



TOPICS

The Extension Courses System; Famous Americans: Lizzie Borden; Boston accent/dialect and the Boston Brahmin; to speak out of turn

GLOSSARY

to be enrolled – to officially be a student in a school or educational program, usually paying money in order to study there

* Jim was enrolled at the university for four years, but never finished his degree.

hobby – an activity or interest that a person has in their free time, usually done for enjoyment

* Her hobbies include playing basketball, reading, and building birdhouses.

offbeat – unusual and interesting; unconventional

* We expected the film to have a traditional happy ending, but instead, it was offbeat and made us think.

palm reading – trying to learn about someone's future by looking at the lines on the inside of their hand

* Jasmine has a talent for palm reading and many of her girlfriends ask her to tell them about their future.

certificate – a piece of paper recognizing someone's achievement or accomplishment

* Leif received a certificate for coming in third place in the essay-writing contest.

step- – used to describe a family member who is not related by blood, such as a step-brother or step-mother

* My step-father is the only father I've ever had, and I consider him to be my real father.

hatchet – a tool with a short handle, used to cut wood

* We went camping without a hatchet and couldn't easily break up wood for fires.



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prime suspect – the person whom police think might have committed a particular crime

* From the beginning, the prime suspects in the bank robbery have been past and current employees

sensational – shocking and fascinating; causing a lot of public interest and excitement

* The most sensational news story this past year was the arrest of the governor.

to speculate – to guess about the reasons for something even though one doesn't have all the information to really know the true reasons

* Instead of speculating about why Shin left his job, why don't we just ask him?

detective – a person whose job is to solve mysteries or to find the person who committed a crime

* Bernice hired a private detective to find her missing brother.

motive – reason for committing a crime; reason for doing something, especially one that is hidden or not obvious

* What could be the motive for someone setting fire to the library?

to convict – to have a judge or jury decide that someone is guilty and should be punished for committing a crime

* If he is convicted, Gerald could go to jail for 20 years.

dialect – a variety of a language used in a particular area or region, sometimes indicating one's cultural, religious, or historic background, or one's social class

* George speaks a dialect of Spanish that no one can understand.

Boston Brahmin – a term used to refer to families in New England, who claim to be the descendants of the English Protestants who founded the city of Boston, Massachusetts, and were among the first Europeans to settle in New England

* Gina tells everyone she meets that she is a Boston Brahmin, but her family is actually from the South!

to speak/talk out of turn – to say something that should not have been said; to say something that one does not have the authority to say

* Mandy spoke out of turn when she said that her husband would help build the community center. She had not discussed it with him and he didn't even know anything about it.



identical twins – two babies born at the same time to the same mother and who have the same genetic material

* Adrian and Luis are identical twins and even some of their relatives can't tell them apart.

fraternal twins – two babies born at the same time to the same mother and who have different genetic material

* I didn't know that Linda and Luke are fraternal twins. They don't look alike at all!

WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Who Teaches Extension Courses?

To teach in U.S. colleges and universities, there are “minimum” (the least amount allowed) educational requirements for “instructors” (teachers). These requirements change depending on the level of education.

For example, for courses at a community college intended for students studying for an “associate degree” (A.A.; two-year college degree), instructors generally need to have a “master’s degree” such as a M.A. or M.S., which is typically a two-year degree earned after one completes one’s “bachelor’s degree” (B.A.; four-year college degree). For courses intended for undergraduate students (students studying for their bachelor’s degree), instructors must have a master’s degree or a “doctoral degree” (for example, Ph.D. or J.D.; degree earned after one completes a master’s degree). This way, the instructor of a course always has a higher level of “academic” (school; scholarly) training than his or her students.

Since university or college extension courses are not typically part of a bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral degree programs, instructors for these courses may have different types of qualifications and academic backgrounds. For courses that require the teaching of practical knowledge or specific skills, extension programs often “seek out” (find; look for) instructors with “real life experience” (experience earned through living one’s life, not earned in school) or



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“work experience.” These instructors are ideal to help students develop skills used “in the real world” (in the working world, not in school).

