



ESL Podcast 489 – Talking About Wealth

GLOSSARY

to throw (one's) money around – to spend a lot of money in a way so that everyone is aware of it, letting other people know that one is rich

* She tries to make friends by throwing her money around, buying everyone nice dinners and expensive presents.

money talks – a phrase meaning that people who have money have a lot of power and that spending money attracts attention and sends a strong message

* The university says that it treats all students equally, but we all know that money talks and if people give enough money to the school, their children will be able to study there no matter how bad their grades are.

to make a splash – to do something to be noticed by other people

* Many people in Hollywood want to be actors, so it can be very hard to make a splash and get the attention of directors.

social climber – a person who tries to build relationships with people who have a lot of power in society or who are very important among a group of people, often ignoring people who are less important

* Andrzej is a social climber who knows a lot of corporate executives by their first name.

to get (one's) way – to have things happen the way that one wants them to happen; to be able to control what happens

* The little boy thinks that he can get his way by screaming and crying when he wants something.

affluent – wealthy; rich; with a lot of money

* A lot of affluent financial advisors live in New York City.

to buy influence – to use one's money to be powerful and important; to use one's money in ways that make other people listen to one's opinions

* He's very wealthy, but everyone respects him because he has never used his money to try to buy influence.

social standing – social status; social importance; the way that other people treat one within a community

* Immigrants often lose a lot of social standing when they come to a new country and don't speak the language.



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to throw (oneself) at – to do whatever is necessary in order to get someone's attention or to be liked by another person

* Vanessa is throwing herself at that man, even though she knows he isn't interested in her romantically.

to donate – to give money to an organization that needs it, such as those that help poor people or support medical research

* They donate \$400 to the American Red Cross each year.

chump change – a small amount of money; an amount of money that is so small that it is unimportant

* You want to start a business with just \$1000? That's chump change! You need to invest a lot more if you want your business to succeed.

patron – a person who supports an organization or business, especially by giving money

* Ms. Crutchfield is a great patron of the arts in this city.

to look a gift horse in the mouth – to not be thankful for a gift and instead wonder why the person has given the gift, or what he or she wants in return

* Mariah gave us her old computer. It's a little bit slow, but we shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth.

to spread money around – to spend a lot of money in many different places, sharing it with many different people and organizations so that everyone has a little bit of money

* Joaquin doesn't think it's right for some people to be billionaires while other people have almost nothing. He believes that they should spread the money around.

sour grapes – the feeling of wanting to have something that one cannot have, so one pretends that the thing is unimportant or bad; jealousy

* Many people criticize famous actors for how they spend their money, but it's really just a case of sour grapes, because they would do the same thing if they ever became that rich.

money is the root of all evil – a phrase meaning that money causes many problems or all problems in society, and that people are better off when they have less money.

* They say that money is the root of all evil, but everyone I know thinks that having more money would make their life better!



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What would a social climber be most likely to do?
 - a) Try to buy influence.
 - b) Look a gift horse in the mouth.
 - c) Have a case of sour grapes.

2. What does Vanessa mean by saying that he's "used to getting his way"?
 - a) He always knows where he's going.
 - b) He worked hard for his success.
 - c) He expects things to happen in certain ways.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to make a splash

The phrase "to make a splash," in this podcast, means to do something to be noticed by other people: "His newspaper article made a splash and hundreds of people wrote letters to the editor about it." Normally the verb "to splash" means for water to move in a big way, often because someone has jumped into the water or dropped something into it: "The child jumped into the pool, splashing everyone who was sitting nearby." The verb "to splash" can also mean to make something wet by throwing water onto it: "She splashed her face with warm water to remove the soap." The phrase "to splash around" means to play in the water, moving one's arms and legs to make the water move: "They spent all afternoon splashing around in the pool."

patron

In this podcast, the word "patron" means a person who supports an organization or business, especially by giving money: "Ninety percent of the organization's money came from one patron, and they don't know what will happen if she stops making donations." A "patron saint" is an important person in the Christian religion who gives protection to a specific place or to a specific group of people: "Saint Abel is the patron saint of the blind." Or, "Saint Olaf is the patron saint of difficult marriages." Another meaning of "patron" is a person who shops at a store or regularly goes to a restaurant or business: "Most of the hotel's patrons are from other countries." Or, "How many patrons come into the store on a typical day?"



