

Pizza Parlor

AD-FREE

Episode description

In this week's bonus episode, Andrew talks about a cool aspect of big city life and shares some stories about what he did last week. Along the way, he teaches you some useful English vocabulary like **to congregate**, **to pass the baton**, and **to be taken aback**.

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Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: According to the website, our worldendata.com, over 55% of the world lives in big cities. And in places like Western Europe, the Americas, Australia, Japan, and the Middle East, that number is more like 80%. So that means that there's a pretty good chance that many of you who are listening right now live in a big city or an urban area that's close to a big city. I myself come from a medium-sized city, well at least for Canadian standards. My hometown, Kelowna, has a population of around 150,000 people. But now I live in Seoul, and Seoul is considered a mega city, with a population of around 10 million people just in the city itself and then there are millions more in the smaller cities surrounding it. Now there's a lot of pros and cons to living in a big city, but at least in my opinion, one of the advantages is all of the different amenities city life has to offer.

My name's Andrew and you're listening to bonus episode number 43 of the Culips English Podcast. Thank you so much for clicking play and joining me here for an English study session. Today, I'm going to tell you a story from my life about what I got up to last week, and interestingly enough, it's related to big city life. And then towards the end of the episode, I'm going to teach you about an interesting and useful English expression that you'll hear me use when I'm telling my story.

One of the advantages of living in a big city is that they're home to many different types of people. I did a little research and according to the Korean Statistical Information Service, wow that's a mouthful, Seoul is around 98% homogeneous. And that means that 98% of the population in Seoul is made up of Korean people. So that means there's a huge majority of Korean people compared to non-Korean people who live here. But when you consider just how many people actually reside in Seoul, well then even that 2% turns out to be a big number. And that means that there are a lot of people, and I'm one of them, who are non-Koreans that live in this city. Now from what I could find online, there are at

least over 250,000 registered foreigners living in Seoul. And when I think about that number, that's huge. That's almost double the size of my whole hometown back in Canada.

Now of course the number of people that make up the foreigner group are extremely diverse as well. There are migrant workers, international students, and even marriage migrants, people who got married to a Korean person and now live here. Anyways, in most big cities around the world, there tend to be neighborhoods where people of a particular ethnic background congregate or hang out. Congregate. I just said they congregate or hang out. Do you know that verb? Do you know what it means? To congregate means to come together as a group. So, for example, many big cities around the world have a Chinatown. I know in Canada, at least there are Chinatowns in Victoria and Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal, and probably other cities as well. And speaking of Montreal, when I lived there, I lived right beside a neighborhood called Little Italy, which was traditionally an area where Italian immigrants settled, and it's still home to a lot of people with Italian roots, and it's home to Italian restaurants, and grocery stores, and cafes, that kind of thing. And then of course, in LA, there's K-town and Little Tokyo, which are places where people from Korean and Japanese backgrounds settled and established homes and businesses. And even when I was back in Vancouver recently, I visited the Punjabi Market, which is an area of the city that's also known as Little India. And it's a place where South Asian, Indo-Canadian, and Punjabi people have homes and businesses.

Now personally, I love visiting neighborhoods like these because it's almost like you get to travel without leaving your country. You can go to a neighborhood like this and hear a different language. You can have a different sensory experience, right? You maybe get to try a different kind of food than you're used to or smell different smells than you're used to. And you also get exposed to a culture that's different from your own and you don't even have to leave your country. It's amazing. Well, here in Seoul there are some

neighborhoods just like this as well, and two of them in particular that I am most familiar with. Korean people who are listening right now will undoubtedly know the two areas that I'm talking about. They're called Itaewon and Haebangchon.

