



ESL Podcast 670 – To Forgive and Forget

GLOSSARY

voicemail – a system for recording audio messages from people who call one’s telephone number when one is not available to speak with them

* Press 7 to repeat the voicemail message, or 9 to delete it.

RSVP – an abbreviation of a French phrase, *Répondez s’il vous plaît*, meaning “Reply, if you please,” often used on invitations to request that the recipient let the organizer know whether he or she will attend.

* The party is next Thursday, so please RSVP by Tuesday so that we can be sure to buy enough food.

to play innocent – to pretend not to understand what another person is talking about, especially when one has done something wrong

* Don’t play innocent with me! I know you read my diary.

correct me if I’m wrong – an informal phrase used when one is fairly certain that one is correct, but wants the other person to tell one if one is incorrect

* Correct me if I’m wrong, but didn’t you tell me that James had no brothers?

knock-down, drag-out fight – a violent, long fight in which people hit each other, making each other fall down

* The spectators became very excited as they watched the knock-down, drag-out fight.

much less – a phrase used to emphasize something that is part of what one has previously said, meaning that if A is true, then B is certainly true

* Mahmoud is a vegetarian who never eats eggs or milk, much less meat.

water under the bridge – something that should be forgotten and is no longer important, often used when talking about a fight or an unpleasant relationship

* That all happened more than 30 years ago, and as far as I’m concerned, it’s water under the bridge.

to err is human, to forgive divine – a famous quotation from Alexander Pope, an English poet, meaning that everyone makes mistakes, but it is unusual and very special for people to forgive other people’s mistakes

* We all need to learn to accept others’ apologies. After all, to err is human, to forgive divine.



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to rant and rave – to complain loudly; to say in very strong words the reasons why one is angry, or to talk repeatedly about one's anger

* Whenever Geraldo returns from doing business at the bank, he always rants and raves about the poor customer service.

to hold (something) against (someone) – to hold a grudge; to refuse to forgive someone for something bad that he or she did in the past

* I can't believe you're still holding against me the fact that I broke that sculpture! I was only three years old at the time!

overdramatic – with very strong emotions and feelings, doing and saying things with a reaction that is stronger than necessary, especially to get attention from other people

* Samantha was sad when her cat died, but her sister became very overdramatic, crying for days and insisting on a special ceremony for its burial.

spat – an unimportant disagreement or fight that doesn't last for very long

* How often do you and your wife have a spat?

to forgive and forget – to decide that something is no longer important and stop being angry at someone for what happened or for what was said

* I was very angry when Viktor said those things last week, but I've decided to forgive and forget. I hope we can be friends again.

selective memory – the ability to remember only certain things, forgetting about other things, especially when they match one's bias or one's ideas about how something should be

* Traci remembers that vacation as the best time of her life, but she has such a selective memory! She has completely forgotten about getting bitten by mosquitoes, getting sick, and having her purse stolen.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Barbara call Luc?
 - a) To offer to host the party at her house.
 - b) To tell him whether she'd be able to go to the party.
 - c) To ask for an invitation to the party.

2. What does Angela mean when she says, "That's water under the bridge"?
 - a) It's no longer important.
 - b) She cried about it a lot.
 - c) The house is flooding.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

much less

The phrase "much less," in this podcast, is a phrase used to emphasize something that is part of what one has previously said: "I'd never volunteer for that organization, much less make a donation." The phrase "less and less" refers to a gradual decrease or reduction: "As Sheila continues to focus on her career, she has less and less free time." The phrase "less than (something)" means not very much of something: "We didn't like our time in Houston, because the people were less than friendly." Finally, the phrase "in less than no time" means very soon or very quickly: "We'll have your house painted in less than no time." Finally, the phrase "no less than" is used for emphasis when talking about very large numbers: "I must have called you no less than 10 times this morning. Why didn't you answer the phone?"

spat

In this podcast, a "spat" is an unimportant disagreement or fight that doesn't last for very long: "When their spats started becoming more frequent and more serious, they decided to start seeing a marriage counselor." The verb "to spat" can mean to fall down like rain: "Rain started to spat against the windshield, and then it became hail." Finally, the word "spat" is also the past tense of "to spit," which means to send a small amount of liquid out of one's mouth very quickly: "The children spat watermelon seeds out of their mouth to see who could spit the farthest." Or, "Look! There's a stain wherever you spat tobacco juice on the floor."



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CULTURE NOTE

Some flowers have unusual names that “evoke” (make an image or idea come to one’s mind) certain images when people hear them.

For example, there is a plant with “clusters” (groups) of small blue or “indigo” (dark blue) flowers called “forget-me-nots.” These flowers are “associated with” (thought about in connection with) memories and “remembrance” (the act of remembering something), and would be an appropriate gift when someone is going away and you do not want that person to forget about you.

“Baby’s breath” is a plant with many very small, white flowers. Baby’s breath is often dried and used in “bouquets” (arrangements of flowers put in a single base), especially next to roses. Baby’s breath is also often put in a “bride’s” (a woman on her wedding day) hair.