Other extension program courses are taken to prepare students for a degree program. For example, most extension programs have English as a Second Language courses to help students improve their English, some of whom plan to continue their studies to get a degree. For this reason, many instructors of English as a Second Language have master’s degrees, or have earned other academic qualifications, such as teaching “certification” (permission from the state to teach, after completing “coursework” (series of courses) or exams).



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 265.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 265. I'm your friendly host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

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On this Café, we're going to talk about the extension course system at American community colleges and universities. This is something that you probably are not aware of – you probably don't know about – but is very common as a way of getting additional education for adults here in the U.S. We'll also continue our series on famous Americans – perhaps we should say infamous Americans, this we'll time focus on Lizzie Borden, a woman who was accused of murdering her father and her stepmother. As always, we'll also answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

This Café begins with a discussion about the extension course system in the United States. A "course" is just another name for a class. An "extension course" is a course provided by a college or university to people who are not regular students of those institutions. We say people are not "enrolled" (enrolled). If you are enrolled as a regular student, that means you probably go there regularly and are trying to get some sort of degree: a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, perhaps an associate arts degree, which is a two-year degree.

If you are just an adult who is interested in learning more about a topic, or who is trying to get some sort of certificate – we'll talk about that in a moment – then you can take college classes through the extension course system. "To extend" means to make something longer. For example, we talk about how modern medical technology has extended our "life expectancy," how long we expect to live. It's been extended. An "extension" as a noun is the increased length or size of something, and an "extension course" has that name because it can extend or expand or increase our knowledge. Extension courses are often taken by people



who already have a bachelor's or a associate arts degree and are just looking to extend their knowledge – to increase their knowledge about some subject.

Remember that we use the word “college” and “university” often to mean the same thing in the United States. Both colleges and universities offer what are called four-years degrees typically, that is a bachelor's degree. But there are some colleges – what are more commonly now called community colleges or private business colleges – that have two-year degrees. You study for two years and you get your associate arts degree. Colleges, then, can be two- or four-year institutions; universities are almost always four years plus often a master's and a Ph.D. program.

Extension courses can be given at either at a community college – a two-year college – or a four-year university or college. Extension courses at the university – the four-year university – are usually a little more academic, a little harder, a little more theoretical than courses at the community college. But that isn't always true; it depends on the course. Extension courses at the university aren't always practical, however; the same is true for community colleges. Sometimes extension courses are about things like how to grow a better garden – how to grow plants that you can eat in your backyard, or how to start a new business, or how to improve your parenting skills so you become a better mother or father. So, not all of the extension courses are academic at a university. Both community colleges and universities offer lots of practical as well as academic courses.

Many people take extension courses to learn more about some particular hobby they have. A “hobby” (hobby) is something you do for fun in your free time, when you're not working. Hobbies could be playing sports, or painting pictures, collecting stamps, building model airplanes – those tiny, miniature, small little airplanes, not real airplanes, although that could be a hobby, too. Building real airplanes, building a rocket that would go to the moon could be your hobby, you never know. It's possible, I think! Anyway, these are all hobbies. Learning languages for some people is also a hobby, something you do in your free time.

Some of the extension courses are often what we would call offbeat courses. Something that is “offbeat” (offbeat – one word) is something very unusual, something very different. For example, you could take a class on animal massage – how to massage your animals. “To massage” is to take your hands, usually, and try to relax the muscles of normally another person. A person who does massages is called the “masseuse.” Well, this is for people – strange



people, to be sure – who want to learn how to massage their dogs and cats and goats and whatever other strange animals they have in their house. I don't think I would ever take such a course! There are also courses in things like palm reading. Your "palm" (palm) is the flat part of the inside of your hand, and some people think you can look at the palm someone's hand and somehow predict what will happen in the future. I say some people; I'm not one of those!

