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ESL Podcast 35 - Taking Public Transportation to Work

GLOSSARY

subway station – a location for entering and exiting underground trains in a city
* In New York City, there are subway stations on all of the important streets.

to swipe – to quickly pass a card through a machine that reads it
* He was so embarrassed when the salesman swiped his debit card and the machine said that he didn't have any money in his account.

monthly pass – a card that gives someone unlimited access to something for one month
* Riding the bus to work costs \$2.50 each day, but I can save money if I buy a monthly pass for \$45.

turnstile – a piece of metal that turns in a circle and lets people walk through an entrance only one at a time
* It is difficult to walk through a turnstile while you're carrying a baby and a shopping bag.

platform – the flat area where people stand while waiting for a train to come
* When you're waiting on the platform, don't stand too close to the trains. It's dangerous!

express – fast; a type of train or bus that moves quickly and doesn't stop in very many places
* It takes 50 minutes to get to work on the regular train, but the express train takes us there in only 35.

handrail – something to hold onto while standing in a moving bus or train
* The child forgot to hold onto the handrail and almost fell down when the bus started moving.

stop – a place where a bus or train stops moving to let people get on or get off
* His apartment is just two bus stops away from the university.

to transfer – to move to a different bus or train during a trip
* You're on the blue subway line. When you reach the Rosslyn stop, transfer to the orange line.



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to get off – to exit, usually from a bus or train

* I got off the bus at Fifth Street and Madison Avenue because my office is nearby.

exit – a door or an area for leaving a building

* Exits are usually marked with green lights so that people can find them in an emergency.

to get on – to enter, usually a bus or train

* When she got on the bus, she had to go to the back to find a seat.

bus pass – a card that allows someone to ride the bus

* The university gives all of its students free bus passes because it wants them to use public transportation.

on board – on a bus, train, or boat

* That bus is really full! I wonder how many people are on board.

route – the path that a bus takes through a city; the roads that a car travels from one place to another

* The bus has to take a different route today because of the road construction.

to signal – to make a movement or sound to send a message to someone

* That driver should receive a traffic ticket for not signaling his turns.

to pull up to – to stop at; to stop beside; to arrive at; to come to

* He pulled up to the traffic light and waited for the old woman to cross the road.

block – a square group of buildings with streets on all four sides; the area with four streets around it

* This block has two restaurants, one museum, an office building, and a small library.



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CULTURE NOTE

Interpreters and Translators

Interpreters and translators help people who don't speak each other's languages to communicate. Although some people do both, interpreting and translating are different "professions" (jobs; careers). Interpreters deal with spoken language, and translators deal with written language.

Interpreters work in "settings" (places) such as schools, hospitals, "courtrooms" (place where a judge or a jury decides a legal question), and "conference centers" (place where large meetings are held). "Simultaneous interpreting" can be stressful, as the interpreter must keep up with the speaker, who may not know to slow down when an interpreter is "present" (there).

Translators typically work from home. These days, they often receive and submit their work "electronically" (using the computer). They must sometimes deal with the pressure of "deadlines" (date/time when something must be done by) and "tight" (with short amounts of time to complete something) schedules.

Although interpreters and translators typically need a bachelor's degree, the most important requirement is that they be "fluent" (able to speak well) two or more languages. It is not necessary for interpreters and translators to have been "raised" (grow up as children) in two languages to succeed in these jobs, but many grew up communicating in both languages in which they work.

Anyone interested in becoming an interpreter or translator should begin in high school by taking foreign languages and becoming "proficient" (capable; have the skills to do well) on computers. Many "prospective" (expecting or wanting to be in the future) foreign-language interpreters and translators spend time "abroad" (outside of one's own country), getting direct contact with foreign cultures, and reading "extensively" (a lot; widely) on a variety of subjects related to languages.

