



## ESL Podcast 492 – Importing and Exporting Goods

### GLOSSARY

**to touch base with (someone)** – to speak with someone about something, especially to get that person’s opinion and share one’s own opinion

\* I’ll give you a call so we can touch base on the revised plan.

**regulation** – rule; law

\* Last week, the city council passed a new regulation against smoking in public places.

**cursory** – quick and without paying very much attention to the details

\* The manager did a cursory review of the report and said that we would need to make some changes, but he hasn’t had time to read it in detail yet.

**to have a grasp on** – to understand something and believe that one can do what is required

\* Clothilde doesn’t have a grasp on physics and is considering hiring a tutor.

**class** – type; kind; classification

\* The airplane has three classes of seating: coach, business, and first-class.

**cargo** – freight; something that is carried in a truck, plane, or ship, especially so that it can be sold somewhere else

\* Uncle Bob is a truck driver who transports cargo between Boise and Seattle.

**certificate of origin** – a document that states where a product was made, used when something is sold and transported internationally

\* According to the certificate of origin, the wood for this table came from Alaska.

**in order** – correct and organized as needed

\* Is everything in order for tomorrow’s conference?

**shipping agent** – a person whose job is to make sure that products can be sent from one place to another, especially internationally, usually by filling out all the required paperwork

\* When ambassadors move to another country, shipping agents make sure that all their furniture and personal belonging follow them to their new home.

**rest assured** – a phrase used to mean that one should not worry about something, because everything is under control and has been or will be handled correctly

\* Rest assured, we’ll take good care of your dog while you’re on vacation.



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**customs** – the part of the government that inspects things coming into a country, looking for items that are not allowed and collecting taxes as needed

\* The customs officer said that we couldn't bring any fresh fruits or vegetables across the border.

**container** – something that holds something else, such as a box or bottle, especially used to talk about large metal boxes that contain products and are transported by trucks or ships

\* How many containers will we need for the next shipment?

**freight** – cargo; something that is carried in a truck, plane, or ship, especially so that it can be sold somewhere else

\* We're expecting a new freight shipment to arrive this afternoon.

**waybill** – a piece of paper with information about what is being sent, how much it weighs, and how much money it is worth

\* According to this waybill, there is more than \$400,000 of medications inside this box!

**packing list** – a piece of paper that lists all the things that should be put in a box, especially for mailing to a customer

\* The packing list has three books, but only two were actually in the box when it arrived.

**to put (one's) mind at ease** – to make one feel calmer and more comfortable; to make one feel that one no longer has to worry about something

\* Being able to call your cell phone puts my mind at ease, because I know I can reach you anytime.

**fire away** – an expression used to let another person know that one is ready for his or her questions, or that one is ready to hear what another person has to say

\* - Are you ready for the first question?

- Sure, fire away.



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### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Giselle mean when she says, “I wanted to touch base with you”?
    - a) She wants to visit the base where Brian works.
    - b) She wants to speak with Brian about something.
    - c) She wants to play baseball with Brian.
  
  2. Has Brian reviewed the new regulations?
    - a) He hasn’t had time to look at them yet.
    - b) He has looked at them very quickly.
    - c) He has looked at them in great detail.
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### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **class**

The word “class,” in this podcast, means type, kind, or classification: “Have you been certified to work on this class of machines?” The word “class” is also used to talk about a group of people in society: “She dreams of being a member of the wealthy class.” The same word can also refer to a group of things that have the same quality: “The city wants to attract a better class of tourists.” When talking about school, a class can be a group of students who study together, or the period of time when students are taught one subject: “How many boys are in your class?” Or, “World history is his last class of the day.” The phrase “class of [year]” is used to talk about the year when someone was graduated: “The university is organizing a reunion for the class of 1966.”

#### **in order**

In this podcast, the phrase “in order” means correct and organized as needed: “Please make sure you have all your documents in order before you show up for your appointment.” The word “order” refers to how things are arranged, or which one is placed first: “Please put these books in alphabetical order.” Or, “The files are in order by date.” The phrase “out of order” is used to talk about something that isn’t working correctly: “How long has this machine been out of order?” The phrase “on order” is used to talk about something that one has requested to buy, but that hasn’t arrived at the store yet: “The store had run out of the printers I wanted, so the salesperson put one on order for me.”



