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**ENGLISH CAFÉ – 155**

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**TOPICS**

The CIA; how to become a court interpreter and/or an interpreter for the U.N.; haunting versus haunted; completion versus completeness; to take (somebody) on

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**GLOSSARY**

**intelligence** – knowing what other people are doing, especially when they do it secretly

\* Deon works for an organization that gathers intelligence about political prisoners.

**foreign** – from another country; not from one's own country

\* The university has more than 5,000 foreign students each year.

**advisor** – a person who gives ideas and suggestions to another person

\* My financial advisor told me that I should sell my stocks in this company before the price goes down any further.

**clandestine** – secretive; something that is kept hidden

\* My mother told me only last year that while she was young, she did clandestine work for the government.

**to tap a phone** – to put a very small microphone and tape recorder inside a phone so that one can hear all the conversations on that phone without letting the people who are speaking know about it

\* It is illegal for your employer to tap your work phone without your permission.

**to bug** – to hide small microphones in a room or building so that one can hear the conversations without the speakers knowing about it

\* The security team looked carefully for bugs in this room before the meeting of world leaders.

**to infiltrate** – to join an organization to learn more about it, without the people in the group knowing one's true purpose

\* The police officer was able to infiltrate Los Angeles' worse crime organization by pretending to be a drug dealer.



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**espionage** – spying; when one tries to find secret information about another country or organization and then send that information back to the country or organization that one works for

\* This book is about a man who is arrested for espionage and who has to escape back to his home country.

**implication** – what something means, but in a way that isn't very obvious

\* Our climate is getting dryer and dryer each year, and the implication is that we will have major droughts in the future.

**interpreter** – a person whose job is to translate spoken words at the same time as when they are said

\* Interpreters can listen, think, and speak at the same time.

**court** – place where legal decisions are made about whether or not people have committed a crime and whether or not they should be punished

\* Kahlil got a speeding ticket and wants to go to court to fight it and to see if he can avoid paying it.

**to polish** – to improve something so that one can do it very well; to become even better at doing something

\* I need to polish up my tennis playing before I challenge you to a game.

**haunting** – having a memorable quality that brings a person or thing to mind frequently; beautiful in a sad and unforgettable way

\* The song has a haunting melody that is not easy to forget.

**haunted** – showing signs of anxiety or suffering; continually or always troubled

\* After his wife died, Mike had a haunted look about him for months.

**completion** – the act or process of finishing something; the state of being done with something

\* How much more time will you need for the completion of this bridge?

**completeness** – the quality of having all the parts or steps; in a whole or perfect condition

\* Please check each order for completeness before you send it out.

**to take (somebody) on** – to give a person a job; to fight or compete with someone

\* Sienna is very brave for taking on the tobacco industry by suing them in court.



## **WHAT INSIDERS KNOW**

### **Books by Tom Clancy**

Do you like books and movies about spies? If you do, you have probably seen a movie based on a book by Tom Clancy.

Tom Clancy is an American writer who has published many “bestselling” (very popular) political “thrillers” (with a lot of suspense and action). His books are often about espionage and the “military” (soldiers working for the government).

Clancy’s books have been so popular that he is only one of two writers who have sold more than two million copies of a book in its “first printing” (the first copies a publisher produces depending on how many they expect to sell) in the 1990s. His “novel” (fiction book; book not about true events) Clear and Present Danger sold 1.6 million “hardcover” (book with a hard paper cover) copies, which made it the number one bestselling novel in the 1980s.

This book, Clear and Present Danger, and many others were made into very successful movies with some of the most well known American actors. One of Tom Clancy’s famous “characters” (people in books, plays, etc.) is a man named Jack Ryan who works for the CIA.

Jack Ryan is an intelligence “analyst,” which means he looks at written evidence and tries to find out or figure out what is really happening and what the implications are. He works in an office, but because he finds information that is important for the security of the United States, he ends up in dangerous situations “in the field” (outside of the office; in a location where the action is happening). Jack Ryan appears in several books and is one of Tom Clancy’s most famous characters.



## **COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 155.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 155. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com). Download this episode's Learning Guide, an 8 to 10 page guide we provide for all of our current episodes that gives you some additional help in improving your English. You can also take a look at our ESL Podcast Store, with additional courses in English, and our ESL Podcast Blog, where we provide additional help several times a week on your English journey.

On this Café, we're going to talk about a famous part of the U.S. government, famous both in a good and a bad way sometimes, the Central Intelligence Agency, or CIA. Then we'll discover how to become a court interpreter or interpreter for the United Nations, something that is very popular here in the United States. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

Our first topic on this Café is the CIA, the Central Intelligence Agency. The CIA is a government agency, and as an agency it's part of the government. An "agency" is like a department or a division, it's a section, or part of the government. Normally the word "intelligence" refers to how smart someone is or how much knowledge someone has. In this context, however, intelligence is about knowing what other people are doing or planning to do, especially when they do it secretly. The CIA collects information or intelligence, about foreign governments, companies, and people. "Foreign," here, means someone from another country. The CIA, then, is supposed to gather intelligence only about people, governments, and companies outside of the U.S. There's another federal, or national, organization called the FBI, or Federal Bureau of Investigation, that is supposed to be in charge of what we would call "domestic intelligence," "domestic" meaning within a country.

