or Diana Dors, or somebody like that. I mean, the 60s it was the legs, you know, the mini skirts and this kind of thing, and the **skinny** thing. And the 70s is a little bit more back to a **fuller figure**. And then I think it all went horribly wrong in the 80s.

L: What happened in the 80s?

M: Well there's the plastic surgery thing **for one thing**.

L: OK

M: But also things like, ummm, MTV, umm, magazines that are targeting...the whole umm, **bombarding** young people with magazines that are showing "This is what you must look like" "This is what is attractive," "This is perfect, and if you don't **measure up** to this you're something less than that," you know? And I think it's...

L: Even if a lot of it is...It's implied. But I would have to agree with you, that, you know -- I don't read women's magazines.

M: MM hmmm, OK.

L: And I think that a lot of the problems that I've had as an adult, with my own **self-esteem** and, you know, problems that you have about how you feel about yourself, are...they sort of **have their root in** reading my mother's **women's magazines**, from a very very young age...

L: Because...

M: OK, yeah

L: ...I was a really really, really **early** and really **eager** young reader. I would read anything I could **get my hands on**.

M: Sure, yeah.

L: And so from the age of, probably six or seven, I was reading my mother's women's magazines

M: Right...well, do you know this kind of transfers in the same way to males...I can tell you that I was also very **keen** reader when I was young...

L: Mmm hmm

M:... And I read, umm, a lot of my dad's men's magazines, shall we say...

L: Mmm

M: ...aaah when I was young. So, umm, you **got the impression** that this is what attractive women **are supposed to** look like as well, from a male point of view. So yeah, it seems like this is all guided, you know, umm, that both males and females are being guided into this thing, you know, we're supposed to find THIS attractive, and that you're supposed to live up to this thing. You

know? Ummm...

L: Exactly. And then you see when you're watching TV, you know, mainstream **junk** TV, how, you know, it's the beautiful people who good things happen to...

M: Yeah.

L: ..the beautiful woman who gets rewarded and...

M: Right, and the **villain** in the movie is usually very ugly because, you know, we're not supposed to sympathize with this.

L: Exactly, and we all know...

M: And the **hero** is a fantastic **chisel-jawed, rugged-looking** guy.

L: Yeah, exactly.

M: And **the love interest** is a stunningly beautiful...It's predictable.

Thanks for tuning in to this edition of Real English Conversations. As always, you can find a full transcript of the entire cast, plus vocabulary explanations, on the website – www.betteratenglish.com . And please stop by the website and cast your vote in the transcriptions poll in the sidebar.

That's all for now. See next time!

Vocabulary List

Have to

To have to do something means you must do it. Here Lori uses "have to" because she feels such a strong desire to ask Michael's opinion that doesn't have a choice. She must ask him.

Your take on

Somebody's take on something means their opinion or ideas about it.

Thing

Lori and Michael use the word "thing" 11 times in this conversation, and with several different meanings. In this example, "thing" means "overall issue" – everything related to the phenomenon of silicone breast implants.

Enhancement

To enhance something means to make it more prominent, salient, or noticeable. Enhancement is the noun form. Here Michael is trying to find a socially acceptable way to talk about women making their breasts larger.

As far as the enhancement goes

The phrase *as far as X goes* is an idiomatic way to say, “My opinion on X is” or “I think that X is...” or “concerning X.”

Took

From the verb *take*. Here *took* means *participated in* or *completed*. Michael participated in an online survey; he completed the survey. (Survey = questionnaire).

Say

Here Michael didn't actually say anything by speaking, he transmitted his message by selecting from the available answers on the survey. The verb *say* can be used even when you (or objects!) transmit a message in various ways. For example, “This book says that men are stupider than women” or “Darn, that sign says ‘no parking,’ so we can't park our car here.”

Fake

Not real, not genuine.

Men's magazines

Men read all kinds of magazines, but when people talk about men's magazines they usually mean magazines that feature scantily clad or naked women. Playboy magazine is a good example.

