



TOPICS

The Chinese Exclusion Act; Library of Congress and the public library system; I thought versus I think; anyway versus however; to make (someone) earn (something)

GLOSSARY

immigration – people moving to a country to spend the rest of their life there; moving permanently to a new country

* After working in this country for a year, Cherise is thinking about moving here and applying for immigration.

to resent – to not like; to feel angry or hurt toward someone or something else because one feels one has been unfairly treated

* Karen resented her parents giving her brother money for school, when she had received nothing and had to earn money for school herself.

act – a law passed by the government; a written rule made by the government

* The new act by the city government made it illegal to smoke in public bathrooms.

to exclude – to not include; to leave out; to not allow someone participate in a group or activity

* If we exclude the younger children from the team, how will they learn to play the game?

citizen – a person who belongs to a country and can vote there

* Only citizens could apply for temporary housing after the storm destroyed their homes.

ethnic – referring to a group of people who look the same and have the same skin and hair color, and/or have the same culture

* An easy way to get fired from your job is to make ethnic jokes about the boss or the other employees.

to repeal – to end a law; to stop a law from being a law

* Alcohol used to be illegal in the United States but that law was repealed.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 156

library – a large building with many books where people can borrow books to read for a short period of time

* Before we plan our trip, let's go to the library to find some books and videos about Greece.

to check out books – to borrow books for a short period of time, reading them and then giving them back to the library

* After we get a library card, we can check out books for the children.

Congress – the part of the U.S. government that makes laws and has representatives from each of the 50 U.S. states

* How many days each year does Congress meet to discuss and pass laws?

collection – a group of similar objects; a group of objects or people put together for a specific purpose

* Paula and Steven have collected old cars for years and they now have five in their collection.

significant – important and meaningful; something important enough that one should pay attention to it

* Our supervisor told us about a lot of new changes that will occur next year, but the most significant was that the company would be hiring 20 new employees.

anyway – a word used to change the subject, to go back to a topic that was introduced earlier, or to jump ahead to the most interesting point of the story

* We had a long fight over who would pay for the damage. Anyway, we decided in the end to each pay for half of the total cost.

however – a word used to show a contrast between two ideas; used to suggest that one is going to hear something that is different from what one would expect, considering the information just provided

* Basil is usually on time. However, since he started dating Alisa, he's often late for work.

to make (someone) earn (something) – to force someone to work for what they receive; to make it a requirement that if someone wants something, he/she must work for it

* My father made me earn money for the new bike I wanted because he said that it would make me appreciate it more.



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

The Yellow Peril

The “Yellow Peril” was a phrase first used in newspapers and political discussions in the late 1800s in the United States to describe the Chinese workers who came to work in the United States. It was used as “rhetoric” (language used to convince other people of your view) to encourage negative views of Chinese workers among Americans.

The word “yellow” refers to the skin color of East Asians, and “peril” means danger. The idea was that the large numbers of immigrants from Asia “threatened” (with the possibility of harming or hurting) the jobs of white workers and their “wages” (money earned from doing work). Since Chinese workers were paid less, white workers could not earn as much as they did before this inexpensive “labor force” (group of workers) entered the country.

These workers were also considered to be “uncivilized,” not socially, culturally, or morally advanced, and threatened the American way of life. “Lynching” (killing by hanging a person from a tree with a rope around the neck) of Asian immigrants by “vigilante groups” (groups of people who try to enforce laws without permission from the government) were common in the early 1900s, similar to the lynchings in the Southern U.S. against African Americans.

In the mid-1900s, the term “Yellow Peril” was used again to talk about the Japanese’s “military expansion,” which was Japan’s effort to “extend” (reach further) their power to other countries. The term is sometimes still used today in racist discussions about East Asian influences in the U.S.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 156.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 156. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California. Ah, California!

Visit our website at eslpod.com. You can 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, which has additional courses in business and daily English, and our ESL Podcast Blog, where several times a week we provide even more help in increasing your language proficiency.

