



ESL Podcast 329 – Being Persuasive

GLOSSARY

favor – something that one does for another person, because one has been asked to do it; something that one person asks another to do out of kindness
* Please take this message to Antuka as a favor for me.

down in the dumps – feeling depressed; feeling sad and without energy, often for no reason
* Anita was down in the dumps for weeks after she found out that she didn't get the scholarship.

shy – timid, quiet, and not comfortable speaking with other people
* Damian is so shy that his face turns red whenever he has to talk to a stranger.

off the top of my head – a phrase used to show that one is saying something very quickly, without thinking about it very much and/or without additional information
* Off the top of my head, I think we sold about 40,000 units last year, but if you can wait a few minutes I'll get you the exact sales figure.

no offense – a phrase used when one says something that another person probably won't like, but doesn't want the other person to become angry
* No offense, but I think you should wear more professional clothes to work.

to miss – to not experience; to not be able to enjoy; to not have an opportunity to do something
* We came late to the movie theater and missed the previews, but we were able to see the movie.

witty – clever, funny, and quick-thinking
* Xena is very witty and can find something funny to say in any situation.

to persuade – to convince; to do or say something that makes another person believe that something is true
* Paola persuaded us that her company was a great investment opportunity, but then it failed and we lost our money

convinced – persuaded; believing that something that another person has told oneself is true
* The children in this neighborhood are convinced that Mrs. Urquizo is a witch.



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to live up to – to fulfill or meet expectations; to be what one wants or expects
* Bella has always struggled to live up to her family’s expectations for her to become a doctor.

hype – advertising or other excited statements about how good something or someone is, often more than he/she or it really is
* There was a lot of hype about this company’s new cell phone.

to twist (one’s) arm – to force someone to do something; to make someone do something; to insist strongly that one do something
* Tracy kept twisting his arm until he agreed to help her with the project.

on the fence – undecided; not sure what to do; trying to decide between two options
* Betty was on the fence regarding whether she should go to medical school or law school

to sweeten the pot – to do or offer something that makes a deal more interesting and attractive
* The company has competitions to see which sales representative has the highest sales, and it sweetens the pot by giving the winner \$2,500.

to tempt – to try to make someone do what one wants him/her to do, often by offering to give him/her something
* The university tempts students into difficult majors like biophysics by offering them full scholarships.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Sylvia mean when she says “she’s down in the dumps”?
 - a) She feels very sad and depressed.
 - b) She is in a part of town known as the dumps.
 - c) She is downtown near the dumpsters.

 2. How is Sylvia going to “sweeten the pot”?
 - a) By adding sugar to the pot.
 - b) By giving Joon two movie tickets.
 - c) By making Joon’s favorite sweet drink.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

no offense

The phrase “no offense,” in this podcast, is a phrase used when one says something that another person probably won’t like, but doesn’t want the other person to become angry: “No offense, but your car smells like cigarette smoke.” The phrase “to take offense” means to become angry because of what someone else says or does: “Jacques took offense when his sister decided not to go to the concert with him and went with her friends instead.” The word “offense” refers to the part of a game or team that tries to earn points, while “defense” is the part of a game or team that tries to stop the other team from earning points: “The team has very strong offense and scored 20 points in the first half of the game.” A “criminal offense” is a crime or something that one does against the law: “Hitting another car without stopping is a criminal offense.”

to miss

In this podcast, the verb “to miss” means to not experience something: “If you don’t go outside and look at the stars, you’ll miss the meteor shower.” The phrase “to miss out on (something)” means to not enjoy something because one chose not to participate or wasn’t able to participate: “You missed out on a great party last night!” The phrase “to miss the boat” means to be unable to do something because one came too late or did something too late: “We had an opportunity to buy stock in this company years ago, but we missed the boat and now we wish that we had bought it!” The phrase “to not miss a trick” means that someone takes advantage of every opportunity: “Fely never misses a trick, always finding new opportunities to open a business and make money.”



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CULTURE NOTE

“Statistics” is a type of math that collects, analyzes, and reports “quantitative data” (information with many numbers) about many topics. In the United States and in other countries, many people and organizations use statistics to persuade others to believe what they believe. When statistics are used correctly, they can be a good way to “support an argument” (present reasons for one’s beliefs). But sometimes statistics are used incorrectly and are “deceptive” (make people believe something that isn’t true).