Now interestingly enough, they're really close together, and you can walk between the two neighborhoods really easily. And I'm not an expert on the subject, but from what I've heard from some friends, after the Korean War there was an American military base near Itaewon, and because of this many businesses popped up to cater to the American soldiers who often visited the area. Now back in the day, I heard that it was a rather wild place. And because of this, for a long time, the neighborhood had a kind of bad reputation. But over time, things gradually started to change and improve. And more businesses who catered to foreigners, or who were actually operated by foreigners, were established in that neighborhood. Now, presently, I actually do live fairly close to Itaewon. It's not too far away, but I don't visit too often. When I do though, it seems to me like these days, there are a lot of restaurants and businesses run by people with a middle Eastern background. But when I go to the neighboring neighborhood, the neighboring neighborhood, which is called Haebangchon, or as many English speakers in Korea call it, HBC, in HBC, there seems to be a bit more diversity in the kinds of businesses that are operating there. It's almost like HBC is a kind of Little America in a way. Just like there's Little Tokyo and Little Italy and Little India in some North American cities. It's been a minute since I have visited HBC, but I do go there occasionally. I enjoy it when I go there. There are some nice restaurants and cafes, and my wife actually enjoys visiting HBC as well. Plus, and this is a bonus for me, HBC is really close to a little mountain in the center of the city called Namsan, and I enjoy walking up that mountain, so sometimes I can convince my wife to go on a little hike with me up Namsan if we visit HBC after and I buy her lunch or a coffee, something like that.

Anyways, there is a very popular pizza parlor in HBC that we sometimes like to visit. Have you ever heard of somebody called a pizza restaurant, a pizza parlor? That's kind of a fun

expression, isn't it? A pizza parlor is just another name for a restaurant that serves pizza. So, there's a nice pizza parlor in HBC, but there's one problem with this pizza restaurant and it doesn't have to do with the food or the service, both of those are good, but it has to do with the restaurant's popularity. We've tried visiting this restaurant several times, but we've had to give up and visit somewhere else because there are huge lines of people waiting to go in to get some of that delicious pizza.

Well, recently I learned that this pizza parlor opened up a second location and it's on the other side of the city in an area called Songpa or Songpa-Gu. And it just so happens that the pizza place happens to be almost perfectly in the middle of where my wife and I live and also where my in-laws live. It also happens to be that one of my favorite foods is pizza. Did you know that about me? I love pizza. And pizza is also one of my mother-in-law's favorite foods. So, we have that in common. Actually, my wife and my father-in-law are what I would call pizza neutral. OK? They don't love pizza, they don't hate it, they'll eat it if it's served, but they rarely crave it or suggest eating pizza. Anyways, when my wife and I returned from our trip abroad to Canada a few weeks ago, we wanted to go and see my wife's parents so we could give them some gifts and catch up with them, that kind of thing. But unfortunately, my father-in-law is super busy right now at work, so he wasn't able to meet us when I had some free time. The good thing about that though is that it provided the perfect opportunity for me and my mother-in-law to eat pizza without too many complaints about the menu.

So, last weekend we decided to meet at the second location of this famous pizza parlor. Now, since the original version of this place is so popular, we were expecting that there would be many, many customers at the second location too. But we were surprised to see that when we got there it was almost empty and we went there for lunch so around 12:30 or 1:00 pm in the afternoon and there were only a few other customers in the restaurant. We had no problem getting a seat. Now remember that the original location of this pizza

parlor is in Haebangchon, HBC, which like I said is kind of like a Little America style neighborhood and because of that the menus are mostly in English, and the staff also mostly speak English too. Going to that pizza place is kind of like stepping into a little English-speaking country right in the middle of Seoul.

Well, since the second location of the pizza parlor isn't in this foreign neighborhood, it's just in a regular Korean neighborhood, I was expecting that they probably would hire some Korean staff and translate the menu into Korean as well, but when we arrived at the restaurant that wasn't the case. The staff were non-Koreans, and the restaurant was English. So even at the second location, it was like stepping into a little English-speaking country and indeed when we walked in the staff greeted us by saying hello. I'm not 100% sure, but I think maybe for most Korean people, this could be a little stressful. I mean, if you went there specifically to get a kind of English-speaking practice experience, I guess it could be okay. But if you weren't expecting it, well, then you might be a little taken aback. Well, lucky for me, and I don't want to brag or anything, but I happened to be a pretty good English speaker. And it was fun for me to be able to flex a little bit in front of my mother-in-law and explain the menu to her and order for our table without any communication problems whatsoever. Although I might be the worst Korean speaker on my wife's side of the family, I also happen to be the best English speaker and it's nice when I can put that to good use from time to time.