On this Café, we're going to talk about a very important piece of legislation – a very important law that was passed in the late 1800s, called the Chinese Exclusion Act. Then I'd like to tell you a little bit about the Library of Congress and the public library system in the United States, a very important part of our country's history and our present. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

The United States has always had a lot of "immigration," people moving to this country to live the rest of their life here. There are two verbs here: to "immigrate" means to come to a country, to "emigrate" (emigrate) means to go to another country, a different country. So you emigrate from your country and you immigrate to another country.

Most early of the immigration to the United States was from Western Europe, places like Germany, Italy, France, the United Kingdom, and other countries in Europe. There was also, however, many immigrants who came from different countries outside of Europe, especially during the latter part of the 19th century, during the late 1800s. Between 1849 and 1882, there was a lot of immigration from China.

Chinese immigrants started to come to mostly here, California, during the California Gold Rush. The Gold Rush (rush) was a period of time in the mid-1800s when people were finding a lot of gold in California and making a lot of money selling it. The word "rush" refers to how people moved very quickly to come to California to find gold. In fact, California is known as the Golden State, it's another name for the State of California. And the Gold Rush was very



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 156

important in the history of California because people thought they could make a lot of money so they came to California looking for gold, and that increased the population dramatically.

At the beginning, there was more gold than people who wanted to look for it, so the Chinese and the Americans worked side by side. But after a few years, there wasn't as much gold and there were too many people looking for it. The Americans, those living here in California especially, began to resent (resent) the Chinese. To "resent" means not liking something, being angry or mad about something. For example, teenagers may resent their parents when they don't let them do whatever they want. In the late 1800s, many Americans resented the Chinese immigrants because they were making money while some Americans were not, in finding gold.

Something else was happening during the late 19th century in the U.S. – the late 1800s – and that was that America was building railroads, and to build railroads, you need a lot of people. Many Chinese people were immigrating to help build railroads, in particular, the transcontinental railroad. "Trans" means over or across; "transcontinental" means across the entire United States, in this case, across an entire continent. It wasn't really across the entire continent; it was just across part of the continent. In any case, the Chinese came to build this railroad that would go from the Atlantic Ocean in the East to the Pacific Ocean in the West.

At the beginning, the Chinese were welcomed by the railroad company. Americans were happy to see the Chinese people coming because there was a lot of work to do, and they could help them do this work. But as immigration increased, Americans began to think there were too many Chinese and that they were taking jobs away from Americans. This is a common theme – a common occurrence – a common situation in American history, where we have immigrants who come in, at first everyone says, "Oh, that's wonderful," then, when the economy is bad, then you say, "Oh, well, too many immigrants." And that's what was happening in the late 19th century. Many people that the Chinese immigrants were working for too little money, which lowered "wages," that is, the amount of money you could earn. So, Americans were getting less money because the Chinese were willing to work for a lower wage – willing to work for less money.

Certainly, another reason why people were afraid of, or wanted to limit Chinese immigration was because the Chinese didn't look like the European Americans, and so there's always a fear of someone who doesn't look like you.



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 156

Well, on May 6, 1882, the United States Congress – the federal, or national government – passed or approved something called the Chinese Exclusion Act. The verb to “exclude” (exclude) means the opposite of include, in other words, you don’t let someone participate in a group or activity. If you are excluded from a club, you are not allowed into that club. The Chinese Exclusion Act, or law, excluded Chinese people from being able to immigrate to the United States for a period of 10 years. Chinese people who were already here in the U.S. would have to get special permission to come back to the United States if they left. And, more importantly, Chinese immigrants were not allowed to become U.S. citizens. They could not become legal citizens of the United States. A “citizen” is someone who belongs to a country, who can have a passport from that country, who usually can vote in that country. Normally, immigrants can become U.S. citizens if they live in the U.S. for a long period of time and, nowadays, pass some tests. But the Chinese Exclusion Act excluded the Chinese immigrants from becoming U.S. citizens.

