



GLOSSARY

mick – a word for an Irish person, usually offensive

* Don't call me mick. I'm Irish, but that word is an insult!

decade – a period of 10 years

* Which wars were fought in the same decade as the Vietnam War?

ignorant – without knowledge of something; unaware of something; never having been taught about something

* Blake has never traveled outside the United States and he's completely ignorant about other cultures.

offensive – hurting someone's feelings in a rude way; insulting

* Several of the employees have complained that you were telling offensive jokes during your lunch break.

to add insult to injury – to make a bad situation worse; to do something that worsens the current situation, which is already negative

* I lost my keys and sat on my glasses. Then, to add insult to injury, I spilled hot coffee on the front of my shirt.

on behalf of – for someone else; as a representative for another person or group of people

* Craig accepted the award on behalf of his team.

How dare (one) – a question asked when one is very angry over another person's inappropriate and rude behavior

* How dare you tell my brother to leave your house because he wasn't invited?

presumptuous – doing something that is inappropriate because one does not have a right to do it; assuming that one may do something when one actually should not

* It was very presumptuous of Dan to ask how old the clerk is, implying that she is too young for the job.

to make a point – to do something deliberately to demonstrate or prove something else

* The protesters are trying to make a point about what's wrong with the new law.



**ESL Podcast 698 – Making Ethnically or Racially
Offensive Remarks**

to get carried away – to do too much of something, usually because one was very excited and wasn't able to realize he or she should have stopped

* Ingrid loves baking, but sometimes she gets carried away and makes way too many cakes and cookies.

insulting – hurting someone's feelings in a rude way; offensive

* Harold is a genius, but he can be very insulting when he assumes other people aren't as smart or well educated as he is.

to give (someone) the benefit of the doubt – to assume that someone said or did something with good intentions or for a good reason, even though the results were negative; to assume that someone did something for the right reasons

* I think you should give him the benefit of the doubt and assume that when he commented on your weight, it was because he was genuinely concerned about your health.

magnanimous – very kind, forgiving, and generous

* Chi-Young made a magnanimous offer to help his friend pay for college.

ethnic slur – an insult based the social or cultural group that one is identified with; an offensive word or phrase about a person's ethnicity

* Ethnic slurs are allowed under freedom of speech, but that doesn't mean we should use them.

politically correct – using words and phrases that are chosen very carefully so that they do not offend anyone

* Some people who are trying to be politically correct refer to short people as "vertically challenged," but that seems silly to me.

behind the times – old-fashioned; outdated; not related to what is happening now in modern times; seeming to be more appropriate in an earlier time

* Lyonne's knowledge of computers is really behind the times. He doesn't even know how to use email or search the Internet.

to catch up – to reach the same position, place, or level as other people after one has been behind or below them

* Our book club will be discussing the end of the book and I haven't finished the second chapter yet. I need to catch up before our next meeting.



COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What was Dan referring to when he called Mike a mick?
 - a) His hairstyle.
 - b) His age.
 - c) His ethnicity.
2. What does Patti mean when she says that Dan's "a little behind the times"?
 - a) He's always running late.
 - b) He has outdated ideas.
 - c) He speaks too slowly.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to get carried away

The phrase "to get carried away," in this podcast, means to do too much of something, usually because one was very excited and wasn't able to realize he or she should have stopped: "While redecorating their home, they got carried away and painted all of the rooms bright pink." The phrase "to be carried along by (something)" means to be excited and determined to continue to do something: "Even though the runner was very tired, he was carried along by the cheers of the crowd." Finally, the phrase "to carry (something) off" means to be able to do something that is very difficult or that seems impossible: "Nobody thought he could carry it off, but his first performance in a movie won an Oscar."

to catch up

In this podcast, the phrase "to catch up" means to reach the same position, place, or level as other people after one has been behind or below them: "Our competitor's sales are growing 20% faster than ours, but with the right marketing strategy, we can catch up." The phrase "to catch (someone) up" means to give someone the information he or she needs in order to know as much as everyone else: "I had to step out of the meeting for a few minutes. Can you catch me up on what was discussed while I was gone?" Finally, the phrase "to not catch (something)" means to not hear or understand what was said: "I didn't catch that. Could you please repeat what you said a little more loudly?"



