



TOPICS

Ask an American: National Jukebox; using “to” with to give and to send; a dime a dozen; complimenting doctors and nurses

GLOSSARY

catalogue – a list of all the things one can see, have, or buy

* Before going to the clothing store, Mariah likes to look through the catalogue and see what’s for sale.

to trace the roots – to look back in history to the very beginning of something and understand how it started and how it has developed and changed over time

* This is a fascinating book that traces the roots of jazz in North America.

recording – a sound or image that has been saved on a tape or CD or as a digital file so that it can be heard or seen many times

* Pablo uses a recording of his daughter’s laugh as the ringtone for his cell phone.

to look back on – to think about something that happened in the past and reflect on it or analyze it in some way

* When you look back on your life, do you wish you had done things differently?

to depict – to show or describe something

* In this painting, the artist tried to depict what it feels like to be depressed.

taboo – something that is not allowed and is not accepted in society

* It used to be taboo for women to wear pants.

firsthand – a personal experience doing something, rather than hearing about it from someone else

* Did you hear her say that firsthand, or is it just a rumor?

vehicle – a tool, means, or way of getting or doing something

* Jose thinks French fries are a vehicle for eating ketchup.

imperative – very important; mandatory or required; not optional

* It is imperative that we get the client to sign this contract this week.



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to applaud – to clap one’s hands together in praise or admiration

* We applaud your professional contributions to developing the new vaccine.

dynamic – always changing and never the same

* The peace talks in the Middle East are dynamic and unpredictable.

archive – a place where a lot of things are stored, especially information or recordings

* If you visit the National Archives in Washington, D.C., you can view the original Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and other documents that played an important role in American history.

evolving – changing over time, becoming something else

* I don’t know who I’ll vote for yet. My opinions are still evolving.

to give – to deliver, put in the hands of, make a gift of, or otherwise pass something to a person

* Why did you give Lisee the last piece of cake when you knew I wanted it?

to send – to cause to go; to make something go

* How often do you send postcards to your nieces and nephews?

a dime a dozen – cheap; inexpensive; common; easy to get; not worth very much

* Writers are a dime a dozen, but *good* writers can be hard to find.



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Jukeboxes

The first jukeboxes were created in the 1890s, and were able to play only one song. In the late 1920s, technology improved so that the jukeboxes were able to change “records” (round disks that held recorded music) depending on what the user “selected” (picked; chose).

Over time, jukebox machines became smaller and could offer a “greater variety” (a wider selection; more types of something) of music. Jukeboxes also became more “ornate” (with a lot of decoration), with bright colors and lights.

As the sound quality also improved, jukeboxes became “increasingly” (more and more) popular and “profitable” (making money; with greater income than expenses) for the “establishments” (businesses) where they were placed, such as restaurants and bars.

Jukeboxes were most popular between the 1940s and 1950s. At that time, most new music was sent to jukeboxes and those machines were the best way for people to hear new music without commercials.

Today, people have many other options for listening to music, such as “portable music players” (devices that play music for one person and can be carried, like MP3 players). Jukeboxes are not as popular as they used to be, but they can still be found in bars, although most restaurants do not have jukeboxes anymore.

“Retro” (related to the past; trying to appear like something from the past) “50s diners” (restaurants with a 1950s theme and appearance) are one “notable” (worth paying attention to) exception, as many of those diners have old-fashioned jukeboxes. However, few or no modern jukeboxes use records. Instead, they are more likely to use CDs, DVDs, MP3 files, or even Internet connections to music databases.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 321.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 321. 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. You can find our ESL Podcast Store there, which has some additional premium courses in business and daily English that I think you will like. Speaking of liking, you can like our Facebook page. Go to [Facebook.com/eslpod](https://www.facebook.com/eslpod).

On this Café, we're going to have another one of our Ask an American segments, where we listen to other native speakers talking at a normal rate of speech – a normal speed. We'll listen to them and then explain what they're talking about. Today we're going to talk about American music and an interesting project called the National Jukebox. And, as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

Our topic on this Café is the National Jukebox Project. This is a project that is being developed and run by the Library of Congress. The Library of Congress is our national federal government library in Washington, D.C. It's a cooperation between the Library of Congress and Sony Music Entertainment, Sony being, of course, one of the largest music companies in the world. It's called the National Jukebox. A "jukebox" (jukebox – one word) is a large machine that plays music when you put money into it. You can still find jukeboxes at restaurants and bars. They used to be much more popular, however. When I was growing up almost every bar or café had a jukebox. You could put money into it and hear music, and it would play the records, because I'm old enough where when you had a jukebox they had little records inside, but now, of course, they have CDs and other digital media that play the music. Jukeboxes, as I said, are not as common as they used to be, but everyone still understands what the word means. The National Jukebox, then, is a collection of important recordings of American music.