Well, when the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, it was the first time that the United States made strong “restrictions,” or limitations, on immigration. Up to this point, up to the late 19th century, Americans welcomed almost every immigrant that came from other countries that came to live in the U.S. But now, beginning with the Chinese Exclusion Act, the U.S. started to stop or limit immigration. The Chinese Exclusion Act was part of a series of discriminatory actions that were taken against the Chinese in the late 19th century. Anyone who was ethnic Chinese was discriminated against, or often discriminated against. The word “ethnic” (ethnic), here, means to be originally or to have your ancestors from a different country. For example, my great-great-grandparents – I think it was my great-great-grandparents – were from Ireland, and that makes me ethnic Irish. Ethnicity usually refers to people who have similar physical characteristics – skin, hair color – often the same culture, coming from the same place or country. So, ethnic Chinese were discriminated against in addition to the Chinese Exclusion Act during this period.

Many people complained that these laws were unfair to the Chinese – the Chinese Exclusion Act was unfair. Eventually, the law was repealed in 1943, so many years later. To “repeal” (repeal) means that it was no longer a law; it was changed. And it wasn’t until 1943 that Chinese could come to the U.S. again and become U.S. citizens.

If you want to know more about the Chinese Exclusion Act and its importance in U.S. history, you can find books about it at most libraries, and that’s our second



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 156

topic for this Café. A “library” is typically a large building with many books and other kinds of things to look at. People who have library cards, who are members of the library, can take books home with them; we would say they can check out books. To “check out a book” means to borrow a book for a short period of time, read it, and then return it to the library.

In the United States, there are many, many different library systems. Some of them are “private,” meaning they’re owned by a person or organization, but this is not the majority of libraries. Most U.S. cities have public libraries, where anyone who lives in that area can go to the library, get a library card, and check out books. You can also check out CDs, DVDs, videotapes, as well as go on a computer to access the Internet.

The United States, in addition to having all of these smaller libraries, each city having its own library, has a national library in Washington, DC, called the Library of Congress. “Congress” is the part of the U.S. government that writes and creates laws. The Library of Congress does research for people who are in Congress – for Congress members. It helps them find information about laws and information to help them make new laws.

But, the Library of Congress is much more than that. It has a very, very large collection of books and other materials. A “collection” is a group of similar things – things that are alike. When we talk about a library, the collection refers all the different books and other materials that the library owns. We sometimes talk about a library’s “holdings,” that is similar to what they own; it means what they actually have in their library.

The collection of the Library of Congress includes more than 30 million books and other printed materials. It also has newspapers, government publications, legal materials, maps, musical scores, and a lot more. Some of these books are “rare,” meaning there are very few of them and very hard to find anywhere else. The Library of Congress also has many sound recordings – digital files. Many of them are about people who talk about their own life, and this is an important source for historians.

The Library of Congress is actually quite old; it was founded or created in 1802. That’s old for the United States. Twelve years later, the American government had a war with Britain, again. We beat them, of course! But the British soldiers who fought in the war burned the Library of Congress down; that is, they burned the building and destroyed 3,000 books. President Thomas Jefferson, who was president in the early part of the 19th century, himself had a large private library of



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 156

more than 6,000 books. So, he said that he would sell these books to Congress in order to create a new Library of Congress. This new Library of Congress had not just legal books, but books on philosophy, literature, even “cookbooks,” books that have instructions about how to make different kinds of food.

Whenever a book is published in the United States, usually two copies are sent to the Library of Congress. That means that the Library of Congress receives a lot of books. In fact, about 22,000 books are received by the Library of Congress every day! It keeps 10,000 of them and sends the rest to other libraries, schools, and organizations. The Library of Congress tries to have copies of every “significant,” or important publication that is written in English.

Now, the Library of Congress is a public library, but it is a little bit more difficult to use than a local public library, such as the Los Angeles Public Library. Only important government workers and researchers can use the library. You can go and visit the Library; it’s a beautiful building. You can use the library to do research, but normally you can’t check the books out; you can’t take them home with you.

The Library of Congress is also famous because it developed a “classification system,” a way to find books in a library, and many university libraries, in particular, use this Library of Congress classification system.

The public library system in the United States is a very important part of our history. Here in Los Angeles, we are very fortunate in that we have a very large library system. We have many different “branches” of the library, smaller libraries that are located in different parts of the city. Someday, we’ll talk more about libraries and why they’re so important, not just for a country’s development, but also for learning languages.