A British man named Benjamin Disraeli once said, “There are lies, ‘damned’ (very bad) lies, and statistics,” meaning that statistics can be even more deceptive than lies. American author Mark Twain “popularized” (made something well known by most people) this saying.

In the 1950s, Darrell Huff wrote a book called How to Lie with Statistics. The book is about how incorrect statistics, whether “intentional” (done on purpose) or “unintentional” (done by accident), and the “interpretation” (how something is understood) of those statistics can be used to make people come to the wrong “conclusion” (main idea based on all the available information). For example, the book describes how making a graph with “bars” (rows or column) in “three dimensions” (with length, width, and height) can make numbers seem bigger than if they are presented only in “two dimensions” (length and width).

Numbers can be very “compelling” (making one want to believe something), but that means that they can also be dangerous. In American schools, students are taught to support their arguments with “well founded” (solid, honest, and based in reality) statistics, but it can be difficult for people who are not statisticians to know which statistics they should believe.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 329: Being Persuasive.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 329. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California. How are you today?

You can visit our website at eslpod.com. While you're there, you can take a look at our new ESL Podcast Blog, you can take a look at our special courses on business and daily English in our ESL Podcast store, and you can download a Learning Guide for this episode to help you improve your English even faster.

This episode is called "Being Persuasive." "To be persuasive" means to try to convince someone that what you are saying is true or right, or to do something. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Sylvia: How would you like to take my sister, Donna, to the movies this weekend? You'd be doing me a favor.

Joon: Why? What's wrong with her?

Sylvia: Nothing is wrong with her! She just broke up with her boyfriend of four years and she's down in the dumps. She's shy, so I thought I'd try to set her up on a date.

Joon: Off the top of my head, I can think of a dozen things I'd rather do than to take out anyone's little sister, including yours, no offense.

Sylvia: You don't know what you're missing. She may be shy, but she's very pretty and witty. If you met her, you wouldn't need me to persuade you.

Joon: I don't know. I'm not convinced. Whenever someone sets me up on a blind date, they always tell me how great the woman is. She never lives up to the hype.

Sylvia: I'm not going to twist your arm, but if you're on the fence, I have two free movie tickets to that new movie you want to see, just to sweeten the pot.



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Joon: You do? Well, why didn't you say so earlier?

Sylvia: I'm glad I could tempt you. Here's her number. I'll tell her to expect your call. Be nice.

Joon: I'm always nice. Don't worry. I'll show her a good time.

Sylvia: Not too good!

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue between Sylvia and Joon begins by Sylvia saying, "How would you like to take my sister, Donna, to the movies this weekend?" Sylvia is asking Joon if he would like to go with her sister to the movies; it's sort of a date. Sylvia says, "You'd be doing me a favor." A "favor" is something you ask someone else to do for you. "Do me a favor and give me a glass of milk, please" – do that favor for me, do that thing for me.

Joon says, "Why? What's wrong with her?" meaning why do I need to take her to the movies. Sylvia says, "Nothing is wrong with her! She just broke up with her boyfriend of four years." "To break up" means to separate from. She has broken up with "her boyfriend of four years," meaning she has been dating him for four years, which is a very long time really. Now "she's down in the dumps." "To be down in the dumps" (dumps) means to feel depressed, to feel sad. Often, there's no good reason for you feeling sad, but here the reason is that she broke up with her boyfriend. The obvious solution is to go back with her old boyfriend. That's what I would tell her, but I'm a man!

Sylvia says, "She's shy, so I thought I'd try to set her up on a date." "To be shy" means to be quiet, to be timid, not comfortable speaking with other people. Sylvia's trying to help her sister by setting her up on a date. "To set someone up on a date" means to arrange, to organize a date for someone else.

Joon says, "Off the top of my head," the expression "off the top of my head" is a phrase used to show that you are saying something without thinking about it very much, very quickly because you don't have time or more information in order to answer. Joon says, "Off the top of my head (without thinking), I can think of a dozen things I'd rather do than to take out anyone's sister." He's saying here that he doesn't have to think very hard to think of reasons why he does not want to go out with Sylvia's sister. He says I don't want to go out with "anyone's sister, including yours, no offense." The expression "no offense" is used when you are telling someone something that they probably will not like, that may make them



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angry. So, you're trying to say I don't want to make you angry, but here is the truth; you may not want to hear it.