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CULTURE NOTE

Most Americans think that there are three “classes” (groups of people with similar wealth, education, and types of jobs) in the United States: the poor (or lower class), the middle class, and the rich (or upper class). However, many Americans believe that the United States should have a “classless society,” or that all people should be equal. Americans also believe in “class mobility,” or the idea that people should be able to move from one class to another through their hard work.

Many newspapers and magazines talk about the “shrinking middle class,” or the idea that the middle class is getting smaller while the upper class and lower class are growing. It is difficult to find “data” (information) about it, because the classes are not “strictly” (exactly; precisely) defined. However, the U.S. “Census Bureau” (the government agency that surveys the population) reports on the “income distribution” of “households” (a group of related people who live together), showing how many households earn different amounts of money. The middle group (currently households making between \$25,000 and \$75,000) can be considered to be the middle class. Households that make less are in the lower class, and households that make more are in the upper class.

In the past 20 years, the percentage of U.S. households in the middle of the income distribution has decreased from 48.2% to 44.3%. Some people fear that if this “trend” (something that changes over time) continues, the United States will have many households that are very poor and very rich, but few that have average wealth. This would create a very “polarized” (with extremes) society.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 489: Talking About Wealth.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 489. 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 of this episode that contains, among other things, a complete transcript of everything we say.

This episode is called "Talking About Wealth." "Wealth" is having a lot of money. It's a dialogue between Anton and Vanessa, where we're going to hear a lot of vocabulary that is used when talking about people who have a lot of money. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Anton: Look at that guy. He's been in town two weeks and he's already throwing his money around.

Vanessa: You know as well as I do that money talks. He's just trying to make a splash in the business community.

Anton: If that were all he was doing then I wouldn't say anything, but he's a social climber of the worst kind. Who does he think he is?

Vanessa: He's someone who's used to getting his way, that's obvious. He's not the first affluent person to try to buy influence and social standing in a community.

Anton: Yeah, but look at all of the people in this town throwing themselves at him!

Vanessa: He has donated generously to the town and given to the arts. He's even given money toward building the new community center, and it wasn't chump change either. If he wants to be a patron in this town, who are we to look a gift horse in the mouth?



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Anton: Right, so spreading money around gives him the right to walk around like he owns this town?

Vanessa: Is this a case of sour grapes?

Anton: Ha, right! Haven't you heard? Money is the root of all evil!

[end of dialogue]

Anton begins the conversation by saying, "Look at that guy. He's been in town two weeks and he's already throwing his money around." He's been in town – he's been in this city for only two weeks and he's already throwing his money around. "To throw your money around" means to spend a lot of money so that everyone knows that you have a lot of money; you're letting everyone know that you are rich.

Vanessa says, "You know as well as I do that money talks." This expression, "money talks," means that people who have a lot of money get attention; they're able to influence things, they have power. Vanessa says, "He's just trying to make a splash in the business community." "To make a splash" means to do something that other people will notice, to do something that other people will see. "Splash" has a couple of meanings in English; take a look at the Learning Guide for some more explanations.

Anton says, "If that were all he was doing then I wouldn't say anything, but he's a social climber of the worst kind. Who does he think he is?" To be a "social climber" means to be a person who tries to get power or influence in society or an organization by getting or being in relationships, friendships with people. A social climber is someone who wants to be important, and so decides on making friends so that he or she can have more power. It's usually considered a negative description to call someone a social climber. Anton thinks that this guy is a social climber; "Who does he think he is?" he says. This is a question that we might use to say this person thinks that they are more important than they really are.