We're going to start by listening to some people talk about the National Jukebox. We'll start by listening to Richard Story, who's one of the presidents at Sony Music Entertainment. We'll listen and then try to understand what he said. Let's listen:



[recording]

These catalogues contain a remarkable collection of recording treasures that trace the roots and development of American music. These are recordings of some of the most influential, most important artists ever.

[end of recording]

Richard begins by talking about catalogues. He says, “These catalogues contain a remarkable collection of recording treasures.” A “catalogue” (catalogue) is a list of all of the things that you can see or you can buy. When I was growing up, there were stores that would send you catalogues in the mail – they still do. But these catalogues would have a listing of all of the things you could buy from that store. A library catalogue lists all of the books in the library, a museum catalogue lists all of the pieces of art in a museum, and so forth. Well, this is a catalogue of recordings of music. Richard says that the catalogues for the National Jukebox “contain” or have a remarkable collection of recording treasures. When we say something is “remarkable” we mean it’s impressive; it’s noteworthy; it’s something important. He says that this National Jukebox – this collection – has a lot of important recordings.

These recordings trace the roots and development of American music. “To trace” (trace) can mean to draw, as on a piece of paper. Usually when you trace something you are copying something exactly. “Trace” can also mean to identify and show something, and that’s closer to the meaning here. He says these recordings can trace the roots (roots) and development of American music. The “roots” are the background or the place where something comes from, so “to trace the roots” means to look back in history to the very beginning and see how something started and how it developed – how it grew, how it changed. Richard says that these recordings – these “recording treasures,” he says, a “treasure” is something that is very valuable – these recording treasures trace the roots and development of American music. These are recordings of some of the most influential and important artists ever. A “recording,” is just, as you probably know, an audio or a video record of something. It’s a sound or sound and images that are saved on some sort of medium like a CD or a digital file or a cassette tape. These are things that can be heard and seen again. Our ESL Podcast and English Café episodes are MP3 recordings. In the same way, the National Jukebox has recordings of important musicians in the history of American music.

Let’s listen to Richard – Mr. Story – talk about this one more time.



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[recording]

These catalogues contain a remarkable collection of recording treasures that trace the roots and development of American music. These are recordings of some of the most influential, most important artists ever.

[end of recording]

Next we listen to a very famous American musician himself, Harry Connick, Jr. He's an American singer and composer. He's probably most famous for singing songs from the 40s, 50s, perhaps early 60s, what we sometimes call "standards." Harry Connick, Jr. has been a musician since he was a child. He talks about a time when he was a young boy and sat next to an older composer, a well-known musician by the name of Eubie Blake. Here's what he says about that day.

[recording]

I remember I was nine and he was around 95, 96 years old, and I'll never forget sitting next to him. I look back on it now and I realize, this guy wrote such significant music, not only musically but, you know, that song was pretty much the song that cleared away the taboo of any depiction of love between black people on screen or in music. But all I could think about at that age was looking at this guy's hands saying, "I've never seen hands that big," I mean the longest fingers you can imagine. I was lucky. I grew up with it firsthand. But you know I look at my kids and to know that they have a sort of a technological way, a vehicle to get these songs, is absolutely imperative and I applaud you all for doing that.

[end of recording]

Harry Connick, Jr. says that he remembers that he was nine years old and that Eubie Blake was 95 or 96 years old, almost 100 years older than Mr. Connick. He says that he'll never forget sitting next to Eubie Blake. He says that he looks back on it now, and he realizes that this guy wrote such significant music. "To look back on (something)" means to reflect or to think about something that happened in the past, to analyze it or interpret it in some way. Harry says that he looks back on it and realizes this guy – this man – wrote such significant or important music, "not only musically but, you know, that song was pretty much the song that cleared away the taboo of any depiction of love between black people on screen or in music." The song he's talking about is "I'm Just Wild



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About Harry,” which Eubie Blake performed with Harry Connick, Jr. when he was a boy.

Harry says this song was the first song that depicted love between black people that was accepted by society. “To depict” (depict) means to show or describe something. This song depicts love between African American or black people, but previously, before this song, there had been a taboo on music about love between black people. Something that is “taboo” (taboo) is not allowed or accepted in society. So this song was important, because it broke the taboo. That is, it said okay, I’m not going to worry about that. Harry says, “the song cleared away the taboo of any depiction of love between black people on screen or in music.” “On screen” would be in the movies or on television – or now, I guess, on your phone or computer, but normally “on screen” refers to movies.

Harry says that all I could think about at that age, meaning when he was a child, was looking at this guy’s hands saying, “I’ve never seen hands that big,’ I mean the longest fingers you can imagine.” So when he was a child, of course he wasn’t thinking about the important music that Eubie Blake had written, but rather he was fascinated by the size of this famous composer and musician’s hands.

