

Chatterbox #228 – NIMBYism

Episode description

Has there been a real estate development that you approve of but ... Just as long as they don't build it in your neighbourhood? That's an example of NIMBYism. What is it exactly? Join Andrew and Morag as they tell you all about it!

Fun fact

There is an interesting phenomenon in China and other places called nail houses. That is when the owner of a house refuses to sell it to a development company, and so the company builds its new project around the house. If ever you see a single house in the middle of a highway or just one house with an entire apartment complex built around it, that's a nail house! They're also called holdouts.

Expressions included in the study guide

- High stakes
- NIMBYism
- To be for [something]
- A demographic
- To jam [something] down [someone's] throat
- A leaning



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: You're listening to the Culips English Podcast. To download the study guide for this episode, which includes the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-world examples, and a quiz, visit our website, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Hey, everybody, my name is Andrew.

Morag: And my name is Morag.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Hey, Morag.

Morag: Hey, Andrew, what's up?

Andrew: Not too much, how about you? What's new?

Morag: I'm doing really well, but I have a new morning hobby that's kind of taking up a lot of my time.

Andrew: A morning hobby, I'm intrigued. Is it meditation or yoga or exercise or something like that?

Morag: No, it's just really particular coffee.

Andrew: Really particular coffee, OK.

Morag: Yeah, so I started dating someone who is really, really into, like, naturally processed, expensive coffees, and they're amazing. But they're, like, oh my god, sometimes they can just taste like fruit and they're wonderful to drink black and, oh my gosh, it's like good wine or something. But the downside is that the beans are expensive and if you make them wrong, they can taste awful.

Andrew: **High stakes** coffee.

- Morag: Very little margin for error. So you have to do things like, well, say this morning I was like, hey, Andrew, I really wanna make a coffee. I need like 10, 15 minutes because you have to go weigh out the beans to a two-decimal accuracy and then, like, grind them perfectly and then do the whole setup, make sure you have a correct temperature of water and then it's, like, a timed pouring thing going on, and then you can maybe drink your coffee.
- Andrew: So are you pouring the water over the beans with, like, a filter and such?
- Morag: Yeah, doing filter.
- Andrew: OK, OK. Wow.
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: And where do the beans come from?
- Morag: These ones are Columbian, I believe, but I'd say Ethiopia's great, Kenya's great. Yeah, I'm still just kind of getting into it, but, warning to everyone, once you start drinking coffee like this, it's really hard to go back.
- Andrew: I was recently in Tokyo for just one day when I was on a layover, and I had a couple of hours so I went into the city. And I found a shop that specialized in coffee gadgets and I totally geeked out and wanted to buy everything. Like, all the little gizmos and filters and pouring pots, you name it, they had it there. So I can see how this hobby can get quite involved, I think.
- Morag: Interestingly enough, pretty much all of the main pots and your pouring devices and this kind of stuff, and your grinders, almost all of that comes from Japan.
- Andrew: Right, yeah, big coffee culture over there, except, surprisingly, sometimes hard to find a cafe. Weirdly enough.
- Morag: This is the weird thing that I've heard, it's everything comes from there, like all the like the Chemexs and all of the pour-over stuff and all the grinders. But, yeah, I've heard it's really actually difficult to find this type of coffee there.
- Andrew: Indeed, indeed. Well, Morag, I hope that your new hobby goes well and you don't spend too much money on it.
- Morag: Thank you, I know, just a couple hundred bucks, it's fine.

Andrew: Anyway, we're going to change the subject completely for this Chatterbox episode. For all of our listeners that don't know, Chatterbox is the series where we have a totally natural conversation about a topic that we think is interesting and we let everyone listen in. And the idea is that you can really get a sense for how native speakers talk about a specific topic in English. And today our topic is **NIMBYism**.

But just before we get started talking about **NIMBYism**, I wanna let everyone know that we do have a study guide available for this episode on our website. It contains a lot of great things that are designed to help you take your English to the next level, really, including a transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, and examples. There's a quiz, there are prompts that you can use for writing practice or speaking practice. Like I said, we are really proud of this product and we think you will like it too. And if you wanna check it out, just visit our website, Culips.com, to give it a download.

So, Morag, I think we should start by defining **NIMBYism**. This is a very interesting turn of phrase: **NIMBYism**. And, actually, you asked me what it meant at the start of the episode.

Morag: Yeah, I did.

