



**BIG BROTHER**  
**IS WATCHING**  
**ALL OF US**

**A TALKING POINTS  
LESSON FOR ENGLISH  
SPEAKING & LISTENING**

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## **Introduction**

Are there CCTV cameras in your neighbourhood?

What are these cameras used for? Are they for the common good or not?

What is facial recognition software? Is it a good thing? Why/why not?

## Reading

Look above your head any time you are outside and you will see them. Dozens of cameras peering down, observing our every move. We cannot do anything without being seen.

For some, this is a good thing. It means that we are safe and criminals are less likely to commit a crime. But for others, this is just a gross breach of privacy. People now believe they can't even walk down the street without being watched and recorded.

And it's not just in the street. In banks, in hotels, in all shopping malls, there are dozens of tiny cameras gazing down upon us and witnessing our every move.

This has been around for many years but now there is something new added. Facial recognition software.

This is an advanced piece of AI that can recognise a person's face and immediately identify them. Anyone checking this app can then locate the person's entire history of where they have lived, worked and any other activity they have done.

So, for example, you are in your car and you break the speed limit as you cross a busy junction. The speed limit is 40km/hr, but you were travelling at 45 km/hr. A minor misdemeanour to be fair.

In the old days, a policeman may have seen you, stopped you and given you a warning.

Be mindful of others on the road, he might say.

And that would be the end of it. But now via a complex computer system, your face is recognised, and the fine is already sent to your current home address.

Or maybe they email it to you. Just as you go past the junction, you hear a small beep on your phone and that is the fine already sent by email.

Some people even believe that companies are demanding to know all this information about their employees. They feel they have a right to know what little crimes their staff commits.

And anyway, if you contest the fine maybe the police can just send it to the accounts department of your place of work. You arrive at work the next day and HR calls you into the office.

It appears you have an outstanding traffic violation. The police demand payment.

Your company accounts department pays the fine. And then next time you receive your paycheck it is minus the fine you received for a minor speeding offense.

There is no escape. Wherever we go, we are under constant observation and scrutiny.

The question is — is it just the police that are watching us?

Maybe big corporations are observing us too. To watch our daily habits and create clever advertising to manipulate us online.

Kind of scary.

## Essential Vocabulary

dozens	peering down	observing
criminals	commit a crime	gross breach
privacy	recorded	tiny
gazing	witnessing	facial recognition
AI	identify	locate
entire history	break the speed limit	junction
minor misdemeanour	warning	mindful
fine	beep	contest
accounts	HR	outstanding
traffic violation	paycheck	minus
no escape	scrutiny	corporations
manipulate	scary	

### Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

**Notebook**—*a small book with pages of blank paper that students use to make notes when studying.*

“I left my notebook at home so I was unable to make any notes in my English class.”

## Questions

1. Are there many CCTV (closed circuit TV cameras) in your city? Where are they mostly? Why are they there do you think?
2. Are we losing our privacy? What do you think about this?
3. In terms of crime, cameras are a good thing. Do you agree or disagree? Tell the class your thoughts.
4. In what places is it illegal to have cameras? Why is it illegal to have cameras in these places?
5. With the class, make a list of places where we should have cameras. Why should we have cameras in these places? Try to think of three reasons for each example.
6. Should there be cameras in your English class? Why/why not?
7. What do you think of facial recognition software? Do you think it is acceptable or not? Give your reasons.
8. Do you think facial recognition AI and cameras make people behave more responsibly in public? Why/why not? Do you think it is good or bad we need this to make us behave in a responsible manner?
9. Are the police doing enough on the streets? Isn't it better to have real police in our neighbourhoods as part of the community?
10. What changes will we see in the future with security surveillance?

## Teacher's Notes

This is fairly well-known concept in most of the world. You may be surprised by some of the responses though. In western countries we might see facial recognition software and CCTV cameras as a gross intrusion to our privacy. In other places they may regard it as the authorities taking care of the people.

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