He says that he was lucky, or fortunate. He grew up with that music firsthand. When you experience something “firsthand” (one word) we mean you have a personal experience of it, you don’t hear about it from someone else. Someone who has experienced the birth of a child firsthand has been there at the birth. If you haven’t been there, and you’ve heard about it, we would say you’ve heard about it “secondhand,” meaning you didn’t personally experience it yourself. I probably will never have firsthand experience climbing to the top of the world’s tallest mountain, Mount Everest; I have secondhand experience by watching it sitting on my couch and looking at the television.

Harry Connick, Jr., however, did have firsthand knowledge. He says, “I grew up with it firsthand, but you know I look at my kids and to know that they have a sort of technological way, a vehicle to get these songs, is absolutely imperative and I applaud you all for doing that.” Let’s step back here and begin where he says, “I look at my kids,” and he says he knows that they (his children) have a sort of technological way (a manner; a method involving technology), a vehicle to get these songs. A “vehicle” here means a manner or a method, a way of doing something, a system. The word “vehicle” is normally a word we use to describe a car – an automobile, but it can also be a tool or a way of doing something, and that’s what it means here. The Internet is an important vehicle for communicating and sharing ideas.



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At the end of this quote, Harry says that it's absolutely imperative that this technology – this vehicle exist. When we say "absolutely," he means completely; it's a way of emphasizing. Something that is "imperative" (imperative) is something that is extremely important, something that must happen. Harry believes that the National Jukebox Project is imperative; it's necessary because it gives children a chance to hear this music – not just children, but all of us. He therefore "applauds," or claps his hands – he appreciates, is what he means, everyone who is working on the National Jukebox Project. If someone says, "I applaud your good works," or, "I applaud your victory," they mean that they appreciate it; they congratulate you for something.

Now let's listen to Harry say all that again.

[recording]

I remember I was nine and he was around 95, 96 years old, and I'll never forget sitting next to him. I look back on it now and I realize, this guy wrote such significant music, not only musically but, you know, that song was pretty much the song that cleared away the taboo of any depiction of love between black people on screen or in music. But all I could think about at that age was looking at this guy's hands saying, "I've never seen hands that big," I mean the longest fingers you can imagine. I was lucky. I grew up with it firsthand. But you know I look at my kids and to know that they have a sort of a technological way, a vehicle to get these songs, is absolutely imperative and I applaud you all for doing that.

[end of recording]

Our third and final audio clip is from Gene DeAnna, who is the head of – or the leader, the boss – of the Library of Congress' Recorded Sound Section. The Library has different parts – different sections. He's the one who is associated with this National Jukebox Project. Let's listen:

[recording]

We think the jukebox is dynamic, it's an evolving archive of historic sound and we want to grow it to include tens of thousands of more recordings in the next few years.

[end of recording]



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Gene says the jukebox is dynamic. When something is “dynamic” (dynamic) we mean it is always changing; it is never the same. They’re always adding new recordings to the National Jukebox, and so it is always changing. Gene says that the Jukebox is an archive of historic sound. An “archive” (archive) is a place where things are stored. They could be old records, old pieces of paper, old books; or it could be a digital archive, where you have electronic copies of things. “Archives” are for things that are old that you usually aren’t using very much anymore.

This is an archive of historic sound. It’s a collection that is evolving. “To evolve” (evolve) means to change over time, to develop. We get the word “evolution” from the verb “to evolve.” “Evolution” typically refers to the theories of Charles Darwin, the notion that our species or that all species evolve or change over time. But other things can evolve; other things change, develop, and grow, and that’s what is happening with the National Jukebox Project. Gene says that we want to grow it – notice he uses the verb here meaning we want to make it bigger or increase it – to include tens of thousands of more recordings in the next few years.

Let’s listen to Gene say all this one more time.

[recording]

We think the jukebox is dynamic, it’s an evolving archive of historic sound and we want to grow it to include tens of thousands of more recordings in the next few years.

[end of recording]

If you want to learn more about the National Jukebox Project in the U.S., and listen to some of these historic American recordings, you can go to www.loc.gov/jukebox (jukebox).

Now let’s answer some of your questions.

Our first question comes from two listeners: Mario (Mario) in Italy and Gülnaz (Gülnaz) in Turkey. Both have questions about using the preposition “to” (to) with the verbs “give” and “send.” “To give,” you probably know, means to deliver or to put in the hands of someone else. It can also mean to make a gift of



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something. “To send” means to cause something to go: “I will send an email.” “I will send a letter.” “I will send my brother to the store to buy some milk.”