Taking extension courses doesn't give you typically a degree, like a bachelor's degree or a master's degree. Most people take these courses just for fun, for personal interest. It is possible, however, to take extension courses to get something called a certificate. A "certificate" is typically a piece of paper that says that you've accomplished something – you've finished something. Here, a certificate is kind of like a degree. It's normally much faster to finish a certificate, maybe three or four months, maybe a year. Certificates are usually related to a particular kind of job. Some certificates are for people who did not want to go to college and get a degree; they may just want to become a plumber, or they may want to learn how to sell houses and buildings, what we call real estate. So they may take extension courses and get a certificate to do that. Certificates are usually job-related. Sometimes for example if you are a computer programmer or a web designer and you are learning a new kind of software, some community colleges in particular will offer certificates in a particular kind of programming. So even though you have your degree – your bachelor's degree – you might go back and get this additional training – this additional certificate.

Many extension courses are now offered online, so you don't even have to go to the college or university buildings.

Universities and colleges offer extension courses in part because they are trying to get more money. Mostly we're talking about public colleges and universities. Extension courses are not as common at private colleges, but many do offer these courses. Some colleges and universities are also trying to do something called community outreach. "Outreach" (outreach) is when you try to help other people. In this case, the university is trying to help the local community, the people who live near that college but who are not members or students at the university.

I've taken several extension courses in languages; I've taken courses in cooking; I've taken courses...oh...even in things like art and history. The people who teach the courses are sometimes regular university professors; sometimes they are simply people who are experts in that area. The courses usually meet 10



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weeks, maybe 12 weeks, sometimes 15 weeks. They cost, depending on the college, anywhere between 100 and 400 dollars per course, it depends on the course. The courses usually have adults, typically adults over the age of 25 or 30. People who are in the middle of their life or retired people also take extension courses. Some people take courses because they want simply to meet other people, and that is sometimes a motivation for taking these extension courses.

So that's the extension course system in the U.S. It is a great thing to help the community – to help adults continue their education. You may also be wondering if community colleges and universities have English classes through their extension system, and the answer is yes they do. There are many courses – especially here in Southern California, but in any big city – that you can sign up for and take English classes to improve your English as well.

Our next topic is Lizzie Borden, who if there were extension courses when she was alive would probably take the one called “How to Kill Your Parents”! Lizzie Borden lived in the late 1800s (the late 19th century) and early 1900s (or 20th century) here in the United States. She was arrested by the police and put on trial, or taken to a court of law, in Massachusetts in 1892 for the murder of her father and her stepmother. Massachusetts is on the eastern coast of the United States; it is east of the state of New York, north of the states of Connecticut and Rhode Island. Massachusetts is famous primarily for the city of Boston, as well as several famous politicians including the Kennedy family – John F. Kennedy was from Massachusetts. It is also one of the early places that there were “colonists,” people coming from Europe. One of the first places they went was Massachusetts.

Lizzie Borden – Lizzie is normally a short form of the name Elizabeth – was put on trial for the murder of her father and her stepmother. When we use the prefix “step-” (step) in front of a family member, we're talking about a member who is not related by blood to that person. Usually we talk about stepmothers and stepfathers. So let's say that you have a woman who gets married and has a baby but then the father dies or perhaps the woman divorces the father of the child – her husband, that is. Well, then she decides to marry again. Her second husband would typically then become the stepfather of the child, especially if it's a young child. Some people use stepfather and stepmother only for those parents who have officially and legally adopted that child; some people use it more informally.



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Well, what happened with Lizzie Borden is that mother died in 1863 and her father married another woman named Abby Gray. Well, Abby was not Lizzie's biological mother – she wasn't born of Abby – but Abby became her mother through marriage making her Lizzie's stepmother. You could talk also about stepchildren, stepsons, stepdaughters, even stepbrothers and stepsisters. These are all people you are related to through your, or someone else's – one of your parents – marriage.