The CIA was officially created by President Harry Truman back in 1947, after the end of World War II. The CIA is supposed to be like an advisor to the president of the United States. An "advisor" (advisor) is a person who gives ideas and suggestions to another person. There's a verb "advise" (advise), which means to give someone suggestions, ideas, and so forth. Many students, for example, have advisors in college, at least in the United States, that help them decide



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which classes they should take and what they might want to do after graduation. In American universities, you're usually assigned, or given, a specific person who will be your advisor, at least for the first few years. The CIA, then, is an advisor to the U.S. president, giving him or her ideas about how to act with other countries and the people in those countries.

One part of the CIA is called the National Clandestine Service. "Clandestine" means secretive, something that is kept hidden. You could have clandestine plans to rob a bank; because they're secret you don't want anyone to know about them. The CIA's National Clandestine Service has many Americans working in other countries, trying to find important information that those countries may be keeping secret. They can do this in many ways. This part of the CIA is sometimes called the "covert (covert) operations." "Covert" is another word for secretive or "undercover," meaning nobody knows who you are really supposed to be.

One of the things the CIA might do is tap the phones. To "tap (tap) a phone" means that you put a very small microphone with, perhaps, a transmitter or tape recorder inside the phone so that you can hear all of the conversations on that phone without letting people who are speaking know that you are listening. At least that's the way it used to be done; there's probably more sophisticated, technologically advanced ways of doing it. When tapping the phones, the CIA might also bug a house or a building. "Bugging" means hiding small microphones in a room or a building so that you can listen to and record the conversations, once again, secretly, without people knowing you're doing it. The reason it's called bugging – to bug a house – is because, at least in the old days, the piece of electronics that the CIA used was very small, about the size of a small bug or insect, so people couldn't see it.

The CIA might also try, especially with foreign governments or terrorist organizations, to infiltrate the organization. To "infiltrate" (infiltrate) means to join an organization to learn more about it but you're not really wanting to become a member of the organization. You don't want to be a terrorist, but you want to find out what that group is doing, and so you join as a member in order to get information to give to your government or the CIA. This is to infiltrate. You'll hear that word when you read about the CIA. If the CIA thinks an organization, for example, is going to bomb the United States, it might send a person to infiltrate that organization, to become a member of it.

Another important tool is "espionage," or spying. "Espionage" (espionage) happens when you try to find secret information about another country or



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organization and then send that information back home. Espionage is a more general term to describe the ways that someone can gather, or get, information that they are going to send back to their own government. The people who do this are called “spies,” and so, people who work for the CIA, at least the covert operations, could be considered spies.

Another thing that the CIA does is use translation, by reading foreign newspapers and magazines in order to understand and analyze what they are talking about – what’s going on inside a certain country, to try to understand the implications of that for the U.S. An “implication” is what something means, but in a way that isn’t very obvious. An implication might be what we would call a “consequence,” or something that might happen in the future. It’s the CIA’s job to figure out – to understand what the implications are of the news they are looking at and the information they are analyzing – the intelligence that they have gathered.

The CIA is located, at least the headquarters, in a town called Langley, Virginia. If you watch a movie about American spies, or television show, they might refer to “the Agency” or “Langley,” meaning the headquarters of the CIA.

The CIA is not the only clandestine or intelligence gathering organization in the U.S. There’s also something called the National Security Administration, which also gathers intelligence about other countries and people.

The CIA, as you probably know, has been criticized by many people, not just in other countries but here in the United States, over its activities or the activities people believe the CIA has been part of, including overthrowing governments. To “overthrow” a government means to eliminate, or get rid of, the leaders of the government right now and put new people in their place. The CIA has been accused also, more recently, of something called “extraordinary rendition.” “Rendition” (rendition) is when you take someone from one country and you don’t bring them back to the United States, you bring them to a third country where you then interrogate them. To “interrogate” means to ask questions, usually questions by the CIA or a police officer; you’re trying to get information from someone. It’s a very strong verb. If somebody says, “Stop interrogating me,” they mean stop treating me as if I were a criminal, or stop acting like you are the CIA. As I say, many people have criticized the CIA, while also recognizing that the CIA does do some important work for the U.S. government. The criticisms are mostly about the things that people think are going too far in terms of what they do to gather intelligence.



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If you want to work for the CIA, and you're an American citizen, you can expect to be "screened," that is, they investigate you; they find out many things about you. They interview other people who know you to make sure that you are not a "security risk," that is, someone who may be dangerous or give information that you're not supposed to to someone else. So, this security screening takes place when you are first hired by the CIA, and then, as you work there and you become more and more trustworthy, you will get a security "clearance," meaning you are allowed to see certain kinds of confidential, or secret, information.

There have been many movies about the CIA and what it does; I'm sure you've seen these. Some of them are movies that show them in a positive light, that is, that are showing the CIA doing things that our good, and some of them show the CIA doing things that are not so good.

