



All Ears English Episode 231:

How Not to Be a Play-It-Safer When it Comes to Your English

Lindsay: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 231: “How Not To Be a Play-It-Safer When it Comes to Your English.”

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Welcome to the All Ears English Podcast, downloaded more than 5 million times. We believe in connection, not perfection. You’ll finally get real Native English conversation with your American hosts, Lindsay McMahon, the ‘English Adventurer’ and Michelle Kaplan, the ‘New York Radio Girl’ coming to you from Boston and New York City, USA.

[Instrumental]

Michelle: Are you a play-it-safer? Find out if you are and what this means for your English and your life.

[Instrumental]

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episodes are HOT, so go to AllEarsEnglish.com/HOT. That's AllEarsEnglish.com/H-O-T.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey, Michelle.

Michelle: Hey, Lindsay. How are you?

Lindsay: Good. How are you doing?

Michelle: I'm great. Thanks.

Lindsay: Awesome. So did you, did you work today? Did you teach your class today?

Michelle: Yes, I worked. I taught my classes and (uh), we just started some new classes. So I'm getting used to, (you know), my new students. When I'm teaching it's really exciting.

Lindsay: Oh, that's super cool. How many students do you have in your classes?

Michelle: (Mm) in one class I have about four. So it's a small...

Lindsay: Oh.

Michelle: ...class. In one I have maybe (like) between – (like) I think maybe 13 and the last one is about, (hm), anywhere from 6-10.

Lindsay: Oh, wow.

Michelle: Depending on the [crosstalk].

Lindsay: They're lucky. They get you – (I mean), a really small class with you as the teacher. That's a pretty good deal. I think.

Michelle: Thanks. Thanks. No, it's, it's a lot of fun. I like the small classes and yeah, it's a great time.

Lindsay: Yeah, yeah. And that's cool. So, so, (you know), going to classes is, is one way to learn and, (you know), that's the way a lot – some of our listeners



learn and then there's other ways to do it too, right. Right, Michelle? So, so, (you know), sometimes it's a good idea to pick up your phone. As we know our listeners at the All Ears English podcast have done, they've picked up their smartphones. They've found us in the iTunes store and they're taking learning on as their own personal project.

Michelle: (Hm), I think that – I'm so impressed with people who do that.

Lindsay: Yeah. I know. It's pretty cool. It's pretty cool 'cause (because) when you take something on as your own project, you kind of – you have ownership over it and I think the results tend to turn out differently.

Michelle: Absolutely, (right). If it's important to you, if it's important enough to you, you are really going to achieve your goals.

Lindsay: Oh, yeah. And so just to that end, I want to share a fantastic quote that I've had posted to my bedroom wall for the past (like) three years.

Michelle: Oh, wow! It must be good. It must be good.

Lindsay: Well, I hope it's good. And I want to share, and let's talk about it after I share it and, (you know), we can talk about it in terms of what it means for our listeners here at All Ears English and on a more important and deeper level, what it means for life.

Michelle: Okay.

Lindsay: For our lives.

Michelle: Okay. Awesome.

Lindsay: Okay. So here is the quote. Are you ready? Drumroll.

Michelle: Ready.

Lindsay: Here we go. Here it is. "Be daring. Be different. Be impractical. Be anything that will assert integrity of purpose and imaginative vision against the play-it-safers, the creatures of the commonplace, the slaves of the ordinary."



Michelle: Ooh, I like that. That's so inspiring.

Lindsay: That is inspiring. *And* the natural question of course would be who said it. *And*, the cool thing is I forgot to write down the person who said it.

Michelle: Oh, no!

Lindsay: That's terrible. Oh, my god. I'm so bad. Well, guys, if you wanna (want to) know who said this quote, please come back to AllEarsEnglish.com/231 and you can get the original person who said this quote. I'm so sorry that I don't have the name. But let's talk about this quote. First of all, Michelle, what does play it safer mean? Play it, play it safe, to play it safe, (I mean), what does that mean?

Michelle: I would say play it safe means you don't wanna (want to) take risks. You just, you wanna (want to) do what you can to get by, follow all the rules and you don't really do anything (uh) that's different from the ordinary.

Lindsay: Ah, yes. So if, so that's to play it safe. And if I'm a play-it-safer, that means I'm someone who, who does that right?

Michelle: Right, right. Exactly.

Lindsay: Ah, okay. I see. (Hmm), do you know anyone in your life who's a play-it-safer?

Michelle: Oh, that's a good question.

Lindsay: You don't have to name names.

Michelle: (Um), yeah, (I mean), of course, (like), I think that, that definitely some people are more interested in doing things that are outside of the box, (you know)...