Andrew: So, do you remember?

Morag: So it is an acronym that stands for "not in my backyard" -ism.

Andrew: Right, not in my backyard. And the suffix "-ism" means a belief or an ideology, right? You can think of communism or Buddhism, OK? So this is **NIMBYism**. So the belief that something should not be in my backyard and here backyard really doesn't mean like the area behind your house, it means more like in your community, right?

Morag: Yeah, your community, your general area within a city, your neighbourhood.

Andrew: And so people that buy into the idea of **NIMBYism**, or not in my backyard-ism, are opposed to something being built in their neighbourhood. And, actually, when I looked on Wikipedia, there was a massive list of things that people get opposed to and I'm gonna list a lot of them off here really quickly, OK?

Andrew: So: housing development; bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure; skyscrapers; homeless shelters; oil wells; chemical plants; industrial parks; military bases; fracking; wind turbines; desalinization plants; landfill sites; incinerators; power plants; quarries; prisons; pubs; adult entertainment clubs; concert venues; firearms dealers; mobile phone masts; electricity pylons; abortion clinics; children's homes; nursing homes; youth hostels; sports stadiums; shopping malls; retail parks; railways; roads; airports; seaports; nuclear waste repositories; storage for weapons of mass destruction; cannabis dispensaries; recreational cannabis shops; and the accommodation of persons applying for asylum, refugees of war, and displaced persons.

I hope you caught all that.

Morag: Yeah, I would actually like to add one to that list, which is one that I'm more personally familiar with, which is safe injection sites.

Andrew: Safe injection sites. That is a good Canadian example, I think.

Morag: It's a good Western Canadian example of what happened in Vancouver, specifically. There's a large drug problem and people wanted people to be safer, even if they're addicted to intravenous drugs. And a) they want them to be safer because they're gonna do it anyway and also not be doing it on the streets for various reasons. So everyone **was totally for places**, buildings, areas where people could inject drugs safely, but no one wanted to have that location be anywhere near their own home. So that is exactly **NIMBYism**.

Andrew: Exactly. So the residents of that neighbourhood where the safe injection site was proposed to be built, they were like, "Yeah, this is a great idea, we can help people who suffer from drug addiction. However, we don't really want it built in our neighbourhood. Go build it somewhere else." Because the negative consequences that could possibly arise from building it in their neighbourhood scared them and concerned them. So they thought it was a good idea, but not in my backyard. Please and thank you.

Morag: Exactly, but it's also like, man, we need an airport, oh god, I don't want to live next to the airport, you know?

Andrew: Right, you don't want planes flying over your house every 5 minutes.

Morag: But you would love an airport.

Andrew: So, Morag, the reason that I thought we'd talk about **NIMBYism** here is because there is a great example of it that just played out in my hometown of Kelowna, British Columbia. There was a big protest in front of city hall because of this issue. And it was a protest by senior citizens, which is interesting 'cause it's a **demographic** that you don't really see out on the street with signs, marching around city hall protesting, right?

Morag: I don't think I've ever seen that.

Andrew: There was probably about 50 people in front of city hall, and they were protesting because in a neighbourhood that a lot of senior citizens—and senior citizen is a person that's 65 years or older—in a neighbourhood where a lot of senior citizens live, the city would like to build a housing shelter for people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.

And the main problem that the senior citizens have an issue with is that the housing complex will be a wet facility, a wet facility. And this means that drugs and alcohol aren't banned, so that they would be allowed to bring these substances into their housing unit. And what the seniors fear is that this will cause an increase of potentially dangerous criminals in the neighbourhood, drug dealers or overdoses or drug paraphernalia in the neighbourhood. So this was the issue, which I can sympathize with, I guess. I can see both sides of the story. But, Morag, I actually have a little audio clip here that I wanted to play for our listeners of one of the protesters. So let's take a listen to him now.

Protester: It's gonna be a wet facility in a seniors-oriented neighbourhood, and our neighbours are already scared. I live in a co-op society, which is going to be right beside it, and I don't agree with having it as a wet facility and only having two security, 24 hours. That's not enough, it's gonna harm the neighbourhood. People are upset about it, and we just wanna bring out the word that this **was jammed down our throats**, more or less.

Andrew: OK, Morag, so that man was concerned because he thinks this project is just **being jammed down the throats** of the senior citizens. That's the quote that he said, "This is **being jammed down our throats**." Could you let our listeners know what this expression means, **to jam something down someone's throat**?