Bachelor’s button is a bright blue, round flower that looks something like a button. “Bachelors” (single, unmarried men) used to put them in a jacket “buttonhole” (the small hole in one’s clothing that a button passes through) when they “went courting” (visited a woman whom they were interested in romantically). Sometimes this flower is also called a “cornflower,” although it doesn’t grow on corn.

There is a beautiful, large flower known as the “bird of paradise,” where “paradise” means heaven, or a place where everything is perfect. The flower’s bright orange and blue “petals” (the colored parts of a flower that open and close) look a little bit like a bird’s head.

Finally, there is a “succulent” (a cactus-like plant) known as “hens and chicks” (chickens and their offspring or babies). It “flowers” (produces a flower), but it doesn’t look like a hen or chicks. However, many small flowers often surround a larger flower, so perhaps that is why they were given that name.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 670: To Forgive and Forget.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 670. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. Download the Learning Guide for this episode that will help you improve your English even faster. "Faster than what?" you ask. Well, faster than not reading the Learning Guide.

On this episode, we're going to have a dialogue between Luc and Angela called "To Forgive and Forget." Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Luc: You'll never guess who called and left a voicemail message today.

Angela: Who?

Luc: Barbara!

Angela: Oh, really? What did she want?

Luc: She said she was calling to RSVP for our party this Saturday.

Angela: Did she?

Luc: Stop playing innocent with me. Did you or did you not invite her to our party this Saturday?

Angela: I may have. Okay, I did.

Luc: Correct me if I'm wrong, but didn't you and Barbara have a knock-down, drag-out fight last month?

Angela: We may have.

Luc: And didn't you say that you'd never speak to her again much less invite her over to our house?



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Angela: That's water under the bridge. You know what they say: "To err is human, to forgive divine."

Luc: I can't believe my ears. You ranted and raved for days that you'd hold against her for the rest of your life all of the terrible things she said about you.

Angela: I was being overdramatic. I don't think I ranted and raved, actually. We just had a little spat. It's best just to forgive and forget.

Luc: Unbelievable! Why can't you have a selective memory when we have fights?

[end of dialogue]

Luc begins by saying to Angela, "You'll never guess who called and left a voicemail message today." A "voicemail" (one word) is a system for recording audio messages from people who call your telephone number and you don't answer the phone. The call, on most phones, will automatically "go to voicemail," we say; that is, the voicemail system begin and allow you to leave a message for that person.

Luc says, "You'll never guess who called and left a voicemail message today." "You'll never guess" is a common expression; you're going to tell the person something surprising, something that they don't expect. Angela says, "Who?" Luc says, "Barbara!" Angela says, "Oh, really? What did she want (why did she call)?" Luc says, "She said she was calling to RSVP for our party on Saturday." "RSVP" is an acronym; it is composed of letters, the first letter of different words. These are actually four French words – and my French is terrible, so I apologize to all French speakers for the following – "répondez s'il vous plaît," that is "please reply," or "reply, if you please." It's used in invitations in English to ask the person to email, call, or write a letter or a note saying whether they be there or not. So I invite you to a party, and on the bottom of the invitation I say "RSVP." That means I want you to let me know if you're coming or not. It's actually used as a verb. You'll notice in the sentence Luc says, "She said she was calling to RSVP." The word "to" (to) before a verb is the infinitive form, we say.

Angela says, "Did she?" That is, did she say she was coming to their party on Saturday. Luc says, "Stop playing innocent with me." "To play innocent" means to pretend not to understand what the other person is talking about, especially when the other person has done something that you consider wrong. So, "to play innocent" is to pretend, to act as though you don't know something when



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you really do and what you know is something that you did wrong. Luc says, “Stop playing innocent with me. Did you or did you not invite her to our party this Saturday?” Angela responds by saying, “I may have,” meaning “I may have invited her.” The word “may” introduces some uncertainty; we’re not sure if she did or not. But then she says, “Okay, I did (I did invite her).”

Luc then responds, “Correct me if I’m wrong.” This is an informal phrase used when you are pretty sure you are correct, but you want the other person to tell you if you are correct. So, Luc says, “Correct me if I’m wrong (tell me if what I am about to say is wrong), but didn’t you and Barbara have a knock-down, drag-out fight last month?” A “knock-down, drag-out fight” would be a long, perhaps violent fight – that is, people hitting each other – where one person actually falls down. That’s the literal meaning. However, we sometimes use it just to describe a very serious argument, a serious disagreement often involving yelling and shouting: “I told you not to come into my room, you...” you know, something like that. Well, Luc says that Angela and Barbara had one of these knock-down, drag-out fights last month. Angela, again, doesn’t say “yes” or “no.” She says, “We may have.” By the way, I should say “to knock down” is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to hit someone or something and make it fall to the ground or fall from the position where it is now. “To drag (drag) out” is another two-word phrasal verb meaning to have a very long event, in the sense that you are making it longer than perhaps it needs to be. That’s how it might be used in another situation; here, it just means a very serious, long fight.