There is currently no "universal" (used by everyone, everywhere) "certification" (official process for qualifying to do something) required of interpreters and translators. However, interpreters and translators can take a variety of tests that show proficiency. For example, the American Translators Association provides certification for its members in 24 language "combinations" (putting together of two or more things) involving English.



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 35: Taking Public Transportation to Work

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 35. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development, in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

In this episode, we're going to see Lucy go to work by way of public transportation. Let's get started.

[Start of story]

I like my job but it takes over an hour to get there from my part of town. First, I walk three blocks to the subway station and swipe my monthly pass to get through the turnstile. I wait on the platform for the first express train. I get on and since it's so crowded during the morning hours, there aren't any seats and I stand, holding onto a handrail. At my stop, I get off and transfer to a second train that will get me to Union Station. This one isn't as crowded and I manage to find a seat.

When the train gets to Union Station, I get off the train, go up the stairs, and go out of the front exit to the bus stop. I get on the B bus to downtown and show my bus pass to the bus driver. I sit down near the front of the bus and when three more people get on board, the driver starts on the route. When we get close to my stop, I press the button to signal to the driver that I need to get off and the bus pulls up to the next stop. I get off and walk half a block to the building where I work. It's a long commute, but I look around every morning and I see that I'm not the only one who has to do it.

[End of story]

Public transportation is anything that the government runs or operates, such as buses, trains, and subways.

Lucy says that she likes her job but that "it takes over an hour to get there from" her "part of town." To get there means to arrive. Her part of town is her area of town. "First," she says, she walks "three blocks to the subway station" and swipes her "monthly pass to get through the turnstile." A subway, "subway," (one



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word) is a train, usually that goes underneath the ground. In some cities, such as Chicago, they have an elevated train, which they call the El. Subways are usually, however, below the ground; they're underground. In fact, in London, the subway is called the Underground or the Tube.

In this story, Lucy walks to the subway station. A station, "station," is a place where you can get on and off the subway; that's called a subway station. To get into the subway station, Lucy swipes her monthly pass. To swipe, "swipe," means to take a card, such as a credit card, and to put it through a machine very quickly so that the machine can read or understand the information on the card.

In the subway system, Lucy has a monthly pass, "pass." A pass is like a ticket; it's a ticket for an entire month - for thirty days. So, she swipes the card through the card reader, we would call it, and that card is her monthly pass.

After she swipes her monthly pass, she can walk through the turnstile. The turnstile, "turnstile," (one word) is a machine that prevents you from walking through somewhere. It has a bar and after you pay, you can then push the bar and the bar will move forward - the bar is just a piece of metal - and then, the next person has to pay and they can push through with the turnstile. One person goes through at a time, and you'll find turnstiles at subway stations, sometimes at train stations. If you don't have any money, you can just jump over the turnstile. I would not recommend that, however, because they might arrest you if you don't pay!

Lucy says she waits "on the platform for the first express train." The platform, "platform," (one word) is the place where you wait for the train or the subway to stop, and then the doors open and you walk onto the train. The platform is the place where you wait right next to the tracks, "tracks." The tracks are what the trains go on.

Lucy is at the platform and she's waiting "for the first express train." Express, "express," here means the train that makes the fewest number of stops. Express trains, such as in New York, will only stop at some of the subway stations, not at all of them. If you want a subway train that stops at all the stations, you would get what we would call a local train. This is true especially in New York City; if you look at their map of the subway, you will see that some subway trains are express, meaning they make fewer stops - they don't stop at every subway station - and some are local.



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Lucy gets "on and since it's so crowded," or because there are so many people there, "there aren't any seats" and so she has to stand, and she stands by "holding onto a handrail," "handrail," (one word). A handrail is a piece of metal that is in a subway train that you can grab onto. You can hold your hand around this piece of metal so that you don't fall when the train goes forward and stops; this is called a handrail because it's where you put your hand. Of course, you could also put your hand on the person next to you, but they may not like that, so use the handrail!