Healthy, red-blooded man

Saying that a man is a “healthy, red-blooded man” a polite way to say that it's natural for heterosexual men to be interested in beautiful/sexy women, and thus to want to look at men's magazines.

Put this delicately

To *put something delicately* means to *say* something in a way that will not be offensive or rude.

Models

In this conversation, models are women whose profession is to look sexy in photographs in men's magazines. In general, a model is a person who is employed to be photographed or painted.

Comes along

To *come along* is a phrasal verb that means *to appear* or *to arrive* at a place.

They're few and far between

To *be few and far between* means that something is scarce. Literally, there are few of them and they are separated by a lot of time or distance or both.

Built

If you describe someone as being *built* a certain way, you mean that their body is shaped a certain way or that their body has certain proportions.

Implies

To imply something means to communicate an idea without saying it explicitly or directly.

Shape

Body shape, the overall form of someone's body

Hollywood starlet

A starlet is a young, beautiful, hopeful actress who (usually) shows some sign of possible fame and success. It is often used in a disapproving way (compare *wanna-be*).

Sex symbol

Sex symbols are famous people who many people in our society consider sexually attractive.

Accent

If the accent is on X, it means that X is considered very important.

Voluptuous

Voluptuous is an adjective that describes a soft, curvy, sexually attractive woman's body shape.

Skinny

Skinny means having an extremely thin body, usually to the point of looking unhealthy. Sometimes this is considered attractive and desirable from a fashion point of view.

Fuller figure

A woman's *figure* is her overall body shape. If her figure is *full*, it means that her shape is curvy. A woman's curves are mainly created by her body fat. Describing a woman as having a full figure can either be a compliment or an insult, depending on who says it and how they think women should look to be considered attractive.

Bombarding

To bombard somebody with something is phrasal verb that means to direct an overwhelming amount of something at someone.

Measure up

To measure up (to something) is a phrasal verb that means to be good enough, or to be as good as something or somebody.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is your belief and confidence in your own value and abilities.

Have their root

If X has its root in Y, it means that X is (more or less) caused by Y.

Women's magazines

Women's magazines traditionally feature a contradictory mixture of recipes for delicious (and fattening) food, diet and exercise plans, and articles about how to be beautiful, sexy, and successful. Being beautiful and sexy is related to looking and behaving a certain way (dictated by the magazine articles either overtly or covertly). Women's magazines also feature advertisements and hidden or overt sales pitches for products to "help" women transform themselves into the very ideals created by the magazines. Lori sees these magazines for the garbage that they are, and chooses not to read them.

Early

If you describe someone as an early X, it means that they started doing X at a relatively early age.

Eager

If you are eager to do something, it means that you are interested in it and want to do it very much.

Get my hands on

To *get your hands on something* means to *obtain* something.

Keen

Keen is a synonym for eager (see above).

Got the impression

To get the impression of/about something means that you form an idea or opinion about what it is like.

Are supposed to

To be supposed to has many subtle meanings. In this sentence, "what attractive women *are supposed to* look like" means "what attractive women *are expected to* look like."

Junk

Junk (adjective) means worthless or useless. For example, *junk mail*, *junk food*, or *junk TV*. Of course, one person's "junk" is another person's treasure...

Villain

The villain in a story/book/film is the person who harms other people. Usually we do not like the villain. A villain can be either a man or woman.

Hero

The *hero* (female form *heroine*) in a story/book/film is the person who is good or does good things. We like the hero and want to see him succeed.

Chisel-jawed

A *chisel* is a tool for carving stone. Sharp and attractive facial features can be described as chiseled. So a *chisel-jawed* man is a man who has a striking, attractive, strong-looking jaw.

Rugged-looking

If you describe a man's features as "rugged," it means that they are strong and attractively formed.

The love interest

The *love interest* in a story/book/film is the attractive character whose main dramatic purpose is to attract the romantic attentions of the hero or heroine; the "romantic sub-plot" provides added tension to the story.