Vanessa says, "He's someone who's used to getting his way, that's obvious." "To get your way" means to have things happen the way that you want them to happen, to be able to control things. "He always gets his way," people always do what he wants them to do. Vanessa says, "He's not the first affluent person to try to buy influence and social standing in a community." He's the – rather, he's not the first affluent person; "affluent" is another word for rich, wealthy, someone with a lot of money. Not me, for example! "He's not the first affluent person to try to



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buy influence.” “To buy influence” is to use your money so that you are more powerful, you are more important. He’s trying to buy influence and social standing. “Social standing” is your importance in a community, in an organization, in society. We might also say your “social status,” the way people look at you and treat you in a group or community.

Anton says, “Yeah, but look at all of the people in this town throwing themselves at him!” “To throw yourself at (someone)” means to do something, to do whatever is necessary to get someone’s attention or to be liked by another person. A woman, for example, who’s very interested in a handsome man – a good looking man – might throw herself at him, might try to do anything to get him to pay attention to her or to like her. This has never happened to me!

Vanessa says, “He has donated generously to the town and given to the arts.” “To donate” means to give money to usually an organization that needs it. The Red Cross, for example, receives donations. This person has “donated generously,” meaning he’s given a lot of money to the town – to the community and to the arts. “The arts” refers to theater, or music groups, or artistic groups; all of these would be considered part of the arts: opera, dance, and so forth. Vanessa says, “He’s even given money toward building the new community center, and it wasn’t chump change either.” A “community center” would be a building that people in your neighborhood or community or a small town would use for various purposes: meetings for example, performances perhaps. This is a case where someone has given money toward building a new community center, and Vanessa says it wasn’t “chump change.” This is an informal expression meaning a small amount of money, an amount of money that is so small it’s not important. That’s chump change, “chump” (chump).

This man has not given chump change, meaning it wasn’t a small amount; it was a lot of money. Vanessa says, “If he wants to be a patron in this town, who are we to look a gift horse in the mouth?” A “patron” is a person who supports, usually with their money, an organization. Usually it’s a non-profit organization or an artistic organization. That’s a patron. The expression “to look a gift horse in the mouth” means to not be thankful for a gift, and instead wonder why that person is giving you this gift. It can also mean that you shouldn’t try to look too closely at the gift with an attempt to find if you can get more out of it, try to get something more from the person who gave it to you. Those are both possible meanings of this expression. Here, I think it just means that we should not be ungrateful; we should be thankful for this gift and not look at it too closely, we should be just happy that we have it.



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Anton says, “Right, so spreading money around gives him the right to walk around like he owns this town?” “To spread money around” means to spend a lot of money in many different places or with many different people and organizations. Anton says that because he is spending so much money he thinks he can walk around this town – this community as if he owns it, that is to say like he were the owner of the town.

Vanessa says, “Is this a case of sour grapes?” “Sour grapes” is the feeling of wanting something that you don’t have, perhaps because you lost a competition or because you don’t have as much money or talent as another person. Sometimes people pretend that whatever the other person has is not important or is bad. It’s really a kind of jealousy, to want what someone else has and to be angry or mad that the other person has it.

Anton says, “Ha, right!” Oddly enough, this expression really means you’re wrong, I don’t agree with you. Sometimes when people say “right,” they really are trying to say I don’t agree with you, it depends on how they say it. In this case, Anton is trying to use expression to show disagreement. “Ha, right! Haven’t you heard? Money is the root of all evil!” The “root” of something is the cause of something, in this case. “Money is the root of all evil” is an expression that means that money causes problems. The expression originally comes from the Bible, and it is not “Money is the root of all evil,” it’s “Love of money is the root of all evil.” It’s not the money that’s bad, it’s loving your money too much that can be bad. But now the expression has changed, really, into this notion that money itself is the root of evil.

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

[start of dialogue]

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Anton: Right, so spreading money around gives him the right to walk around like he owns this town?

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[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by someone who has already made a splash in the ESL world, 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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