



ESL Podcast 691 – Dangerous Freeway Driving

GLOSSARY

each way – in both directions; going somewhere and coming back; both halves of a round-trip

* Kyoko's commute is 45 minutes each way.

to get old – to become tiresome, boring, monotonous, and uninteresting

* Laura doesn't like working as a customer service representative. She says that listening to people complain all the time gets old.

interminable – very long, uninteresting, and boring

* Doesn't Professor Faber notice that almost half of the students fall asleep during her interminable lectures?

to pass – to move around another car when driving, usually because one wants to go faster than that car

* Trent drives 50 miles per hour on the freeway, so of course most other drivers try to pass him.

passing lane – the parallel area on the left-hand side of the road, separated by painted lines, intended to be used by the fastest cars that want to move around slower cars, which should travel in the other parallel areas on the middle and right-hand side of the road

* Can you get a ticket for driving too slowly in the passing lane?

to tailgate – to follow another moving car very closely, leaving dangerously little space between the two cars

* Please stop tailgating the car in front of us! If the other driver slows down, you won't be able to brake quickly enough and we'll get in an accident!

to weave – to change direction many times while moving, especially while driving and changing lanes frequently

* Asu likes to ride a motorcycle because he can weave through heavy traffic more easily than he can in a car.

back and forth – repeatedly going in one direction and then in the opposite direction

* Look how everyone is swaying back and forth to the music.



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what can I say – an informal phrase used when one is admitting that one's actions are slightly bad or inappropriate, but one does not want to change that behavior

* I know smoking is bad for me, but what can I say? It helps me relax.

to keep (someone) from – to prevent someone from having or doing something; to not allow someone to have or do something

* How long are you going to try to keep your daughter from dating?

open road – the feeling of freedom one has when driving in an area with little traffic

* Troy can't wait to get his driver's license so he can start to explore the open road.

to encounter – to find or meet someone without planning to do so

* As a teacher, do you find it uncomfortable when encountering your students outside of school, like in a grocery store?

drag race – an informal competition to see which car can go faster when both cars are stopped at the beginning of the race, often at a stoplight

* This car accelerates really quickly, so I'm sure it could win a drag race.

to bird dog – to observe, watch, or monitor something very carefully

* Police officers have been bird dogging the suspect for weeks.

to speed up – to accelerate; to go faster; to do something more quickly; to increase in speed

* They asked the taxi driver to speed up because they were worried they might miss their flight.

to overtake – to pass; to go past another car or person because one wants to go faster

* It's very dangerous to overtake another car on a curve because you can't see whether other cars are coming from the other direction.

to spice up – to make something more interesting and exciting

* Let's spice up this party by putting on some dance music.

on the road – while traveling, especially by car

* I'll be on the road next week, but you can reach me on my cell phone.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does he do when there is a slow-moving car in the passing lane?
 - a) He waits patiently for it to speed up.
 - b) He follows it very closely.
 - c) He honks his horn and yells.

2. What does he mean when he says, “I know how to spice up a boring drive”?
 - a) He likes to eat spicy food while driving.
 - b) He knows which routes are the least boring.
 - c) He knows how to entertain himself while driving.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to get old

The phrase “to get old,” in this podcast, means to become tiresome, boring, monotonous, and uninteresting: “I used to like that show, but now it’s getting old. They need to add some new characters.” The phrase “the good old days” refers to a period of time in the past that one believes is better than today: “In the good old days, we didn’t have television, cell phones, or the Internet, but life was simple and we were happy.” The phrase “for old times’ sake” means to do something as a reminder of something fun or enjoyable one used to do: “Let’s go to the beach together one last time, for old times’ sake.” Finally, the phrase “to be an old hand at” means to have experience doing something and to be good at it: “After 20 years of working in a mechanic’s shop, she’s an old hand at fixing cars.”

to pass

In this podcast, the verb “to pass” means to move around another car when driving, usually because one wants to go faster than that car: “You can get a ticket if you go faster than the speed limit while passing other cars.” The phrasal verb “to pass over” means to overlook someone or something, especially when someone was not given a raise or promotion: “Ingrid was really upset when she was passed over for a promotion at work.” The phrase “to pass away” means to die: “Did you hear that her mother just passed away?” Finally, the phrase “to pass the time of day with (someone)” means to spend time speaking with someone else in a friendly way: “I spent a few hours at Blake’s house, just passing the time of day.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Seatbelt Laws – “Click it or Ticket”

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration was created by the Highway Safety Act of 1970. It tries to make people safer by “preventing” (not letting something happen) “crashes” (car accidents). One of its most successful programs is the “Click It or Ticket” “campaign” (efforts to create some change in people or society).