Morag: Well, **to jam something down anyone's throat or someone's throat** is to force them to deal with something or a situation that they do not approve of. So it is without their consent.

Andrew: Yeah, without their consent, without their consultation. Just doing it against their will. That it's being forced upon them.

Morag: I guess it's like, guess what, you're eating this. We're not talking about it anymore.

Andrew: Right.

Morag: It's kind of this strange mental image that I have, at least.

Andrew: Totally, totally. I think of maybe a prisoner that's being force-fed or something like that. It's kind of a gross image. Anyways, it is what it is.

Morag: It is a saying in English, so there we go.

Andrew: So a lot of these protesters outside of city hall were carrying signs that said, "Right project, wrong place." And I think this summarizes **NIMBYism** in a nutshell. They realize that homelessness is a problem, drug addiction is a problem, they wanna have this problem eliminated, but they're not willing to sacrifice their neighbourhood to solve the problem.

Morag: The thing that gets me about this stuff is that it's a perceived sacrifice. It's also one of those things where I think it displays an incredible lack of empathy, because it's, like, what are you giving up potentially and what have the people who are set to benefit from this, how much has been taken from them?

Andrew: I definitely understand that point of view and, yeah, absolutely, this is a vulnerable community that you wanna help. At the same time, I think these seniors have lived in Kelowna for a long time and they've seen the government screw up many projects and so they think if the government, if this is their track record of not carrying out projects very well, then they might screw up in our neighbourhood too. And if they do, the consequences could be big.

One of the things that the seniors were saying, as well, was that they're worried about their property value declining. And if their property value declines, that's kind of their legacy, they were planning on passing these properties down to their children once they move on into the next world. And so it's a complicated issue, I don't really know how to feel about it.

Morag: I have pretty strong socialist **leanings**, so I'm like, oh, people who have a lot of things would like to keep on having a lot of things, which means the people who have nothing can continue to have nothing. Share the things!

Andrew: I think that might be an ideal solution in my view, as well.

- Morag: But it is difficult. It's one of those things where it's very natural if you have been in a place for some time or you have even struggled to attain something for yourself, when that's threatened, you feel like it's a loss, even if you would agree that the basis behind what's happening is good, you know? People don't, in many areas of life, people don't really like change, especially when they're comfortable.
- Andrew: Totally.
- Morag: And that's a very natural and human and not evil or mean thing, cruel thing to feel. It's just I personally think it's something that should be fought against, that level of comfort. It's also very much something up for discussion or debate.
- Andrew: Now, Morag, you mentioned just before we started recording that you got into an argument with your mother over **NIMBYism**. Do you care to talk about that briefly?
- Morag: Sure. So the last time I was out visiting my mom, we went on, like, a nice long walk and we're chatting about things. And one of them was, in Victoria, there have been a lot of issues in the last few years with homeless people not being able to camp in public parks and spaces. They used to be able to camp in a lot of different parks, but the homeless population has been growing a lot and there are now more people and they were shut out of many of the spaces that they used to camp out overnight in.
- Andrew: Right, right.
- Morag: So there's a group of people, they're trying to find a space where they can camp and live. But there are some problems associated with them being in a particular space for any length of time, notably like drug paraphernalia and crime rates going up around there. Not usually with the people living there, but because the people coming in and, like, trying to sell to people who live in these spaces and that kinda thing.
- Andrew: Right.
- Morag: Anyways, so you have this whole thing and this group of people were going all around and actually trying to, like, pay to be able to camp in a space, go into provincial parks and camp in spaces that are, like, outside of regular camping grounds and stuff. But they were being removed from everywhere, even if they had the funds to pay for a spot. This just seems completely ridiculous to me.