Now let’s answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Vasyl (Vasyl) in Ukraine. Vasyl wants to know the difference between “I thought” versus “I think.” Many times, we use “I think” when we are giving an opinion. In one recent ESL Podcast, number 350, we say, “I thought it was entertaining.” Vasyl wants to know why we don’t say, “I think it is entertaining,” in the present tense. “Thought,” of course, is in the past tense. Well, this is a good question.

If we say, “I thought it was interesting,” you’re talking about or referring to your opinion or perspective or ideas at some point in the past. When I say, “I thought



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 156

it was an entertaining movie,” we’re conveying the impression that that was my opinion at the time when I watched the movie. It can also mean that is what I still think, but it refers specifically to my opinion in the past.

We would also use “I thought” when we want to indicate that our opinion has changed. For example: “I thought it was entertaining when I first saw it. But last night, I saw it again and now I think it is boring.” So I’ve changed my opinion from past to present.

When we use “I think,” we’re focusing more on our opinion or our view right now, at this minute or currently. So, it is a bit confusing; someone could say, “I thought it was a good movie.” That doesn’t mean they don’t think that still; it doesn’t mean they’ve changed their mind. It’s just a way of expressing your opinion referring to what happened in the past – your past opinion. So, it can be used, in other words, to really mean the same as “I think it is an interesting movie.”

When I first read this question two weeks ago, I thought it was interesting; I still think it’s interesting!

Carla (Carla) in Italy wants to know the difference between two very common words in English: “anyway” and “however.”

“Anyway” is a common, somewhat informal way Americans use to change the subject of the conversation, to talk about something different, or perhaps to go back to a topic that you were talking about before. So you’re talking about topic or subject A, and then you start talking about subject B. Now you want to go back and talk about subject A, you could use this expression, “anyway.” For example, we’re talking about a movie we saw last night, and then we start talking about a television show. And then I say, “Well, anyway, I really liked that movie,” going back to the first topic we were discussing. “Anyway” can also be used to change the topic – to talk about a new topic. This is very common in informal conversation especially: “Anyway, I want to go to dinner now.” You stop talking about the movie and you talk about a new topic.

The word “however” is used usually to show the difference between two different ideas, what we would say is the “contrast” (contrast), the difference between two things. It usually suggests that you’re going to hear something different, perhaps, than what you expected or what you would normally expect after hearing the first piece of information. So again, we’re dealing with two different pieces of information that are somehow different. For example: “My friend Colin



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 156

wants to buy a new car. However, his wife says they do not need a new car.” So you have piece of information number one: Colin wants to buy a new car. And then you say “however,” meaning well, even though he wants to buy a new car, there’s this second piece of information that is different – that contrasts with the first piece.

Here’s another example: “I arrived late for the meeting.” I arrived late – it started at 2:00, or was supposed to start at 2:00; I didn’t arrive until 2:30. “However, because there was bad weather, there was a lot of rain, I was the first one to arrive.” Again, you would expect when someone says, “I arrived late,” that there would be other people there. However, because of the bad weather, this person was the first person to arrive; everyone else was even later.

Finally, Arnold (Arnold) in Taiwan – not the Arnold here in California! – wants to know the meaning of the expression “make me earn it.” To “earn” (earn) something means to get what you deserve. It often means to receive money for work that you have completed.

To “make someone earn something” means to expect good work or a good effort in exchange for the payment. The payment could be money; the payment could even be just appreciation or applause. What you are saying is that the person isn’t going to get money or isn’t going to receive your respect just because they are there, they have to earn it; they have to work; they have to do something for it.

So in the example that Arnold was asking about, a professor comes into the room and everyone applauds – everyone claps their hands. And he says, “No, wait. Make me earn it,” meaning I haven’t given my speech or presentation yet; you can’t applaud me, you have to make me work for it.

Anyway, if you have a question for ESL Podcast, you can email us. Our email address is 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.

ESL Podcast’s English Café is written and produced by Dr. Jeff McQuillan and Dr. Lucy Tse. This podcast is copyright 2008, by the Center for Educational Development.