The campaign “encourages” (tries to make something happen) people to wear their “seatbelts” (two pieces of strong fabric that connect around one’s waist with metal pieces while one is seated in a car, airplane, etc.). The campaign “warns” (says something bad will happen) that people will get a “ticket” (a piece of paper from a police officer stating one has broken the law and needs to pay money as a punishment) unless they “click” (fasten; put together) their seatbelt.

The campaign uses a lot of advertising, both nationally and locally, to “raise awareness” (make people more aware of something) of the need to wear seatbelts. The campaign’s “target audience” (the group of people a campaign wants to reach) is men ages 18-34, because they are the people who are least likely to wear seatbelts.

Most people believe the campaign “has been success” (has done what it is supposed to). Studies show that 83% of Americans “have heard of” (are familiar with; recognize the name of) the campaign. Other studies have shown an increase in seatbelt usage when there is a “mobilization” (increase in efforts and visibility) of the Click It or Ticket campaign.

Nationally, the seat belt usage “rate” (percentage; frequency) is 85%.

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – b; 2 – c



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 691: Dangerous Freeway Driving.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 691. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Go to our website at eslpod.com to download a Learning Guide for this episode that includes a complete transcript of everything we say. How do you get the Learning Guide? Well, you can become a member of ESL Podcast and get that guide; just go to eslpod.com for more information.

This episode is called "Dangerous Freeway (or Highway) Driving." Let's get started.

[start of story]

I do a lot of driving in my job. You would think that driving several hours each way would get old really fast, but I have ways of making an interminable drive seem much more exciting.

I like to drive fast on the freeways. I usually pass all of the slower cars by staying in the passing lane. When there's a slow-moving car in the passing lane, though, I tailgate it until the driver moves over to another lane. If the driver doesn't move over, I weave back and forth from one lane to another until I get around it. What can I say? I just don't like anyone to keep me from the open road.

Sometimes, I encounter another driver who likes to drive fast and we have a drag race. I know how to bird dog the other car until I see a way to speed up and overtake it. That's why I almost always win.

As you can see, I know how to spice up a boring drive. I hope to see you soon – on the road.

[end of story]

Our story begins with the person telling the story – not me, I don't do a lot of driving in my job. But, the person in our story does a lot of driving. He says, "You would think that driving several hours each way would get old really fast." "Each way" is another way of saying in both directions, going somewhere and



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coming back. When you leave your house, go to your work, then leave your work at the end of the day and return to your house, we would call that a “round trip.” Well, this is both ways of the round trip, each way. “To get old” here means to become boring, uninteresting, we might say “monotonous.” There are other meanings of that expression, “get old.” Take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

So he says, “You would think (in other words, it would seem likely to you) that driving several hours each way would get old real fast, but I have ways of making an interminable drive seem much more exciting.” “Interminable” (interminable) means very long, almost without an end; in fact, it does mean without an end. But more generally, it means uninteresting, boring, very long. That’s the idea here.

The narrator here, the person telling the story, says that he has ways of making an interminable drive “seem” or appear much more exciting. How does he make it more exciting? Well, he tells us. He says he likes to drive fast on the freeways. The “freeway” is the same as the highway. In some parts of the U.S., they call it an “expressway.” These are roads that are built that you can drive fast on, often you don’t even have to stop, especially if it’s what we call an “interstate” freeway. Those usually have no stops in them; you get on and off, but you don’t have stop signs or stop lights. He says he likes to drive fast on the freeways, “I usually pass all of the slower cars by staying in the passing lane.” “To pass” (pass) here means to drive your car around another car so that you can be in front of them or ahead of them. “Pass” has many meanings in English; take a look, once again, at the Learning Guide for some more explanation.

So, he likes to pass all of these slower cars, the cars moving more slowly. How does he pass them? He stays in the passing lane. “Lanes” are the areas on the freeway where you have a line of cars driving. If it’s a two-lane freeway, there are cars in one direction and cars in the other direction, only one section of the road for each way. Of course, in most big cities, in fact in all of the United States, you will find four-lane freeways, with two lanes going each way, six-lane freeways, eight-lane freeways, ten-lane freeways, and so forth. Here in Southern California, some of our freeways probably have total 12 or 14 lanes, at least at their widest section. However, there are only usually three or four lanes going in a single direction. In the United States the “passing lane,” the fastest lane is the lane that is farthest to the left. The left lane is the lane where faster cars travel; it’s sometimes called the “passing lane,” because that’s how you get around the slower moving cars in front of you. Here in Los Angeles, I’m not sure about other cities, we also number the lanes. The left-most lane, the passing lane, is the number one lane. Sometimes when there are accidents, they will announce on



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the news that there is an accident blocking the number four lane. That would be the lane four over from left, and so forth.

