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**ESL Podcast 296 – Bad Manners at a Business Lunch**

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**GLOSSARY**

**client** – customer; a person who buys products or services from a company

\* This bank has more than 3,000 clients in this city.

**manners** – the way that one behaves around other people, either politely or rudely; the way one does things around other people

\* Theresa has good manners because she always says “please” and “thank you.”

**unprofessional** – not professional; not appropriate for the work environment

\* Most people would consider it unprofessional for employees of one company to ask employees of another company how much money they make.

**rough around the edges** – not polished; not refined; having the ability to do something well, but not yet doing it well

\* Kyle is a good piano player, but he is still rough around the edges, and he needs a great teacher to help him get better.

**previous** – prior; earlier; the one before this one

\* I like my new job a lot. My previous job paid less and I didn’t like the work.

**to air (someone’s) dirty laundry** – to tell someone’s bad secrets to another person; to share secret information about something bad that shouldn’t be shared

\* Walter was airing his kids’ dirty laundry during the party by telling everyone about the problems they were having in school.

**blunder** – a mistake; an error; something that was done incorrectly

\* Alberto made a blunder by accidentally telling Jackie about the surprise birthday party everyone was planning for her.

**clueless** – not knowing what is happening; unaware; not able to understand something

\* Ang is so clueless about money and finances that his parents still help him manage his bank account, even though he’s 30 years old.

**distracted** – not paying attention to something because one is thinking about something else

\* Yanna has been very distracted at work because she has been thinking about her mother’s illness.



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**excuse** – a reason for having done or not having done something; something used to explain why something happened or didn't happen

\* Many children say, "The dog ate my homework!" as an excuse for not having finished their homework.

**kicker** – the most important, shocking, or surprising thing

\* Ulysses' boss was angry about the project and yelled at him, but the kicker was when his boss actually threw the papers across the room at him.

**to pick up the tab** – to pay for a group meal; to pay for the food and drinks of everyone who is at the table

\* At dinner last night, Ulma picked up the tab to thank us for helping her find a new apartment.

**mortified** – very embarrassed; very ashamed

\* Emma was mortified when her boyfriend drank too much and started singing and dancing at the party.

**to see red** – to be very angry; to be very mad

\* Josea was seeing red when he realized that someone had stolen his wallet.

**a little while** – a short period of time; soon

\* We were full after eating a big dinner, so we decided to wait a little while before eating dessert.



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**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. What did George do wrong at the lunch?
    - a) He brought his dirty laundry.
    - b) He picked up the tab.
    - c) He was rude and unprofessional.
  
  2. What is Yolanda going to do?
    - a) She's going to see red.
    - b) She's going to talk to George.
    - c) She's going to be mortified.
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**WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?**

**manners**

The word “manners,” in this podcast, means the way that one behaves around other people: “If you interrupt other people’s conversations, they will think that you have bad manners.” “To have good manners” means to be polite, and “to have bad manners” means to be rude. If someone says, “Mind your manners!” it means that you should pay attention to how you are acting, because you need to be more polite. This is something parents may say to their children. The word “manner” also means the way that someone does something: “A good teacher should have a relaxed manner when speaking with his or her students.” The way that a doctor acts around his or her patients is known as “bedside manner”: “Dr. Ortega has an excellent bedside manner that helps his patients feel more comfortable.”

**excuse**

In this podcast, the word “excuse” means a reason that one gives for (not) having done something: “Gregory’s excuse for not having stopped to talk to us yesterday was that he was in a hurry to get to the office.” As a verb, “to excuse” means to forgive someone for something: “Please excuse Vikki for not being at the meeting today, but she was called away to our downtown office.” When you need to interrupt a conversation, it’s a good idea to say, “Excuse me!” because this is a polite way to tell the other people that you need to say something, even though it is rude to speak when they are speaking. At the end of a meal at home, children are sometimes taught to say, “May I be excused?” because this is a polite way to ask for permission to leave the table.



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**CULTURE NOTE**

Having good “table manners,” or the way that one acts when eating, is extremely important at a business lunch. Bad manners can mean losing a job or a client. Here are some “tips” (ideas and suggestions) for things that business people should do – and not do – during a business lunch.