Lindsay: Right.

Michelle: ...that are a little bit different. But I also think that some people are, (you know), maybe a little afraid to do something that's different from what they know.



- Lindsay:** Yeah. And that's okay 'cause (because) we know that routine is comfortable. (I mean) [crosstalk]...
- Michelle:** Oh, absolutely.
- Lindsay:** it's so easy to fall into a routine. Even like a little thing like having a snack at a certain time of day. It's so easy to fall into that routine, right. Because it feels safe. A routine feels safe and we're human so we wanna (want to) feel safe.
- Michelle:** Right. Exactly. I think there's something really good to be said about routine. I think that we need some of it.
- Lindsay:** (Uh-huh).
- Michelle:** Exactly what you said, but maybe too much is not so good.
- Lindsay:** Totally. Totally. Yeah, exactly. And then the next word was commonplace, (right). We said the 'creatures of the commonplace'.
- Michelle:** (Um).
- Lindsay:** What's the commonplace?
- Michelle:** (Um). I would say (uh), (you know), just regular, regular, like ordinary, regular, nothing different, right?
- Lindsay:** Yeah.
- Michelle:** So 'creatures of the commonplace' – people who, (you know), just, like I said, do what they can to get by. They follow the routine like what you said.
- Lindsay:** And maybe they just (kind of) take what other people say is the – the limits that other people set on them for their lives and they, they accept that.
- Michelle:** (Um). Yes. I think that's such a good point.



Lindsay: I know. It's so funny. It's like sometimes I have a dream right. I have a (dr-), (like), I wanna (want to) build a business or I wanna (want to) do something really cool. I wanna (want to) drive across the US and I'll share it with someone who, who maybe is more of a play-it-safer...

Michelle: (Um).

Lindsay: ...and they might say, "Oh, you're crazy, you'll never be able to do that."

Michelle: (Um).

Lindsay: And that's dangerous.

Michelle: Absolutely. And you wanna (want to) surround yourself, I think, with people who are also, (you know), willing to take these kinds of risks with you.

Lindsay: Yeah, because sometimes, we, we – (you know), I think that's a famous Jim Rohn quote. This time I have... I have the person...

Michelle: You have the person.

Lindsay: Yeah, I think – didn't he say – do you know this one Michelle? He said, (um), "You become the average of the four people you spend the most time with." Have you heard that one?

Michelle: I actually haven't, but that's a cool quote.

Lindsay: That's a good one. So it's true. We become who we spend time with. So who do we wanna (want to) become?

Michelle: Right.

Lindsay: So Michelle, what's your reaction to this quote? (I mean), how does this make you feel? What does it make you think of?

Michelle: (Um), it makes feel, I think, inspired. Definitely. It almost makes me fear the commonplace, (like), (you know), it makes me reflect on myself.

Lindsay: (Um).



Michelle: Right. What am I doing in my life? Am I a play-it-safer? How much of a play-it-safer am I? Because, of course, in some aspects I am, (like)...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Michelle: Like how we said that, (you know), I think in some ways all humans are...

Lindsay: Sure.

Michelle: ...play-it-safer, right. But it makes me reflect on myself and think is, 'Am I too much of a play-it-safer?' or 'Do I take some risk?' It makes me think, 'Okay, maybe I should try new things. Don't forget to try new things.' How 'bout (about you)? How do – (I mean), you had this on your wall, you said, for a long time. [crosstalk] (I mean), it obviously, it means something to you, so what does it – how does it speak to you?

Lindsay: Yeah, well, it keeps me motivated (um), in – with my work, (right), because one area that I take a lot of risks is-is in my work. I have two businesses and I don't have an em-employer and that's a big risk. But what you said, I think is really interesting that everyone can be, can be play-it-safer in one aspect of life, but more daring and risk-taking in another aspect of life.

Michelle: Right.

Lindsay: (Like), maybe for example, someone has a job and they're a play-it-safer in terms of their work, but then in their social life, they go out and they talk to anyone at every party and they're totally the life of the party.

Michelle: Right. Right. I think – (I mean), do you think that if somebody who is completely out of the box in every aspect of their life, do you think that that can almost be bad? Like too much of one or the other?

Lindsay: Yeah, maybe all at one time.

Michelle: (Uh-hmm).

Lindsay: It could be – if you try to take all those risks, jump out of the box – is that a term? I think that is, (right). Jump out of the box – I guess we're making up our own expression here. If you jump out of the box at one time in all



aspects of your life that could be chaotic. But I also think that we push our limits throughout our life. So if we're continuing to take risk, then things start to feel very easy like...

Michelle: (Um).