Continuing on then, the narrator says that when there's a slow-moving car in the passing lane, in other words a car that is not going fast in the so-called fast lane or passing lane, he tailgates the car until the driver moves over to another lane. "To tailgate," here, means to follow another car too closely, meaning it's dangerous. It's used sometimes by drivers to indicate to the driver in front of them that they need them or want them to move over. Tailgating a car can be very dangerous, as well as illegal. There's another meaning of "tailgate," and that is to have a party – have a celebration where you eat and especially where you drink before a sporting event. You drive your car to the parking lot, and then you have a little party outside of the stadium before you go in. That's called "tailgating." The reason is is that when you have a big station wagon, a long car, the back door is called the "tailgate door," or simply the "tailgate," and that's where the expression, I think, comes from. We used to tailgate at baseball games and soccer games when I was a boy, many years ago.

The narrator says, "If the driver doesn't move over," doesn't move to the number two lane, next to the number one or fast lane, he weaves back and forth from one lane to another. "To weave" (weave) here means to change lanes many different times in order to go faster. So, there's a slow car in front of you, you move over to the next lane, and then there's another slow car, you move back to that original lane, and so forth. In California, where we have many lanes going in each direction, it's a little easier for you to do; people do it all the time, weave back and forth. But of course, it can also be dangerous if you are weaving, or moving at a high speed.

The narrator says, "What can I say?" That expression, an informal one, means that you are saying that what you do is not good, is bad, or is inappropriate, perhaps even dangerous, but that you are not going to change the way you act. You might say, "What can I say? I know smoking is bad for me, but I'm going to continue to smoke." That's not a personal example; I don't smoke, but someone who does could say that. So he says, "What can I say? I just don't like anyone to keep me from the open road." "To keep (someone) from (someone else or something)" means to prevent that person from having or doing something, not allow them to have or do something. "The father kept his son from driving, because the son was not a very good driver." He did not allow him – give him permission to drive.

The narrator doesn't like anyone keeping him from the open road. "The open road" is the idea that you can drive fast down the freeway, and there are very few



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other cars around you. Here, he's referring to slow moving cars, if you remember. He's trying to get around them so he can move fast. Some people like the feeling of driving fast. He says, "Sometimes, I encounter (that is, I meet) another driver who likes to drive fast and we have a drag race." A "drag (drag) race" is an informal competition to see which car can go fast enough. If you've watched a movie about the 1950s and 60s in the United States, you may have seen a drag race, where two high school boys will be in their cars and they will race to see who is the fastest. That's a "drag race." More commonly, perhaps, two usually young male drivers will be next to each other at a stop light, and they will race each other to the next stop light or to wherever they're going.

The narrator says, "I know how to bird dog the other car until I see a way to speed up and overtake it." "To bird dog" (two words) means to observe, to watch, to monitor something very carefully. He bird dogs, or watches the other car until he sees a way, sees a manner in which he can speed up. "To speed up" means to go faster; "to accelerate," we could also say. He speeds up and he overtakes the other car. "To overtake (someone)" means to go faster than them so that you are in front of them. You were behind them before, but now you go in front of them because you are moving faster. That's why, he says, he almost always wins these drag races, because he's able to speed up and overtake the other car.

Finally he says, "As you can see, I know how to spice up a boring drive." "To spice up" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning here to make something more exciting, to make something more interesting. "Spice" is what you add to food that gives it a different taste, or perhaps for certain kinds of food makes it hotter – hotter in taste, not necessarily temperature. So, he spices up his boring drive. He ends by saying, "I hope to see you soon – on the road." "On the road" means in your car while you are traveling. Of course, most of us hope that we don't see this kind of dangerous driver on the road, or anywhere else. That's what happens when you get older, you realize just how dangerous you were when you were younger!

Now let's listen to the story, this time at a normal speed.

[start of story]

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[end of story]

Our scripts never get old. Even after writing hundreds and hundreds our scriptwriter, Dr. Lucy Tse, spices them up and keeps them interesting.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan – not very interesting. But I thank you for listening and hope that you'll listen to us again here on ESL Podcast.

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