In English, the verbs “give” and “send” often take what we call a direct object, as well as an indirect object. Now if you remember from your grammar classes, a direct object is something that usually answers the question “what” or “who.” “I gave a gift to my brother.” What did I give to my brother? I gave a gift. It’s the thing that was given. It, you could say, receives the action of the verb directly. An indirect object is the person, typically, to whom something is given in this example. I gave what? The gift. To whom? To my brother. “My brother” is the indirect object. Well, I have eight brothers, so one of them is the indirect object! So in the first example, the indirect object comes after the preposition “to.” I could also say, “Send the letters to my brother,” or, “I will send some money to my daughter” – if I had a daughter, which I don’t! So, that’s using the proposition “to.”

Now, you can also use the indirect object without a “to,” but only when it comes immediately after the verb. Let’s go back to our first example: “I give a gift to my brother.” I could also say, “I give my brother a gift,” no “to.” You don’t use the word “to” (to), the preposition, forming a prepositional phrase when the indirect object comes immediately after the verb, even before the direct object. We often use this in command forms, what are called imperatives: “Give me the remote control for the television, you’re driving me crazy.” “Give the cat some food and tell it never to come back here again.” Those are examples where the indirect object comes immediately after the verb, and therefore there is no preposition “to.”

The meaning of the two sentences, with the preposition “to” or without it, is exactly the same. It’s more, I suppose, a matter of emphasis, what you are trying to give the most attention to. Whatever comes last is emphasized a little bit more than what comes in the middle, though this can change in English based on the way you say something: “Give *me* the remote control.” Or, “Give me the *remote control*.” In the first example, I’m emphasizing “me,” meaning give it to me, not my wife. In the second example I’m emphasizing the thing that is being given; give me the remote control, not another beer. Although another beer would be nice, too!

Sounds simple, right? Wrong. As with many things in the world of grammar there are exceptions to the rule. One exception, important exception, is that when you have a phrase inside another sentence sometimes the word order – the order of the words: the subject, verb, direct object, indirect object – change.



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And then, you get some different rules that become important and are different than the general rule I just gave you. So, let's look in a...at an example – if I can talk, too many beers! Uh, just kidding. I'm not actually drinking beer while I am recording the podcast. I do that before I record the podcast. No, just kidding. I drink rum, not beer!

So, uh, where were we? Yes, right. So, “give” and “send.”

If you have a phrase inside of a sentence sometimes the word order changes. For example: “Now we'll answer some of the questions that you have sent us.” Now we'll answer some of the questions. What kind of questions? Well, we have a phrase that tells you what kind of questions: the questions that you have sent us. I could also say, “Now we will answer some of the questions that you have sent *to* us.” There, you can either use the “to” or not use the “to.” Why? Because it is what we call an embedded phrase, a phrase that is put inside the sentence, and those have slightly different rules. Another example: “I can't find the present you gave me.” “I can't find the present you gave *to* me.” The phrase “you gave me/you gave *to* me” is inside of the larger sentence, which is “I can't find the present,” and therefore you can use the “to” or not use the “to.”

The verb “to say” is not like the verb “to give” or the verb “to send” with this pattern. When you use the verb “say” you have to use the preposition “to.” “What did you say to me?” “Don't say that to me.” You can't ever say, “He said me,” no, “He said to me.” All clear? Good.

Roberto (Roberto) in Brazil wants to know the meaning of a couple of idioms that he has heard or read. One of them is “a dime a dozen.” The expression “a dime (dime) a dozen” means very cheap, easy to get. It could also mean not worth very much. It could be, and often is used to describe something in a negative way. “Beautiful blondes here in Hollywood are a dime a dozen. They're everywhere.” That's not exactly true, but some people think that. A “dime,” of course, is 10 American cents, and that's not very much – not today, anyway.

There are other expressions related to money – other idioms related to money. Maybe we'll talk about those in a future Café.

Finally, and quickly, Xiomara (Xiomara) in the Dominican Republic wants to know what you would say to a doctor or a nurse if, for example, they gave you an injection – they gave you a shot – and you wanted to say something nice to them like “that didn't hurt very much.” What could you say?



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In that situation, you could say, “That shot didn’t feel too bad,” or, “I barely felt that.” “Barely” means just a little bit, almost not at all. Or you could say, “I hardly felt that.” You are complimenting the nurse or the doctor for giving an injection that didn’t hurt you very much – though usually it hurts me, so I never compliment them. The best expression here would probably be something like “Oh, that wasn’t too bad,” or, “That wasn’t as bad as I expected.”

Notice in English when we say “that was not too bad” we mean that it was actually good, and when you say “that’s not good” we mean that it is actually bad. Who says English isn’t perfectly logical?

If you have a perfectly logical question, you can email it to us. You can email us your question at eslpod@eslpod.com.

From Los Angeles, California, I’m Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again here on the English Café.

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