Lindsay: ...doing something that seems really scary to other people becomes the commonplace for you. So it's like the commonplace moves.

Michelle: Ah. Yeah. I like that. I like that. I totally agree. And, (you know), different people can have different strengths, and (you know), in different areas. And...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Michelle: ...(um), they may, may feel, like you said, more comfortable going out of the box in one area of their life and less so in another.

Lindsay: Exactly. So for our listeners in terms of learning English, (I mean), what could this mean? (Like), how could they be not – less of play-it-safers? How could we try to get away from the commonplace? What are some methods, and some tools, some actions that our listeners can take? What do you think Michelle?

Michelle: I think there's so much that you can do with learning a language to, (you know), mix it up. I think there's so much you can do. Anything from, (you know), (ma-), trying to make friends with somebody who speaks the language you're trying to learn, (right).

Lindsay: Yeah.

Michelle: So, (I mean), if you have that opportunity and, (you know), maybe you see there's (like) a meetup or something like this, some (sort of) social situation – and you said it yourself, (you know), instead of being in my bubble...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).



Michelle: ...I'm going to try – I have a goal to, (you know), really talk to native speakers and that can be really difficult. But if you just go and you keep on speaking in your first language and only talk to your friends in your first language, then maybe (um), (you know), you'll be missing some of the positive things about learning the language.

Lindsay: Yeah. I really like that and I think a lot of it is about – well, two things. It's setting that goal. For example, if you say that what you want to do to get out of the commonplaces, maybe after you go to your class, you want to go and speak with native speakers.

Michelle: Right.

Lindsay: That's the first thing. And then it's the way you do it, (right). Do you approach them – and we've talked about this in another episode a while back: How do you approach the native speakers? (You know), do you hold your head high and do you say, "Hey, I wanna (want to) be... (you know), let's be friends." Do you connect with them on the social friendship level or do you go begging to them and saying "Please help me with my English." [crosstalk]. That's not gonna (going to) build any real relationship. So, do you have the relationship and the connection in mind first or do you just have the, (you know), what you wanna (want to) get from them in mind?

Michelle: (Um), yeah, that's so, that's such a good point because I think that it's really obvious to native speakers, "Okay, this person doesn't really want to be my friend. They want, (you know), me to be there for them to help them learn." But if they feel, (you know), "Oh, wow, this person really wants to know me."

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Michelle: "Oh, and by the way I can speak with them." (You know), they're learning my language. I think it can be really exciting and people can be open to that.



Lindsay: Absolutely. And the ways to do that – (you know), we’re giving you guys the tools on this podcast to start those real, natural conversations, (you know). So if you go back to AllEarsEnglish.com/229 and AllEarsEnglish.com/228, you’re gonna (going to) see two very, very real conversations that could help you. You could mirror those conversations when you’re out there starting connections, making connections with native speakers.

Michelle: (Uhn).

Lindsay: But really trying to go straight to the persons, (you know), persons... straight to the person’s heart. (You know), you’re trying to make friends with them. You’re not trying to get a language partner immediately.

Michelle: Right, right. I think that’s so important.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Michelle: (Um), and yeah, I, I think this is a really great way to learn. (I mean) are there any other daring ways to learn that you can think of?

Lindsay: (Hmm), well I’m thinking about one thing that we can start to do on this show that I think would be really cool. I would love to start having (like) challenges.

Michelle: Cool.

Lindsay: I think it would be so cool if we could have a community-wide All Ears English challenge and we have to figure out together, Michelle, what those challenges will be and then we’ll ask our listeners to come back and let us know how it went. (Uh)...

Michelle: I love that. That’s so cool. It’s like a game.

Lindsay: It-it’ll be like a game. It’ll be really fun. So we’re gonna (going to) be working on that for you guys over the next couple of months. But yeah, engaging an-an-and this is something we talked about yesterday in Episode 230, (you know). So setting that one action, that one goal for



yourself and going out and just doing it. (Um), I think it's just kind of a philosophy, a way to live that we can start to learn to think that way and live that way every day.

Michelle: Yeah, absolutely. I really like that. I think it's really inspiring.

Lindsay: Cool. Alright. Well, thanks for chatting with me today Michelle.

Michelle: Thank you Lindsay. That was great.

Lindsay: I know. I'll see you next week.

Michelle: Okay, I'll see you next week.

Lindsay: Alright.

Michelle: Bye.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: If you believe in connection, not perfection, *and* you wanna (want to) put your ears into English more often, please subscribe to our podcasts in iTunes, on your computer or on your Smartphone. And hey, if you liked today's show, please let us know with a review in iTunes. Thanks so much for listening and see you next time.