So, we ordered a pizza for lunch, and we also had a sneaky late afternoon beer as well. Pizza and beer is a really popular combination in Korea. So popular in fact that it actually has a nickname in the Korean language which is *Pimaek* and the *pi* is short for pizza or pizza and the *maek* is short for *maekju* which is the word in the Korean language for beer. We enjoyed the meal. It was delicious but afterwards we all felt totally full and stuffed, you can imagine that food is pretty heavy. But thankfully there's a really nice lake and a park nearby that restaurant and the weather that day was really nice. So, we went out for a little

stroll around the lake and then we found a cafe to go to and had a nice cup of coffee and a chat. So, all in all it was a great way to spend an afternoon with my wife and my mother-in-law and also to have a different kind of cultural experience all without having to leave the city of Seoul.

On Tuesday last week, I hosted the February 2023 edition of the Culips member live stream. And it was awesome. I think it may have been our best live stream yet. We had so many members join in and participate from all over the world. We had members join us from all of the continents except Antarctica. Isn't that cool? The best part of the stream was that we had several members call in and chat with me. Members from Brazil and Taiwan and Korea and I just had a blast spending some time with everyone from our great member community on Tuesday.

Now for the next month's live stream, we're going to be talking about the topic of how to study and learn English with Culips. Sometimes I get asked what's the best way to learn and study with Culips and to be honest that's a hard question for me to answer because there are a ton of different techniques that you can use to improve your English with us, and it really boils down to so many individual factors that have to do with each individual learner and that person's goals and schedule and motivation. But of course, there are some techniques that I think are more effective than others. And I've talked about those techniques and even made some videos about that in the past. And all of that is on our website, Culips.com if you want to check it out. But what I think is really interesting to find out about and what can also be really motivating and inspiring, is to learn about how other English learners, just like yourself, like to study and improve their English with Culips. So that's going to be the topic of our next live stream. And I'd love for all members to join me so we can discuss it together and share our ideas with the Culips member community. Now we'll announce specific details about the time and the date of the live stream soon. So, keep your ears open and we'll let you know about it as soon as we can.

In other Culips news, I got together with Suzanne last week and we recorded some new episodes together, which was great. I don't want to spoil things, so I won't say too much, but I will say that we've got a Simplified Speech episode coming up that will be very interesting if you are an animal lover. So, if you're an animal lover like Suzanne and I are, then you're going to enjoy the Simplified Speech episode that we recorded last week. Another update about what's happening behind the scenes here is that we are passing on the baton from one of our audio editors to a new one. And although you don't hear or see them often, we do have a small team of support staff here at Culips, writers, editors, audio editors that really do help keep Culips running. They're a super, super vital and important part of what we do, and without them, we'd have a really difficult time producing Culips. One of our long-time audio editors, Kevin, recently left the team because he landed a great job in the software industry, and he needs to focus his time and attention on that. And although we were sad to see him go, it's always a bummer to lose a great teammate, we were happy to see him achieve this great accomplishment. It's something that he's been working towards for a long time. So now we're going to pass the baton onto a new audio editor.

Pass the baton. Have you heard that expression before? Maybe you have a similar one in your language, actually. I could see that probably many languages have an expression like this. So, what does it mean? Well, when we talk about passing on the baton, we're using a metaphor that comes from a kind of running relay race. And in a relay race, a team of runners take turns running around a track and they have to pass a baton to the next runner who then continues the race. By the way, I got to give a shout out to the Canadian men's 4x100 meter relay team who won the gold at the world championships last summer. I'm very proud as a Canadian that thankfully Canada has a good running relay team. Anyway, let me get back to my explanation here. The baton in the expression is what we call that small stick or rod that the runners pass from hand to hand, and it represents the team's progress in the race. So, when we use the expression pass on the baton in a non-

racing context, then we're using this metaphor to talk about passing responsibility from one person to another person. So, for example imagine that a CEO is retiring, and a new CEO is taking over. Well in that kind of situation we might say that the retiring CEO is passing on the baton to the new CEO. So, when we use this expression to pass on the baton then we're just talking about the transfer of responsibility from one person to another person using this metaphor of relay racing to illustrate the idea. So, the baton has been passed from Kevin to our new audio editor Marshall and I hope you'll all appreciate his hard work behind the scenes helping us make Culips sound as good as possible.