Lucy says that at her stop, or the place where she leaves the train - leaves the subway - she gets off, or exits, and transfers "to a second train." To transfer, "transfer," as a verb, means to go from one train to another or from one bus to another. Your train may not go all the way where you want to go, so you may need to transfer to a different train.

Lucy says that she needs to take a second train in order to get to her final destination, which is Union Station. Union Station is a train station in downtown Los Angeles. This train, Lucy says, "isn't as crowded" - there aren't as many people - it "isn't as crowded" and she manages "to find a seat" - she is able to find a seat.

"When the train gets to Union Station," Lucy gets off, or exits - leaves "the train, goes up the stairs" - walks up the stairs - and goes out "the front exit to the bus stop." The front exit, "exit," as a noun, means the door where you leave. You can also use exit as a verb to mean to leave.

Lucy walks out "the front exit to the bus stop." The bus stop is the place where, you can guess, the bus stops to pick up people and to drop them off, or to leave them. The bus stop is like the subway station, but we don't call it the bus station; we call it the bus stop. There is actually an expression, the bus station, but that's a place where you take a bus to another city; that would be a bus station. Usually there's only one or two of those. A bus stop is anywhere or anyplace where the bus stops to let people on the bus and let people off the bus.

Lucy gets "on the B" - the letter "B" - "bus to downtown and" shows her "bus pass to the bus driver." Your bus pass is like your subway pass. In this case, you show the pass to the driver; the driver looks at the pass to see that it is a good pass. Lucy then sits "down near the front of the bus and three more people get on board." On board, "board," means to be on a train, or a plane, or a bus, or a ship. You may say, "I need to get on board my plane," that means you need to get onto your plane - you need to go into your plane.



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Here, Lucy talks about three people getting on board, or coming onto and sitting in the bus. After "three more people get on board," or get on the bus, "the driver starts on the route." The route, "route," sometimes called the route (pronounced "root"), both pronunciations are possible, is the path or the direction that the bus goes. It goes down Main Street, then goes on First Street, then goes down Central Avenue, then takes a left on Seventh Street, and comes back on Waterview Drive. That would be a route, the streets where the bus goes. In general, a route is a list of the streets or freeways or roads that you take to get somewhere.

Lucy says when she gets close to her stop, she presses "the button to signal to the driver that" she needs "to get off." To signal, "signal," means to indicate - to tell the driver that she needs to get off. In many American buses, there's a button or sometimes there's a string that you pull, and it makes a noise in the front of the bus, and that allows the bus driver to know that you want to get off. It tells the bus driver that you want to get off at the next stop. You can also ask the driver, "Can I get off at the next stop?" Remember, a stop is anywhere the bus goes to pick up or let out people.

Well, Lucy signals to the driver that she needs to get off at the next stop, and "the bus pulls up to the next stop." To pull up (two words) means to dive up - to go to. We use that verb especially when we are talking about cars or buses. Your car can pull up to the house; that means it drives up to the street where your house is and it stops. The idea of pulling up usually means go forward and then stop.

Lucy gets off, or leaves the bus, and walks a "half a block to the building where" she works. A block, "block," is the area between two streets. In most American cities, the blocks are square, so you have two streets on both sides and that whole thing is called a block. The block that I live on is not square; it's a very strange, unusual shape, but most cities have blocks that are square. We also use that expression when we are talking about distance. Someone may say, "How many blocks is it to the train station?" You could say, "It is four blocks from here," meaning you have to walk four streets to get there.

Lucy says that she has "a long commute, but" she looks "around every morning" - she looks at the other people - and she sees that she is "not the only one who has to do it," meaning there are many people who have to commute a long distance. Some companies now allow their employees to telecommute. Telecommute, "telecommute," (one word) means that you work at home but you call the office to talk to people.



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

[Start of story]

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[End of story]

Thanks to our fantastic scriptwriter, Dr. Lucy Tse, for her hard work. And thanks to you for listening. From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Come back and listen to us again here on ESL Podcast.

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