On the morning of August 4th, 1892, according to Lizzie she found her father dead on the couch in their home (the couch is the sofa where three or four people can sit in a living room). Lizzie says she came into the living room and she saw her father dead on the sofa. He had been hit in the face with a hatchet several times. Now, a "hatchet" (hatchet) is similar to an axe (axe). What that means is that it is a tool for cutting wood, so it is very sharp. An axe can be very big. You take the axe and you hit it against a tree and it cuts into the tree. A hatchet is like a small axe, much smaller. You can still use it to cut wood, but typically smaller pieces of wood.

Well, imagine coming in and seeing your father killed with hatchet marks on his face. Lizzie was crying and her neighbors immediately came over to help her. When that happened the maid for the family, a woman who was helping the family with cleaning and cooking, found the stepmother also dead upstairs on the second floor of the house. She had been killed with a hatchet also.

Well, the police began to doubt Lizzie's story, and about a week later they arrested her as the prime suspect. "Prime" is the leading, the most important, the first. A "suspect" is someone who the police think committed a crime; in this case murder.

In the U.S., of course, a person is supposed to be innocent until proven guilty; that's a common expression you'll hear. That means that the government has to prove that the person committed the murder, that we assume the person is innocent. However, this was a very sensational story. "Sensational" means shocking and for some people fascinating, interesting. If this happened today, it would be a sensational story. Imagine it happening in the late 19th century where people were less used to the cruel crimes that you often see today.

Some people speculated that Lizzie killed her parents because she was angry that her father was giving money to her stepmother instead of to her. "To speculate" means to guess. People were guessing that that's why Lizzie killed



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her father and stepmother. But other people said no, Lizzie is innocent; she didn't do it. Detectives for the police, people who try to figure out who committed the crime, did not find any blood on Lizzie's clothes. They did find an axe in the house, and the handle of the axe – the wooden part that you hold onto – was burning. But, the main reason that they arrested Lizzie was because they thought she had the best "motive" or reason for killing her parents.

However amazingly, Lizzie was found not guilty. I say "amazingly," given the media – the newspaper coverage – the newspaper stories about this sensational crime. The court ruled, however, they decided that there was not enough to convict Lizzie of her murders. "To convict" means that you prove that someone is guilty, or you prove that someone is guilty we would say "beyond a reasonable doubt," meaning it's not reasonable to think that they didn't do the murder. But the court said no, Lizzie was not guilty. However, she could never go back to her original life. People were always talking about her and assuming that she had killed her parents.

The story of Lizzie Borden is famous in the United States not from history books so much as it is from a children's rhyme, or poem. Sometime in the early 1900s someone wrote a poem about the Lizzie Borden case, and you sometimes hear children singing this poem even though it's about a terrible thing. I remember learning it as a child. The children's rhyme, or poem is:

Lizzie Borden had an axe
And gave her mother forty whacks.

"To whack" (whack) means to hit someone very hard with something. So:

Lizzie Borden took an axe (picked up an axe, a hatchet)
And gave her mother forty whacks
When she saw what she had done
She gave her father forty-one.

So she kills the mother – the stepmother technically – first, and then she kills the father.

Lizzie Borden took an axe (other versions say Lizzie Borden had an axe – same thing)
And gave her mother forty whacks.
When she saw what she had done



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She gave her father forty-one.

We say that comedy equals time plus tragedy. “Tragedy” is a horrible thing that happens; “comedy” is something that is funny. So, you can laugh about something horrible, as long as it is not close in history – it is a long time ago. You can make a joke about Abraham Lincoln and his assassination – he was killed. But you can’t make a joke about John F. Kennedy’s assassination; it was too recent. As the comedians say, too soon. But, Lizzie Borden was many years ago, and children today in the U.S. will sometimes learn this little poem. Maybe they learn it to scare their parents, I’m not sure!

