



All Ears English Episode 148:

Sorry, Not Sorry, Think Twice About Your Speech Habits

Gabby: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 148: “Sorry, Not Sorry, Think Twice About Your Speech Habits.”

[Instrumental]

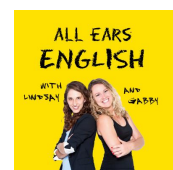
Gabby: Welcome to the All Ears English Podcast, where you’ll finally get real, native English conversation with your hosts, Lindsay McMahon, the ‘English Adventurer’ and Gabby Wallace, the ‘Language Angel,’ from Boston, USA.

[Instrumental]

Gabby: Hey, guys. So Lindsay has made a really awesome e-book, and I just wanna (want to) thank her and also to let you guys know where you can get the “Ten Ways to Learn English with a Podcast.” (Uh), you get that at AllEarsEnglish.com/free. So what's good about this e-book?

Lindsay: Oh, it's awesome. So it shows you how to use any podcast, specifically even our podcast, to improve your English. So go over and get it guys. It's at AllEarsEnglish.com/free.

[Instrumental]



Gabby: In this episode, you'll learn why saying "sorry" all the time could be a problem. And you'll learn to think critically about your speech habits and how to improve them.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey, Gabby!

Gabby: Hey, hey! I'm sorry.

Lindsay: I said, "Hey, Gabby!"

Gabby: Hey!

Lindsay: How you doing?

Gabby: Oh, hey, Lindsay! (Um), I'm sorry, (uh), are, are we starting our episode?

Lindsay: Yeah, we are starting. You need to get with the program.

Gabby: Oh, (um), I'm so sorry, I didn't realize we were starting already.

Lindsay: Well get with it.

Gabby: (Ugh), sorry. (Uh)...

Lindsay: And while you're at it.

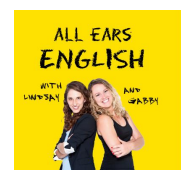
Gabby: Yeah!

Lindsay: I think you should stop saying sorry so much.

Gabby: Oh, I'm sorry. Oh, wait! No. Oh, no! Okay! So, (ugh), we tried to say sorry a lot just to (uh), hammer home a point there that (um)...

Lindsay: Sorry about that guys.

Gabby: Yeah, sorry. There's this commercial that just came out; it's gone viral. It's Pantene which is a kind of shampoo, and the commercial is talking about how women should stop apologizing. They should stop saying "sorry" so much. We'll include the commercial video (po-) in our blogpost, (um), so you guys can check that out. But basically, it shows how (um), how



especially women, will say “sorry” a lot, right? And (uh), maybe there’s some alternatives. So, actually in tomorrow’s episode, we’re gonna (going to) show some phrases that you might use with “sorry” and then (kind of) alternatives that you might use instead of (um) saying sorry.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: But in this episode, (you know), we just want to talk about the use of the word “sorry.” It’s quite interesting...

Lindsay: (Um).

Gabby: And that (um), some people believe there’s (kind of) an overuse of the word “sorry.” And so, to figure out, how to be selective...

Lindsay: Yeah!

Gabby: ...in using this.

Lindsay: And the first thing I would, I would think about, that you guys might wanna (want to) consider is, thinking about coming from your native language...

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: ...how often do you use the word sorry or some form of that, in your native language?

Gabby: Right.

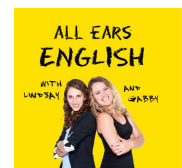
Lindsay: And actually, if you could come over to our blogpost and let us know about that.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Come over to AllEarsEnglish.com/148...

Gabby: (Uh-hm).

Lindsay: ...and let us know what is the cultural frame that you’re coming into English with. So, Gabby and I, both, were in Japan at different times...



Gabby: (Uh-hm).

Lindsay: ...and we heard the word “Sumimasen” (I am sorry, excuse me) used.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: We’re not sure if we’re interpreting “Sumimasen” (I am sorry, excuse me) correctly as meaning ...

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: ...“sorry” ...

Gabby: ...or maybe “excuse me” ...

Lindsay: We think it means “excuse me” ...

Gabby: ...or something else. Maybe you guys can help us out there...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...if there’s different ways that you use the word “sorry” ...

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: ...in your native language

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: So, in English and in American culture, I think there are some common reasons why you might say “sorry.”

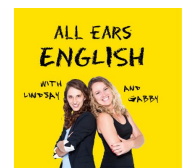
Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: (Um) one...

Lindsay: If I step on your foot.

Gabby: Yeah, sure, if you hurt me by accident. If it’s on purpose...