- Morag: And what my mother said was that she feels extremely bad for these people and believes that they should absolutely have outreach and homes and help, but that Victoria's a very expensive city and maybe they should go somewhere else because it's unreasonable to think that you can live here if you don't have enough money.
- Andrew: Right. And one of the reasons that Victoria actually has a higher homeless population is because the weather is mild. So it attracts people that don't wanna live in a freezing cold city during the winter. You can imagine if you're homeless that could be a life or death situation, really.
- Morag: It is literally a life or death situation if you're somewhere like, well, basically anywhere other than certain parts of BC. So there really isn't anywhere else.
- Andrew: Right.
- Morag: You really can't go anywhere else. It's also if you're even low income, it can be very, very difficult to move; it can be very expensive to move. You need to get a new job and all this stuff, you know, and sometimes you don't have enough money to move to somewhere else that's cheaper.
- So we got into a long argument because I just thought that, while true that it's not feasible to change the housing economy in a place because you think that there's a group of people that should be accommodated, it's also completely unreasonable to say that this whole patch of the world is off-limits just because you don't have enough money. Especially if it's one of the only places that you can be to survive.
- Andrew: Yeah, it's interesting that both of the examples that we brought up about **NIMBYism**, they're both surrounding homelessness, right? And we recently did a Culips episode about this topic, it's a really big issue in Canada these days, homelessness and how we can tackle this problem.
- Morag: I think especially in the areas that we're from in BC, like lower BC. It's a really, really large issue. Although I've definitely heard of people opposing the kind of industrial production that you mentioned earlier, it's similar, you know, you want generally to be able to have something, have a new service, have energy, but you don't want to live right next to something that's belting smoke.
- Andrew: Totally. And I guess the pipeline in Canada might be another example of **NIMBYism**, too, but perhaps we can save talking about the oil pipelines in Canada for another episode, because that's another huge topic.
- Morag: That's a big one, yeah.

Andrew: Anyways, we'll leave it at that for today, I think. But thank you for listening, everyone. And I'm sure there are some examples of **NIMBYism** where you live, as well, and perhaps they are specialized to the issues that you encounter in your country. So I would love it if you could send us an email and share some of the examples of **NIMBYism** that you see around you. The place you wanna send your email is our inbox, that address is contact@Culips.com.

Once again, our website is Culips.com and that's the place where you can get the study guide for this episode. And, finally, we are on social media, as well, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, everywhere. Just search for the Culips English Podcast and you will be sure to find us.

We'll be back soon with another new episode and we'll talk to you then.
Bye, everyone.

Morag: Goodbye.

Detailed Explanations

High stakes

Adjective

High stakes is when there is potentially a lot to win but also a lot to lose. In this episode, Andrew says that Morag makes **high stakes** coffee. This is because if she doesn't make it well, it will be a big waste of money. But if she does make it well, it will be amazing and well worth it.

Here are a couple more examples with **high stakes**:

Gary:	Hey, do you want to come to Atlanta with us next weekend?
Eddie:	Sorry, I have plans. I'll be playing in a high stakes poker tournament.
Gary:	High stakes ? What do you mean?
Eddie:	The entry fee is \$10,000.
Gary:	What? That's crazy! Why would you even risk that amount of money?
Eddie:	Because I can potentially win \$2,000,000!
Gary:	Oh, wow. I hope you're good at it.

Aman:	John? Can you help me with—
John:	Wait a second. I'm watching soccer, and there's a high stakes penalty shot coming up.
Aman:	OK. Why is it so important?
John:	If my team scores, they win the championship. If the goaltender saves it, my team loses. I'm so nervous.

NIMBYism

Noun

NIMBY stands for “not in my backyard.” The “-ism” relates to a belief or ideology. Taking both parts together, **NIMBYism** is the belief that something should not be allowed in your community. One of the examples given in the episode is how airports are important for a city, but no one really wants to live close to an airport.

Here are a couple more examples with **NIMBYism**:

Reporter:	Senator, why do you oppose the building of a sewage treatment plant in your own city?
Senator:	Because it is dirty, and the people do not want it.
Reporter:	But last year you voted to build a new one across the state. How do you justify that?
Senator:	The two situations are completely different.
Report:	Sir, is this just a case of NIMBYism ?

Lyle:	Didn't I see your wife on the news the other day?
Enrique:	Yeah. A reporter was asking her questions about the construction of a new factory in town.
Lyle:	She's opposed to the idea, right? I thought she supports new industry.
Enrique:	She does. But this factory is going to pollute the air and water in our neighbourhood.
Lyle:	Ah, I see. It's her NIMBYism coming through.

To be for [something]

Idiom

To be for [something] is to support the idea of something. For example, instead of saying “I support workers’ rights” or “I’m in favour of workers’ rights,” a very common way of saying the same thing is “**I’m for workers’ rights.**”

Here are a couple more examples with **to be for [something]**:

Carrie:	Who do you like in the upcoming election?
Mike:	You know, I like Patterson. He’s a smart guy, and he’s strongly for women’s rights in the workplace. I think that’s important.
Carrie:	I like him too. I’m for anybody who’s for women’s rights.
Mike:	There’s a campaign rally on the weekend. Wanna go?