Now let’s answer a few of your questions.

Antonio (Antonio) in Italy wants to know the meaning of the expression “Boston accent” and “Boston Brahmin.” We were just talking about Massachusetts and Boston. Many cities in the United States have a very individual – a very specific accent, just as I, being from Minnesota, sometimes have an accent. It tells people where I’m from; that’s the way we talk where I am from. Boston has a very particular accent also. Boston, New York, people from the what we call Deep South in the southern part of the U.S., these are all particular accents in English that you can hear.

I’m not an expert in the Boston accent, and even in the city of Boston there are different accents. One part of the Boston accent people are most familiar with is the pronunciation of the “r”, or rather the non-pronunciation of the “r”. So for example they might pronounce the phrase “park the car in Harvard Yard” as “pahk the cah in Hahvahd yahd.” Not very good Boston accent, but you get the idea!

Now, “Boston Brahmin” is a particular social class as well as for some an accent. It refers to families in this area who are what we would call direct descendants of the eventual founders of the city of Boston – the people who first came there. They are “descendants,” meaning they came from one of those founders – their father’s father’s father’s father’s father’s, their great-great-great-great-great-grandfather, or whatever it is, was one of the original founders of Boston.

The reputation for a Boston Brahmin is someone who is rich, who has a lot of education, and is very influential in the local arts and culture scene. It’s a very exclusive group, we might say. You don’t have a lot of people who are part of this group. It’s an elite group; those that are at the top of society you might say.



At least that was the traditional idea – the traditional reputation of the Boston Brahmin.

You might be familiar with the word “Brahmin,” it refers to a particular group of Hindu believers. Hinduism is a religion that is popular in India and other countries. The Brahmin class or group was the highest – the elite group, and a famous American took that term and applied it to these elite groups of Americans, the Boston Brahmin. That man was Oliver Wendell Holmes, who was a very interesting and important figure in American history in the 19th century. We’ll talk about him on another Café.

Philipe (Philipe) in Germany wants to know the meaning of the expression “to speak out of turn.” “To speak” or “to talk out of turn” means to say something that you should not have said, perhaps because it is embarrassing or it hurt someone’s feelings. It’s also used to mean to say something that you don’t have the authority to say: “I’m going to give you the job here at our company.” If you say that and you’re not the boss, you’re speaking out of turn; you’re saying something that you don’t have the authority to say. Often we use this expression in formal situations to apologize or to excuse someone who has said something they shouldn’t. You might say, “Oh, I’m sorry. I spoke out of turn.” I said something that I should not have said.

There’s also the expression “to take turns.” A “turn” is where you are in a particular sequence or order. So for example in a class, the teacher may ask everyone sitting in the circle to talk: first you, and then the person to the right of you, and then the person to the right of her, and so forth. Each person takes their turn – they take their opportunity in the sequence or order to speak.

Finally Agustin (Agustin) in Argentina wants to know the difference between “identical twins” and “fraternal twins.” “Twins” are two babies that are born at the same time from the same mother. I have two older brothers who are twins. They were born on the same day. I have two nieces who are twins.

“Identical twins” are born at the same time and also have the identical genetic material. Your “genes” are the instructions that are passed on, if you will, that determine what your eye color will be, will help determine many physical and perhaps even mental factors or characteristics that you have. So, when their genetic material – their DNA is the same, we call them identical twins, and when they grow up they often look exactly the same. My older brothers are identical



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twins; even I don't know which is which. Well, I'm kidding – they wear little shirts with names on them, you see!

Now, “fraternal twins” are two babies born at the same time by the same mother, but who have somewhat different genetic material. So for example, if there is a boy and a girl who are twins, they are going to be fraternal twins because they don't have identical DNA; their genetic material is not the same. You could have two boys or two girls who are also fraternal twins. My nieces are fraternal, not identical twins.

If you or your identical twin has a question, 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 again on the English Café.

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