Lindsay: (You know), it’s like, if you inflict pain on someone you should apologize.



Gabby: Yeah, yeah, if it's by accident. (Um), if, if, if you're late to a meeting or, (you know), you're late to some event, you might wanna (want to) say...

Lindsay: Well, we had...

Gabby: "I'm sorry."

Lindsay: ...different opinions on this, right?

Gabby: Right. Well, that comes from (um) -- I have (kind of) a, a personal opinion that, first of all, we use the word "sorry" too often, and also if you, if it's not (like) a big mistake, if it's just a few minutes that you're late, I would say you don't always need to apologize. You take it, (you know), situation by situation. (Uh) it's up to you, but sometimes I think it's worse to focus on how you were late by saying "I'm sorry, I'm late." Maybe you're taking up more time by apologizing that you're late.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: So, I would encourage you guys to just think about this situation by situation – depends...

Lindsay: (Um).

Gabby: ...what's going on.

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: But, yeah...

Lindsay: But I would disagree with that.

Gabby: Yeah, yeah.

Lindsay: Can I share my point of...

Gabby: Sure, sure.

Lindsay: ...view on that one? Yeah.

Gabby: Absolutely.



Lindsay: So for that one I think that when you apologize -- in that situation being late.

Gabby: (Um).

Lindsay: So we know that in the U.S, Americans are pretty time conscious...

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: ...or pretty schedule-oriented.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: And it, it is a form of disrespect when you arrive late.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: And you -- I think you have the responsibility to address the fact that you've disrespected the people you're meeting.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: So as you said, I agree with the situation or looking at the context.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: (You know), what's happening? Are they even noticing that you're late? If they are, I think you owe them an apology.

Gabby: Right.

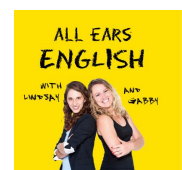
Lindsay: Maybe you don't need to use the word "sorry," right?

Gabby: (Um).

Lindsay: We're gonna (going to) give you alternatives tomorrow, but I do think that it's actually stepping into your power...

Gabby: (Um).

Lindsay: ...by accepting responsibility.



Gabby: Yeah, that's a good point.

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: I just thought of an example, (um) because, (you know), I, I sometimes I teach English in a class and sometimes students come in late, and I actually find it more disruptive if the student comes in and says to everyone, (you know), he's sorry.

Lindsay: (Um).

Gabby: And we'll talk about phrases...

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: ...how to do that, but sometimes if you're walking into a meeting, or a class, or something like that, and (um) people are already working or talking, or there's a presentation going on, you're actually going to be more disruptive if you interrupt everyone and say "Sorry!"

Lindsay: Right. I think it depends on whether or not they need you, in that...

Gabby: Right.

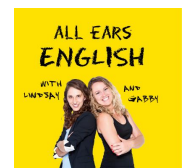
Lindsay: ...(like) are you part of a team that's actually already gotten started working on something...

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: ...and they need your help. You've done the work, prepared for that meeting – are, are you missing in that meeting, or is it just that you're in a (cla-) -- someone's giving a presentation and no one even knows that you're late.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: I agree and (tha-), in that case, it would be distracting saying, "I'm so sorry I was late. I had this problem." Right? No.



Gabby: I think I've been guilty of that one. All right, so if you, (uh), are late, you might wanna (want to) say "sorry." If you made a mistake...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: ...(uh), maybe you sent the wrong information in an email, or...

Lindsay: Would you apologize in that case?

Gabby: (Um), possibly, yeah, yeah. Possibly. Again, I, I try to use the word "sorry" selectively.

Lindsay: Okay.

Gabby: So, (um), (you know)...

Lindsay: So you would apologize but maybe not use the word "sorry."

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: Okay.

Gabby: (Um) maybe -- (I mean), obviously I apologize, another way to say I'm sorry, but, (um), I might say, "There was a mistake," or "I made a mistake in the last email, (um), here's the correct information." (Right).

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: So I avoid using the word "sorry."

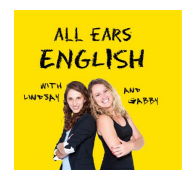
Lindsay: (Mm).

Gabby: Because sometimes I feel like using the word "sorry" is admitting some kind of weakness, and...

Lindsay: (Mm).

Gabby: ...if you do that too often, (um) it really reflects on how people think of you. I'm not saying...

Lindsay: (Mm).



Gabby: ...don't say sorry...

Lindsay: This is...

Gabby: but...