And now it's time for this week's vocabulary lesson.

At the end of each bonus episode, I like to teach you about a useful English expression. Today, we're going to learn about the phrasal verb to be taken aback. To be taken aback. Aback is spelled A-B-A-C-K, and it's one word. This is a common English expression, and it's a fantastic one to add to your vocabulary. It will help you improve not only your listening, but also your speaking, because it is one that we say all the time when we're speaking English. And in fact, I used this expression a little bit earlier in the episode. Did you notice when I said it? I used it when I was talking about how Korean people might feel when they walk into a pizza parlor in the middle of Seoul that uses only English on their menus. You know what? Why don't we go back to that part of the episode so we can hear me say this expression in context a couple of more times. Let's do that now. Here we go.

If you weren't expecting it, well, then you might be a little taken aback.

OK, now let's talk about what to be taken aback means. So, when we use the expression to be taken aback, we're describing a feeling of surprise or shock that we experience when something unexpected happens. It's like suddenly being hit by a wave or wind that knocks us off balance. It's just shocking and surprising and comes out of nowhere. So, for example, if you were to receive some very unexpected news, you might be taken aback by

it. Or if someone said something to you that was rude or hurtful and you weren't expecting it, then you'd be shocked, right? You would be taken aback. This expression, to be taken aback, actually has its origins in sailing, and it describes a ship that has been surprised by a sudden change in wind direction, which would cause the sails to flap back violently and very forcefully. The ship in that kind of situation would be literally taken backwards, right? Taken backwards, moving backwards, taken aback by the wind, and it wouldn't be able to continue smoothly sailing.

So, the origins of this expression are very old, but these days we use to be taken aback in everyday language when we're using it metaphorically to describe that same feeling of being thrown off balance, being surprised or shocked by something unexpected. OK, so to summarize, when we say that someone is taken aback, we mean that they've been surprised or shocked by something that's happened to them that was completely unexpected.

Now that we know exactly what to be taken aback means, let's hear some example sentences so we can learn about how to use this expression in a natural way. Let's do that now. Here we go.

Example sentence number one.

Polly was taken aback when her friend suddenly yelled at her for no apparent reason.

Let's break this example sentence down. In this example, we hear that Polly was shocked. She was surprised. She was taken aback. Why? Because her friend yelled at her suddenly and for no apparent reason. So, wouldn't you feel taken aback in that same kind of context if you are just hanging out with your friends, having a nice time, and then suddenly one of your friends starts yelling at you? Well, yeah, you would probably feel just as shocked as Polly did.

Example sentence number two.

When I realized that I'd forgotten my notes at home, I was taken aback for a second, but thankfully I had practiced a lot, so I was able to finish my presentation without any problems.

Let's break this second example sentence down. So, in that sentence, the speaker says that when he realized that he didn't have his notes with him, he was taken aback. K? He had to make a presentation and he had some notes to help him with his presentation, but suddenly he realized that, oh no, I don't have my notes. I forgot them at home. And could you imagine yourself in this situation if you had to make a big, important presentation and you had some notes to help you, but then suddenly you realized that you forgot your notes, well then, you'd be taken aback, you'd be surprised, you'd be shocked, you'd probably panic a little bit. But at least in the example, the speaker had practiced a lot, prepared a lot, and he was ready to do the presentation, so even without his notes, he was able to finish it up successfully.

Example Sentence number 3.

The server was taken aback by the customer's rude comment and didn't know how to respond.

Let's break this final example sentence down. In that sentence, we hear about a server at a restaurant. And unfortunately for that server, one of their customers was very rude and said something rude to them. And the server then was taken aback. Okay, very shocked, very surprised by the sudden rude complaint by the customer. And in that situation, the server didn't really know what to do. Why? Well, because they were so shocked, they were so surprised, they were so taken aback. That brings us to the end of bonus episode number 43. We did it, yeah! Thank you for listening. If you're looking for more lessons to

learn English with, don't worry we've got you covered. We've got hundreds of more lessons that you can find on our website, which once again is Culips.com. And of course, there are helpful study guides and transcripts for all of them if you're a Culips member. I hope you have an absolutely fantastic week, an ab-fab week. Take care and I'll talk to you next time, bye.

Episode credits

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