CULTURE NOTE

Unacceptable Racial Slurs

Languages change over time, and some terms that were “once” (in the past) “acceptable” (okay to use) are no longer acceptable. This is especially true for terms used to refer to “minority groups” (people with a race that is less than 50% of the larger population).

For example, in the past it was acceptable to refer to blacks or African Americans as “colored” people, but this term isn’t heard very often anymore, and most people consider it to be rude. Similarly, in the past people referred to anyone with Asian “heritage” (background) as an “oriental,” but this isn’t acceptable now, either. It is better to refer to the specific race or country of origin, or just to say “Asian American.”

In the past, Native Americans were often called “redskins.” This term is generally considered inappropriate, but there is a major exception – the “Washington Redskins” are an American Football Team. For years, some people have tried to make the team change its name and “mascot” (an animal or figure representing a team) because they think it is inappropriate. Other people argue that although the word “redskin” was used in a “defamatory” (hurtful and rude) way in the past, the team now uses the name as a way to honor Native Americans.

Some terms refer not only to someone’s race, but also their beliefs and sense of “identity” (how one identifies or categorizes oneself). For example, an “apple” is a rude term sometimes used to describe a Native American who has been “assimilated into” (become part of) “white” culture, because an apple is “red” (an inappropriate reference to Native Americans’ skin color) on the outside and “white” on the inside. A “banana” is a rude term sometimes used to describe an Asian American who is “yellow” on the outside and “white” on the inside.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast episode 698: Making Ethnically or Racially Offensive Remarks.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 698. 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 to improve your English even faster.

This episode is called "Making Ethnically or Racially Offensive Remarks." Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Mike: Did you hear what Dan said? He called me a mick. What decade is he living in?

Patti: He's just ignorant. I'm sure he wasn't trying to be offensive.

Mike: Well, I take offense. And to add insult to injury, did you hear what else he said?

Patti: What?

Mike: He said that he was speaking on behalf of the Irish in the community when he said he liked the plan. How dare he speak for other people? It's presumptuous.

Patti: He was trying to make a point and probably just got carried away. I agree that what he said could be insulting, but let's give him the benefit of the doubt.

Mike: You can be magnanimous if you want to be, but I know an ethnic slur when I hear one.

Patti: It wasn't an ethnic slur. It wasn't the politically correct term, that's all. He's a little behind the times.

Mike: Behind the times?! He'd have to live to 150 to catch up to the present!



[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Mike saying to Patti, “Did you hear what Dan said? He called me a mick.” A “mick” (mick) is an old term for someone who was from Ireland or had relatives from Ireland. It is an insulting term, what we would call a “derogatory” term. It is not a compliment, but an insult to someone. There are many, as you probably know, words that are used to describe people from different countries, different ethnicities, as well as different races: white, black, Asian, and so forth. We’re not going to go over those here on the podcast other than to use this one as an example. A “mick” was someone who, as I said, was Irish.

Mike continues, “What decade is he (is Dan) living in?” A “decade” is a period of 10 years. If someone says, “In the past decade we have had many good things happen at our company,” they mean in the past 10 years. Decade is related to 10; usually it refers to 10 years, but it can refer to 10 other things as well.

Patti says, “He’s just ignorant,” he doesn’t have the knowledge of something, he was never taught some particular thing. When you say someone is “ignorant,” you say they don’t know something. They’re not necessarily a bad person, they just don’t know. Patti says, “I’m sure he wasn’t trying to be offensive.” “To be offensive” here means to be insulting, to be rude, to try to hurt someone else’s feelings.

Mike says, “Well, I take offense.” “To take offense” says that you are bothered by – you are offended by something someone did or said. Mike says, “And to add insult to injury, did you hear what else he said?” The expression “to add insult to injury” means to make a bad situation worse, to do something to make a situation more negative that was already a negative situation or a bad situation.