When “ordering” (telling the waiter what you would like to eat or drink), try to order foods that won’t be “messy” (dirty) to eat. “Avoid” (don’t order) foods with long noodles, or foods that need to be eaten with your hands. If possible, order something similar to what the “host” (the person who invited you to the meal) is ordering. Order alcohol only if the host does.

While you’re eating, use the right plates, glasses, and “silverware” (forks, knives, and spoons). Never reach in front of another person. If you can’t reach something, say, “Could you please pass the...?”

Remember that if people are “toasting” (touching their wine glasses together to celebrate), toast only with the people who are nearest to you. If people are far away, look at them, raise your glass, and gently “nod” (quickly move your head up and down).

Always bring your fork up to your mouth. Never move your head down to your fork. Eat slowly, taking time to “chew each bite” (put food in your mouth and move your teeth up and down to make the food smaller). Finally, when the meal is finished, don’t use a “toothpick” (a small, pointed wooden stick) to “pick your teeth” (try to remove food that is between your teeth). Instead, go to the bathroom where people can’t see you picking your teeth.

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Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – c; 2 – b



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 296: Bad Manners at a Business Lunch.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 296. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com) and download a Learning Guide for this episode. It contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional explanations, cultural notes, a comprehension quiz, and a complete transcript of this episode. You can also get free tickets to Hawaii in the Learning Guide. Those are bus tickets, however!

In this episode, we're going to listen to a conversation between Yolanda and Sunan talking about a lunch they had and one of their coworkers (one of their colleagues) who had very bad manners (who did not behave very well). Let's get started.

[start of story]

Yolanda: I will never invite George to another business lunch with clients again!

Sunan: Why, what happened?

Yolanda: George has the worst manners of anyone I know. First of all, he was ten minutes late. And as soon as he sat down, his cell phone rang and he answered it!

Sunan: Maybe it was an important call?

Yolanda: From his girlfriend? It was completely unprofessional.

Sunan: I know George is a little rough around the edges, but he's not that bad.

Yolanda: You don't think so? After I introduced him to the clients, he told them that he had been up late the previous night, because one of our other account representatives didn't finish her proposal and he had to complete it. Everyone knows not to air their company's dirty laundry in public, especially in front of clients.



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Sunan: Okay, that was a blunder. Normally, George isn't so clueless. I wonder if he was distracted.

Yolanda: I don't buy that as an excuse. And here's the kicker: He ordered two drinks during lunch! If that weren't bad enough, when he ordered his second one, he jokingly thanked the clients for paying for lunch. Of course our company was picking up the tab since we invited them! I was mortified.

Sunan: I'll admit that that was bad, very bad. Are you going to have a talk with George?

Yolanda: I will as soon as I calm down a little. I'm seeing red right now.

Sunan: Then waiting a little while is a good idea. I'd better go warn George...

[end of story]

Our dialogue begins with Yolanda complaining to Sunan, telling him her problems (her complaint) against one of their coworkers (someone who works with them).

Yolanda says, "I will never invite George to another business lunch with clients again!" She's angry; she's upset. She went to lunch with some clients; a "client" is a customer, someone who buys products or services from a company.

Sunan asks her, "Why, what happened?" Yolanda says, "George has the worst manners of anyone I know." "Manners" is the way that you act toward other people, the way you behave around other people. You can be nice, we would say "polite," or you can be bad around them, we would say you are "rude." It's the way that you do things around other people; it's called "manners." You can have good manners or bad manners.

Yolanda says that George "was ten minutes late" (he came to the dinner ten minutes late). "And as soon as he sat down (at the table), his cell phone rang and he answered it!" In other words, he did not get up from the table and answer his phone outside; he answered it at the table with other people sitting around listening. This is something I have seen people do, but I really hate that! I really hate when people get a cell phone call and don't go outside and talk. Instead, they right in front of you, which I think is rather bad manners.

Sunan says, "Maybe it was an important call?" Yolanda then responds, "From his girlfriend?" meaning the phone call was from George's girlfriend. She says,



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“It was completely unprofessional.” “Unprofessional” means not professional, not appropriate for work or a work environment.