Sylvia says, "You don't know what you're missing." "You don't know what you're missing" means you don't know what you are not experiencing, what you are not able to enjoy. She's saying you're being foolish, you're not being smart: "you don't know what you're missing." The verb "to miss," like the expression "no offense," has a couple of different meanings; take a look at the Learning Guide today for some additional explanations.

Sylvia says her sister "may be shy, but she's very pretty and witty." "To be witty" (witty) means to be funny, to be clever, to be able to think of funny things very quickly. Sylvia says to Joon, "If you met my sister, you wouldn't need me to persuade you." If you saw her, in other words, you would not need me to try to get you to go on a date with her, because you would see that she was a pretty girl, and that she was witty and funny.

Joon says, "I don't know. I'm not convinced." "To be convinced" means to believe what the other person has told you; it's similar to "to be persuaded." Joon says, "I'm not convinced. When someone sets me up on a blind date, they always tell me how great the woman is." A "blind date" is when you go on a date, but you have never met the person before – it's arranged for you. If you find someone on the Internet that would be a kind of blind date – you've never seen them before. Well, maybe you have, I don't know; I don't get my dates from the Internet. I don't get any dates actually, because I'm very happily married! Back to our story...

Joon says the woman that he gets set up with "never live up to the hype." "To live up to something" means to meet the expectations, to do what you are expected to do. In this case, the woman will be as beautiful as his friends tell him that she is. "Hype" (hype) is kind of like advertising. It's a statement – it's something someone says about how good something is: "This movie has a lot of hype; everyone is saying it's great." Often, we use the word "hype" when we mean that it's exaggerated, that people are saying it is better than it really is. So, Joon is saying that these women that he goes on dates with are never as good as his friends tell him: they don't "live up to the hype."

Sylvia says, "I'm not going to twist your arm." "To twist someone's arm" means to force someone to do something, to make somebody do something. Sylvia says, "I'm not going to twist your arm, but if you're on the fence, I have two free movie tickets." "If you're on the fence" means if you are undecided, if you're not sure whether you should say yes or no. When you're trying to decide between



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two options, you say, “I’m on the fence. I’m not sure. Should I go, should I not go?”

Sylvia says, “if you’re on the fence, I have two free movie tickets to that new movie you want to see, just to sweeten the pot.” The expression “to sweeten the pot” means to do something to make somebody more interested in a certain deal – in a certain agreement. If you are buying a house, I was reading in the paper this morning that some people here in the U.S., when they try to sell their houses, they try to give the buyer some additional incentive – some additional gift. Because the economy (when we’re recording this episode) isn’t doing very well, especially houses, so some people try to sweeten the deal – sweeten the pot, we would say – by giving extra things to someone who buys your house.

Joon says, “You do?” meaning you do have free tickets. “Well, why didn’t you say so earlier?” meaning why didn’t you tell me before, we would not have needed to have this long conversation. Sylvia says, “I’m glad I could tempt you.” “To tempt (tempt) someone” means to try to make someone do what you want them to do, usually by giving them something. We can also use this as an adjective: you could say, “Mmm, that cup of coffee is very tempting,” meaning it really is something that I would like to try. It’s something that is very attractive, but of course, you sometimes have to resist these temptations, which is the noun. “Temptations” are things that attract you, that make you want to do something. Sometimes you have to say no, but Joon says yes.

Sylvia says, “Here’s her number (here’s her telephone number). I’ll tell her to expect your call (to wait for you to call her).” Joon says, “I’m always nice. Don’t worry. I’ll show her a good time.” “To show someone a good time” means to entertain them, to make sure that they are happy. Sylvia says, “Not too good!” meaning don’t try to do anything with her other than just be a friend.

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

[start of dialogue]

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Joon: I'm always nice. Don't worry. I'll show her a good time.

Sylvia: Not too good!

[end of dialogue]

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

If you have a question or comment, you can email us. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com.

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

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