I mention that the CIA has a lot of translators who work for it, so I want to move on and talk about our next topic, which is court interpreters, or interpreters for an organization or a government. An "interpreter" is a person whose job is to translate spoken words, usually in what we call "real time," meaning as the person is talking – simultaneously, at the same time, or at least a few seconds afterwards. That's an interpreter. The other word is a "translator." A "translator" usually works on written documents, translating written words, typing them out. It's easier to be a translator because you have time to think about it. If you're an interpreter, you have to be able to translate – to be able to give the meaning in the different language right away.

Interpreters work in the American court system, and they're called court interpreters. A "court" is the place where legal decisions are made about whether you committed, or did. Sometimes people who are being tried, that is, people who are being accused of doing something wrong, these people sometimes need an interpreter if their English is not very good. Or, if someone is coming to testify, that is, to say what they think happened or what they saw, they may also have a court interpreter. The court interpreter, obviously, must be very accurate or precise, because if he translates, or she translates something incorrectly, the person may not understand what is happening and that would be unfair. In most states, if you speak a language other than English and your English is not very good, you can ask for a court interpreter if you have to go to court. I hope you don't!

To become a court interpreter for the federal (or national) government, you have to take a written test. If you pass the written test, then you have to take an "oral," or spoken test. If you pass that test, then you can become a court interpreter.



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There are universities here in Los Angeles that offer classes to help you become a better interpreter, or to get a job as a court interpreter. Usually, these classes have people who are already very “bilingual,” they speak at least two languages. Sometimes that’s because their parents spoke a language other than English, and they grew up speaking English and this other language. Sometimes it’s because they have studied for many years and have become fluent in another language. Of course, all the court interpreters have to be fluent in English as well. Sometimes people come to the United States and learn English very well and become a court interpreter; that’s also possible.

Although court interpreters are the most common kind of interpreters you’ll see in the United States, I should also mention that there are interpreters for those people for deaf – who can’t hear. There’s also a group of interpreters in New York City that work for the United Nations. Since the United Nations is an organization of people from many different countries, having good interpreters is obviously very important.

Interpreters for the UN, or United Nations, must have a college degree. They must, also, have a lot of experience in interpreting for other companies or other organizations. Of course, they have to be fluent, but at the UN they must be fluent in at least three languages – three of the official languages of the UN, which are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. People who meet these requirements “compete” with each other, they go against each other because there are only so many jobs, in order to get those jobs.

If you are interested in being an interpreter, you would want to polish up your language skills. To “polish” something means to practice it, to study, to do things that will make it better and better. So, to “polish up” your language skills means to improve your language skills, having a bigger vocabulary for example, or being able to listen to things at a faster speed. All these would be necessary if you wanted to be an interpreter.

Now let’s answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Bruno (Bruno) in Brazil. Bruno wants to know the difference between the word “haunting” and the word “haunted.”

“Haunting” (haunting) means something stays with you; something continues to come to your mind, you continue to think about it. It’s often used to describe something that is, perhaps, somewhat sad or scary, but also it has a certain beauty to it. So, you could say, “The opera begins with a haunting melody,”





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music that you will remember, that you will continue to have in your mind that is both somewhat sad but also, perhaps, somewhat beautiful.

“Haunted” has a couple of different meanings. “Haunted” can mean showing signs of anxiety or suffering. “He was a haunted man” – he was a man who was suffering because of something, usually bad, that has happened.

“Haunt” can also be used to describe ghosts and spirits. In Halloween there is the very common tradition in many places to have a haunted house. A “haunted house” is a house that is supposed to have ghosts and dead spirits in it.

So, “haunt,” “haunted,” and “haunting” have a variety of meanings.

Narat (Narat) in Thailand wants to know the difference between “completion” and “completeness.”

“Completion” is when you are finished with something, when you are in the process of finishing something, or when something is done or finished. “The company moved into its new building a week after its completion” – a week after the building was finished.

“Completeness” means that it has all the parts or all the steps of something, that it is whole. For example: “The completeness of this report makes it very thick” – very long because it has all the different parts of the project or whatever it is you’re talking about.

“Completion,” then, focuses on the action of something finishing, whereas “completeness” focuses on the product, that thing that has all the parts that it needs.

Finally, Peter, originally from Iran, now living in Canada, wants to know the meaning of the expression “to take somebody on,” or, “to take on somebody.”

It can have two meanings. First, it can mean give someone a job. “The company decided to take on five new employees this summer.” They hired them; they became employees; they worked for the company. The other meaning of “to take on somebody” means to fight somebody. For example: “The two boys took on the other two boys standing in the park.” Or, “The baseball team took on the champions from last year.” They competed or they fought with that person. You could also say, for example: “The lawyer (the attorney) decided to take on the tobacco companies.” He was going to fight them, legally.



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I promise not to take you on if you send us a question or a comment! You can send that to [eslpod@eslpod.com](mailto:eslpod@eslpod.com).

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us next time on the English Café.

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