Sunan says, “I know George is a little rough around the edges, but he’s not that bad.” To be “rough around the edges” means to be not polished or not refined. It’s an idiom that says that a person has the ability to do something well; they could do it, but they’re not yet doing it well. They’re not trained or they’re not educated, or whatever they need to do something better. Someone who is “rough around the edges” is someone who is going to do a good job in the future at something, but not right now.

Yolanda says, “You don’t think so?” meaning you don’t think he’s that bad, he’s bad. Yolanda goes on to say, “After I introduced him to the clients, he told them that he had been up the previous night, because one of our other account representatives didn’t finish her proposal and he had to complete it.” The “previous night” is the night before this one; it means “prior” or “earlier” (something that happened before). So, the “previous night” would be last night (yesterday at night).

What happened here is George told the clients that someone in the company didn’t do their job and he had to stay up (or be awake) until late in the evening to finish this proposal.

Yolanda says, “Everyone knows not to air (air) their company’s dirty laundry (laundry) in public.” To “air your dirty laundry in public” means to tell someone your secrets; to share secret information with other people that you shouldn’t tell other people. So in this case, George is telling the clients about some bad things that happened in the company; this is “airing his (or the company’s) dirty laundry.” To “air” normally means to take your clothes and put them outside, perhaps because you were sitting next someone who was smoking and your clothes smell of smoke, so you want to “air them out.”

Sunan says, “Okay, that was a blunder” (blunder). A “blunder” is a mistake (an error, something that was done wrong). Usually not a serious mistake but it’s a mistake; it’s an error. Sunan says, “Normally, George isn’t so clueless.” To be “clueless” (clueless) means not to know or understand what is happening (what is going on), to be unable to understand something. It’s somewhat of an informal expression; it’s a negative description of someone. There was actually a movie about some rich high school girls that was called Clueless. But normally it’s an insult; it’s a negative thing to say someone is “clueless,” means they’re not very smart; they don’t understand things.



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Sunan says, “I wonder” why George “was distracted.” To be “distracted” means not to pay attention to something because you are thinking about something else or doing something else. For example, you're driving in your car and you are looking for a radio station to listen to, and you hit the car in front of you. You were “distracted,” you were not paying attention to your driving when you were looking for the radio station or talking on your cell phone.

Yolanda says, “I don't buy that as an excuse.” An “excuse” is a reason why someone did something or didn't do something. It's a way of explaining why something happened or didn't happen. That word has a couple of different meanings; take a look at our Learning Guide for additional explanations of that word and the word “manners,” which we used earlier in the dialogue.

Yolanda says, “here's the kicker.” In this case, “kicker” (kicker) is an informal word that means the most important or the most surprising thing. If you are describing several bad things, and then at the end you say the worst thing, you could say, “here's the kicker” – here's the worst or most important or most surprising thing. “He ordered two drinks during lunch!” George ordered two alcoholic drinks – two beers, for example – during lunch. That is usually not a good idea, if you are at a business lunch, to order more than one drink; at least that's what some people think.

After he ordered his drink, he joked with the clients by thanking them for paying for lunch. Yolanda says, “Of course our company was picking up the tab” (tab). To “pick up the tab” means to pay for someone else's meal, in this case the food and drinks of everyone who's at the table (the clients). To “pick up the tab” means to pay for someone else, usually to pay for their food at dinner. So, George made a joke about the clients paying for lunch, when, of course, it was Yolanda and George's company that was going to “pick up the tab.” “Tab” is just another word for bill (what you have to pay).

Yolanda says, “I was mortified.” To be “mortified” means to be very embarrassed, to be very ashamed. Sunan says, “I'll admit that that was bad, very bad. Are you going to have a talk with George?” – are you going to talk to him about it?

Yolanda says, “I will as soon as I calm down a little” – as soon as I am less upset (less mad). “I'm seeing red right now,” she says. The expression to “see red” means to be very angry (to get very mad). If you go to a bullfight in Mexico or Spain, the bullfighter (the person who is going to try to kill the bull) will have a red piece of cloth that he waves back and forth. The idea is that the red will make the bull mad (angry). Actually, I believe bulls are “color blind,” meaning they





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cannot see color. But, they still use the color red, and we have the expression to “see red” (to get very angry). Sunan says, “waiting a little while is a good idea.” A “little while” is a short period of time, soon.

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

[start of story]

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[end of story]

The script for this podcast was written by Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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