Patti says, “What?” Mike says, “He said that he was speaking on behalf of the Irish in the community.” “On behalf of” means representing someone else or some group of people. “I’m speaking on behalf of everyone in my family when I say thank you for all the help you have given us.” I’m speaking on behalf of them; they’re not speaking, I’m speaking for them – on behalf of. Mike says that Dan said he was “speaking on behalf of the Irish in the community when he said he liked the plan. How dare he speak for other people?” The expression “how dare you” or “how dare she” is the beginning of a question you ask when you are angry at what someone has said; you think what they said or did was wrong. Often, the expression is used when you think that person has somehow done more than they had the right to do. “How dare you throw water at my cat when he was in your backyard.” He was in your house, how dare you? You don’t have



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a right to do that, that's what you're saying. You're wrong, but that's what you're saying!

Mike says how dare Dan speak for other people. He says, "It's presumptuous." "To be presumptuous" (presumptuous) means doing something that is wrong, that is inappropriate, because, once again, you don't have the right to do it. You're assuming that you can do something when, in fact, you should not be doing it. So you walk into a bar and you start talking to this beautiful woman, and about halfway through your conversation you give her your phone number and you say, "Well, let's meet next Friday for a drink. Give me a call," that would be presumptuous; the verb would be "to presume." You are presuming that the woman is interested in you and wants to go on a date with you. That would be very presumptuous, probably not very successfully either!

Patti says Dan "was trying to make a point." "To make a point" is an expression that means to do something to demonstrate or prove something else. It's often used simply to mean to make a statement or a strong statement, and sometimes you can add the preposition "of" at the end when you want to say that you specifically and purposely did something. For example: "I want to make a point of arriving at work on time every day this week." You are planning on doing it, probably because you want to prove something or demonstrate something, or simply because you think it's important. Patti says Dan was trying to say something important, "to make a point and probably just got carried away." "To get carried away" means to be so excited, so enthusiastic about doing something that you do too much of it; you don't realize you're doing too much. To go back to our example at the bar, if the woman actually does call you, and you decide that you're going to buy her a dozen roses and a bottle of champagne and get a special car – a limousine to pick you up together at this restaurant, you go to the best restaurant in the city, you might be getting carried away. You might be doing too much – especially if it's just your first date! If you bought her a ring, to marry her, you would definitely be getting carried away.

Patti says, "I agree that what he said could be insulting (could hurt someone's feelings), but let's give him the benefit of the doubt." "To give (someone) the benefit of the doubt" is to assume that what someone said or did, they did for a good reason; they had good intentions even though the result was negative. When you're not sure why someone did something, and it seems like something bad happened, you can give them the benefit of the doubt; you can say, "Well, they probably didn't realize they were talking so loudly on their cell phone in the café yesterday." So, you're not going to get angry at them, you're going to give them the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps there's something they didn't understand



or you didn't understand about the situation that would give it a different meaning.

Mike says, "You can be magnanimous if you want to be." "To be magnanimous" is to be very kind, very forgiving, very generous. "The businesswoman gave a million dollars to her old university. It was a magnanimous gift," a generous one. Mike says, "I know an ethnic slur when I hear one." A "slur" (slur) is an insulting term or word, sort of like a swear word, but usually it's directed at a person. You're saying something about that person. An "ethnic slur" would be like the term "mick," an insulting term about someone from a particular group or country. A "racial slur" would be about someone's skin color.

Patti says, "It wasn't an ethnic slur. It wasn't the politically correct term, that's all." "Politically correct" is using words and language carefully so that you don't offend other people – to get other people mad at you. You often will change the words that we perhaps used to use to describe someone and use language that is less offensive to them. Some people use "politically correct" itself to be an insulting term, saying that people are being too careful not to be offensive. In any case, Patti says that Dan is "a little behind the times." "To be behind the times" is to be old-fashioned, to be outdated; someone who's not necessarily modern, who is not doing things appropriate for the current times – the current day.

Mike says, "Behind the times?! He'd have to live to 150 to catch up to the present!" "To catch up" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to reach the same position or place or level as other people are. If you are in school and you don't go to class for two weeks, you'll have to catch up to the other students. You'll have to work to get to the same level they are at.

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

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Mike: Behind the times?! He'd have to live to 150 to catch up to the present!

[end of dialogue]

I speak on behalf of everyone at ESL Podcast in thanking our scriptwriter today, Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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