Lindsay: ...interesting.

Gabby: This is interesting, right? We kinda' (kind of) disagree.

Lindsay: I disagree with what you just said.

Gabby: Yeah, I know. I know.

Lindsay: Yeah, it's really -- I think there's a real fine line, but I think that by being humble it shows strength.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: Humility to me is strength, openness. Admitting that you've done something wrong actually shows that it's not gonna (going to) crush your being. (Like)...

Gabby: (Um).

Lindsay: ...you're not, (you know), okay, the thing you did was wrong, but it doesn't mean there's anything wrong with you as a person.

Gabby: Right.

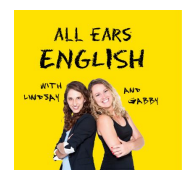
Lindsay: So, that's interesting.

Gabby: Yeah, I can agree with that. I think, (uh), just being careful and selective about how often...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...you say sorry.

Lindsay: I agree with that.



Gabby: If, if you watch the commercial on our blogpost, you'll see there's so many situations where people say "sorry" that it might not always be necessary.

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: But, (um), certainly if you upset someone, (uh), that's another situation where you might wanna (want to) say you're sorry and, and take that humble stance, where you're, you're showing, "Okay, (you know), I, I, regret hurting your feelings."

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: "So I, I empathize with you." It might be the, the...

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: ...true meaning.

Lindsay: And maybe a lot of this has to do with the tone of voice, (you know)...

Gabby: (Uh-hm).

Lindsay: (I mean), there's a way to say...

Gabby: "Sorry."

Lindsay: But, oh, well that's a (tot-) -- that's sending a different message.

Gabby: Yeah, that was for a different message.

Lindsay: But there's a way to say "sorry" with strength behind your voice.

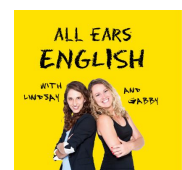
Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: And there's a way to say "sorry" without strength. "I'm sorry. Oh I'm sorry. Oh, I'm sorry. Oh, I'm sorry."

Gabby: Oh if it's sincere or not. That's a good point.

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: Yeah.



Lindsay: Okay. Yeah, sincerity or tone of voice.

Gabby: (Uh-hm).

Lindsay: (Um)...

Gabby: (Uh-hm).

Lindsay: ...so this is really nuanced, isn't it?

Gabby: Yeah, it really is. (Um), so, wow! It's a, it's a big topic, it's nuanced, but I think what the takeaway is, is to consider when you personally think it's appropriate to say "sorry." Be selective...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh), (uh-huh).

Gabby: ...and perhaps, (uh), think of some other alternative phrases that you could use just to expand your vocabulary even...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...in English.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...in (diff-), with different phrases, which we're going to show you on tomorrow's episode number 149.

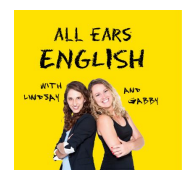
Lindsay: Right. Because I think in a lot of (wa-), cases -- in the case of this commercial, I think for these women in the commercial "sorry" is just a habit.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: And you're gonna (going to) develop your speaking habits in English based on who you learn with.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: So if you're in a circle of, of people who just drop "sorry" all the time as a speaking habit...



Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...you're gonna (going to) start doing that.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: So, I think what we're trying to say here is, critically consider your speaking habits, things like "sorry."

Gabby: Exactly.

Lindsay: Or even things like, (you know), filler words. (You know)...

Gabby: Oh, yeah...

Lindsay: We use "um" a lot on this show...

Gabby: (Um), (uh)...

Lindsay: ...because we're trying to give you real English...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...but if you're giving us speech, you would wanna (want to) think about whether you wanna (want to) use "(um)"...

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: ...all the time.

Gabby: Absolutely. So, so yeah, consider if you're relying on the same word over and over...

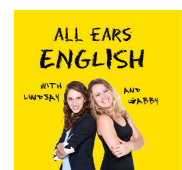
Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...and let's work on expanding your phrases.

Lindsay: Yeah, 'cause (because) it's easy to (da-), drop into habits.

Gabby: (Uh-hm).

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).



Gabby: Absolutely.

Lindsay: Okay.

Gabby: All right, sorry guys, this episode has gone a little bit longer than usual.

Lindsay: I'm so sorry.

Gabby: Not sorry. Not.

Lindsay: Not at all.

Gabby: All right, see you guys tomorrow.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: If you wanna (want to) put your ears into English more often, be sure to subscribe to our podcast in iTunes on your computer or on your smartphone. Thanks so much for listening and see you next time.