Angela, as I say, does not say “yes” or “no.” She once again says, “We may have (possibly).” Luc says, “And didn’t you say that you’d never speak to her again much less invite her over to our house?” So Luc is saying you and Barbara had a big fight last month, and you said you would never even talk to her again – you would never speak to her – much less invite her over to our house. The phrase “much less” is used to emphasize something that is part of what you have already said. It’s another way of saying If “A” is true than “B” is also true. So for example, you might say “Mahmoud is a vegetarian who never eats eggs or milk much less meat.” So we start by saying that Mahmoud is a vegetarian who never eats eggs or milk; if that’s true, then of course, he doesn’t eat meat either. This expression, “much less,” is one that has other meanings in English, and those can be found in the Learning Guide.

So Luc is very surprised that Angela invited Barbara. Angela says, however, “That’s water under the bridge.” That fight they had, those things she said about never inviting her over, that’s all water under the bridge. “Water under the bridge” is an expression meaning something that should be forgotten, something that is no longer important; you used to think it was important but not anymore,



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especially if it is related to something like a fight or some unpleasant relationship you had with someone. Angela says, “You know what they say.” We use this expression when you are about to give a traditional saying or proverb. She says, “You know what they say: ‘To err is human, to forgive divine.’” “To err” (err) means to make an error. The verb form of “error” is rarely used, and therefore there are many people now who pronounce (err) as though it were the same pronunciation as “error,” so it is very common to hear “to err is human.” The traditional pronunciation is “to err is human.” It means to make a mistake is something that all we human beings do. “To forgive,” however, to say “that’s okay, I forgive you,” that is divine. “Divine” (divine) is something related to God, something that is in some ways holy. So, the expression “To err is human, to forgive divine” means that making mistakes is human but forgiving someone is an even better thing to do, it’s like what God does for us or to us. This is actually a quotation from one of the great English poets Alexander Pope – who was not a pope, though there was, I’m sure, a Pope Alexander; that’s a completely different person. “Pope” is the name given to the leader of the Catholic Church, and he lives in Rome – in, technically, Vatican City.

Anyway, getting back to the story here: What Angela is saying is that she has decided to forgive Barbara. Luc says, “I can’t believe my ears,” meaning I don’t believe what I am hearing. We say this when we are very surprised at what someone is telling us. He says, “You ranted and raved for days that you’d hold against her for the rest of your life all of the terrible things she said about you.” “To rant (rant) and rave (rave)” means to complain about something very loudly, to say in very strong words the reasons why you are angry. This is something people do when they get upset and they keep complaining about it over and over again: “to rant and rave.” “To hold something against someone” means to refuse to forgive someone for something bad they did to you in the past. It could have been a year ago; it could have been 10 years ago. If you say “I still hold that against him,” you mean I have not forgiven him, I’m still angry at that person. Many people will also say “I won’t hold that against you. I won’t hold the fact that you called me an idiot against you, I forgive you.” Remember, to err is human, to forgive divine!

Luc says that Angela was very angry; she ranted and raved saying that she would hold all of the terrible things that Barbara said about her against her. But Angela responds, “I was being overdramatic,” meaning I was showing very strong emotions and feelings, usually more than what I had to perhaps because I wanted other people to pay attention to me. If you, for example, spill a glass of water and you begin crying: “Oh, no! What am I going to do? My life is over! I spilled my water!” that’s being overly dramatic or overdramatic. You’re



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expressing feelings that are too strong for the situation, perhaps because you want other people to pay attention to you.

Angela continues, “I don’t think I ranted and raved, actually. We just had a little spat (spat).” A “spat” here means a small disagreement, a little fight that wasn’t very important and didn’t last very long. She says, “It’s best just to forgive and forget.” “Spat,” I should say, has other meanings that can be found in the Learning Guide. The expression “to forgive and forget” means you’re going to decide that you forgive the other person and you’re going to forget about what they did wrong to you.

Luc says, “Unbelievable (meaning this is unbelievable; this is incredible)! Why can’t you have a selective memory when we have fights?” So Luc and Angela are married, perhaps, and he’s saying to her “Well, you forgive her, why don’t you forgive me?” He says, “Why can you have a selective memory?” meaning you only remember certain things, especially things that are in agreement with your own opinions and views.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal rate of speech.

[start of dialogue]

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Angela: Who?

Luc: Barbara!

Angela: Oh, really? What did she want?

Luc: She said she was calling to RSVP for our party this Saturday.

Angela: Did she?

Luc: Stop playing innocent with me. Did you or did you not invite her to our party this Saturday?

Angela: I may have. Okay, I did.

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Angela: We may have.

Luc: And didn't you say that you'd never speak to her again much less invite her over to our house?

Angela: That's water under the bridge. You know what they say: "To err is human, to forgive divine."

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Luc: Unbelievable! Why can't you have a selective memory when we have fights?

[end of dialogue]

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think this was another great script by our scriptwriter, Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you, Lucy.

From Los Angeles, California, thank you for listening to us. Come back and listen to us again on ESL Podcast.

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