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**CULTURE NOTE**

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is a “trade agreement” (an official document in which countries agree how they will buy and sell each other’s products) between Canada, the United States, and Mexico. It was signed by the nations’ leaders on December 17, 1992, but it went through many changes before it was approved by the “legislature” (law-making part of government) of each country. NAFTA didn’t actually become part of U.S. law until January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994.

Some people think that NAFTA has “benefited” (helped) trade among the three countries, but other people “criticize” (say bad things about) it. Many Americans are worried that NAFTA doesn’t “protect American workers,” because it sends jobs to other countries and especially Mexico, where people are willing to do the same work for less money. Other Americans worry about the environmental effects of NAFTA, arguing that the “laxer” (less strict; easier) environmental regulations in Mexico and Canada give foreign companies an “unfair competitive advantage,” or the ability to make and sell products for a lower cost because they don’t have to “comply with” (follow) as many environmental laws as U.S. companies do.

Economists in all three countries have “conducted” (done) many studies on the “effects” (consequences; results) of NAFTA, but they have reached very different conclusions. Some economists think that “on the whole” (altogether; overall) it has been beneficial, helping the three economies to grow and giving employees more opportunities. Other economists think that the “harmful” (damaging; bad) effects have “outweighed” (been bigger or stronger than) the benefits.

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



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### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 492: Importing and Exporting Goods.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 492. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode, which will help you improve your English even faster.

This episode is called "Importing and Exporting Goods." It's a dialogue between Giselle and Brian that's going to use a lot of business vocabulary related to companies that "import," bring goods – bring things (products) into a country, and those that "export," send those products to be sold in other countries. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Giselle: Good morning, Brian. This is Giselle calling from Intergroup in Kansas City.

Brian: Hi, Giselle. How are you?

Giselle: I'm great, thanks. Listen, the reason I'm calling is that I wanted to touch base with you about the new proposed regulations. Have you had a chance to review them?

Brian: We've only had time to give them a cursory look, but I think we have a grasp on what the changes will be. I don't think that most of the new regulations would apply to our class of cargo. As long as our certificates of origin are in order and our shipping agents are well informed of the changes, we won't have anything to be concerned about. Rest assured we'll take care of all that.

Giselle: That's good to hear. Won't the customs procedures be different, though? I understand that there are changes to the regulations affecting which containers we can use and how we transport our freight.

Brian: No, lucky for us, all we need to do is to put some additional information on our waybills and make sure our packing lists reflect the same information.



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Giselle: I'm relieved to hear that. You've really put my mind at ease, thanks.

Brian: Don't mention it. While I have you on the phone, do you mind if I ask you a couple of questions about the latest order?

Giselle: No, not at all. Fire away.

[end of dialogue]

Giselle begins our dialogue by saying, "Good morning, Brian." She's calling him on the phone. "This is Giselle calling from Intergroup in Kansas City." Kansas City is located in either Missouri or Kansas: there's actually a Kansas City, Missouri and a Kansas City, Kansas, in the center part of the U.S.

Brian says, "Hi, Giselle. How are you (how are you doing)?" Giselle says, "I'm great, thanks. Listen, the reason I'm calling is that I wanted to touch base with you about the new proposed regulations." She's saying "listen" as a way of transitioning – of going back to her main topic. "The reason I'm calling is that I wanted to touch base with you." "To touch base with (someone)" means to speak with someone about something, to get their opinion or to give your opinion. It's often an expression you hear in the business world. Someone says, "I need to touch base with my customer," that means they need to connect or be in contact with them, usually speaking to them, but perhaps emailing them as well. Giselle says she needs to touch base with Brian about the new proposed regulations (rules or laws). "Have you had a chance to review them?" "To review them," here, probably means look at them closely, read them carefully.

Brian says, "We've only had time to give them a cursory look." "Cursory" (cursory) here means a quick look, without reading them very carefully. He says, "I think we have a grasp on what the changes will be." This expression, "to have a grasp (grasp) on (something)," means to understand something well, to believe, in this case, that you can do what is required. When I was younger, I didn't have a grasp on how to talk to women, and therefore, women didn't talk to me!

Brian says, "I don't think that most of the new regulations would apply to our class of cargo." "Class," here, means kind or type or classification. "Class" has several meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations. "Cargo" (cargo) is something that is carried usually in a truck, a plane, or a ship so that it can be sold somewhere else. Another word we use for "cargo" use "freight" (freight). So when one country – one company decides to sell things that they make to another country or another company in



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another country, they would have to send that product – send those things that they are selling, and when they send them they would be “cargo.” They would be sent in a plane, a train, an automobile, a truck, or a ship – probably not an automobile.