Flynn:	Yo, we’re ordering pizza in a few minutes. What toppings would you like?
Henri:	Can you put some broccoli on it?
Flynn:	What? Broccoli on a pizza?
Henri:	Oh, yeah. I’m all for it. It’s the best. You should try it—seriously!

A demographic

Noun

A demographic is a specific sector of the population. The example used in this episode is of senior citizens. Senior citizens as a group share a lot of the same concerns and needs. The same goes for certain minorities, single mothers, teenagers, people with disabilities, white men between the ages of 35 and 50, or any other group who have things in common. These are all examples of **demographics**.

Here are a couple more examples with **a demographic**:

Aaron: The company needs to expand our market share. Any ideas?

Sid: It looks like we're underperforming in the 18-to-25 **demographic**. Maybe we should look into a new Instagram campaign.

Aaron: That's a good idea. I'll tell Marketing about it.

Tricia: I would like it if we could hire more teachers at the school.

Bethany: I'm sorry, but that's not possible.

Tricia: Why not?

Bethany: Because the **demographics** show that there are fewer and fewer new students registering every year. Soon we will even have to let go of some teachers.

To jam [something] down [someone's] throat

Idiom

To jam [something] down [someone's] throat is to force someone to do something. Think of animals who have tubes shoved into their mouths and are force-fed. It's probably not something they want to do. The same thing goes for humans, but it's not necessarily about food. The expression usually refers to forcing something in general that someone doesn't want to do.

Here are a couple more examples with **to jam [something] down [someone's] throat**:

Rita:	What's up? You look frustrated.
Yuri:	I am. I'm really opposed to this idea the boss is trying to jam down our throats .
Rita:	Which one?
Yuri:	How we will have to work on Saturdays.
Rita:	It's for extra pay, right?
Yuri:	Yes, but nobody likes this idea. The boss will force us no matter what.

Felicia:	Our son is having difficulty with his math homework again.
Lance:	I told him so many times. He should go back to the academy so he can receive the properly tutoring.
Felicia:	But he hates it there. You can't just jam it down his throat . He needs to want to go.
Lance:	Then I should tutor him on weekends when I have time. Do you think that will work?
Felicia:	We'll give it a try.

A leaning

Noun

A leaning is a kind of opinion that you have or a tendency to do something. In this episode, Morag says she has pretty strong socialist **leanings**. That means that when it comes to politics, Morag is rather socialist in her opinions. She leans towards a certain way of thinking. The word **leaning** is almost always plural because we usually have several opinions on various topics.

Here are a couple more examples with **a leaning**:

Talib:	I like this new mayoral candidate. She's got some fresh ideas.
Wendy:	I don't know much about her. What kind of political leanings does she have?
Talib:	She's left wing on most social issues.
Wendy:	Oh, that's good. I'll have to check out her website.

Linda:	How does your daughter like her new school?
Jiyeon:	She loves it!
Linda:	Oh, that's so nice to hear.
Jiyeon:	They have a great sports program and, with her strong athletic leanings , she's enjoying all the clubs and activities she can join.

Quiz

1. What does high stakes mean?

- a) high risk, low reward
- b) high risk, high reward
- c) great rewards
- d) low risk, high reward

2. Which of the following is a good example of being for something?

- a) Anchovies are disgusting.
- b) I'd die without peanut butter.
- c) I don't mind tomatoes.
- d) I'd rather not have salt.

3. Which example of NIMBYism is not discussed in this episode?

- a) safe injection sites
- b) shelter for the homeless
- c) human rights for migrant workers
- d) camping areas for the homeless

4. True or false? Something that is jammed down someone's throat is sometimes a welcomed thing.

- a) true
- b) false

5. What is a leaning?

- a) the direction of the wind
- b) a kind of physical activity
- c) a kind of newspaper
- d) a point of view

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. What are your opinions on NIMBYism? Should there be areas for rich people and areas for poorer people?
2. What is something that could come to your neighbourhood that would force you to move away immediately?
3. We all belong to certain demographics. Which demographics do you belong to?
4. Is there a demographic you identify with more than others?
5. How would you characterize your political leanings?

Quiz Answers

1.b 2.b 3.c 4.b 5.d

Episode credits

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