Giselle is asking, then, about regulations that are related somehow to importing and exporting. “To import” means to buy things from companies in another country, usually to sell in your country. “To export” is the opposite, to sell things to a company in another country so they can sell those things to their customers.

Brian says, “As long as our certificates of origin are in order and our shipping agents are well informed of the changes, we won’t have anything to be concerned about.” Your “certificate of origin” is a document that states where something was made – where a product was made. It’s used when something is sold and transported internationally. So if I make, say, a CD, a compact disc of my singing, I would, if I were going to sell it in another country – and of course, I would want to – I would have to have a certificate of origin. “Origin” is where something is from; a “certificate” is just a piece of paper that gives that information. Well, Brian is saying that as long as our certificates of origin are in order, meaning under this condition, if this is true – if our certificates of origin are in order, then we don’t have anything to worry about. The expression “in order” here means correct and organized as needed – if our certificates are done right, done correctly. “Order” has several different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide, once again, for some additional explanations.

Brian also talks about the shipping agents. “To ship (something)” as a verb means to send it somewhere, to mail it or to send it by some form of transportation. An “agent” is a person who is responsible for doing something, someone who represents your company. So, a “shipping agent” is a person whose job is to make sure that products can be sent from one country to another; someone who looks at all the regulations, for example. Brian is saying as long as the shipping agents are “well informed,” meaning they know what’s going on, we won’t have anything to be concerned about. “Rest assured we’ll take care of all that.” The expression “rest assured” is used to mean that the other person doesn’t have to worry, everything is under control. It’s something that you say to someone else in order for them to have confidence in you, for them to know that you are going to take care of this problem.

Giselle says, “That’s good to hear (I’m glad). Won’t the customs procedures be different, though?” “Customs” is the agency or office of a government that looks at things – “inspects” things, we would say, that come into a country, looking for things that are not allowed and possibly collecting taxes on certain things.





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Usually you have to talk to someone from customs and someone from immigration when you go into a new country. Giselle says, “I understand that there are changes to the regulations affecting which containers we can use and how we transport our freight.” A “container” is just something that holds something else. A box is a container; a bottle can be a container for soda or milk, and so forth – or beer, which is just like milk, or as important! Giselle says that she’s worried about the changes that will affect how they transport their freight. “Freight,” you’ll remember, is the same as “cargo.” It’s the product that you are shipping from one place to another.

Brian says, “No, lucky for us (fortunately), all we need to do is to put some additional information on our waybills and make sure our packing lists reflect the same information.” A “waybill” (waybill – one word) is a piece of paper with information about what you are sending, how much it weighs, and how much it is worth – how much money it is worth. A “packing list” is a piece of paper that says what’s inside the box or the container.

Giselle then says, “I’m relieved to hear that. You’ve put my mind at ease.” “To put (someone’s) mind at ease” (ease) means to make someone feel more comfortable, to make someone feel calmer, to make someone feel that there is no longer anything to worry about.

Brian says, “Don’t mention it,” meaning it’s no big deal, that’s my job. “While I have you on the phone,” he says (since I’m talking to you anyway), “do you mind if I ask you a couple of questions about the latest order?” Giselle says, “No, not at all. Fire away.” “Fire away” is a somewhat informal expression used to let another person know that you are ready for his or her questions or you are ready to hear what that other person has to say. It can also be used in a business context as well.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

Giselle: Good morning, Brian. This is Giselle calling from Intergroup in Kansas City.

Brian: Hi, Giselle. How are you?

Giselle: I’m great, thanks. Listen, the reason I’m calling is that I wanted to touch base with you about the new proposed regulations. Have you had a chance to review them?





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Brian: No, lucky for us, all we need to do is to put some additional information on our waybills and make sure our packing lists reflect the same information.

Giselle: I'm relieved to hear that. You've really put my mind at ease, thanks.

Brian: Don't mention it. While I have you on the phone, do you mind if I ask you a couple of questions about the latest order?

Giselle: No, not at all. Fire away.

[end of dialogue]

Our scriptwriter has a grasp on how to write a good dialogue; her name is Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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