



ESL Podcast 20 – Formal Emails

GLOSSARY

keynote – a speech or presentation that is the focus of an event, such as a large, important meeting or a conference

* There were many interesting speakers at the meeting, but Dr. Kozak was chosen to give the keynote because she was an expert on the topic.

conference – an event where experts about a specific topic meet and share information about that topic; an event where people interested in a certain topic listen to experts talk about that topic

* Alton had recently started his own business, so he went to a conference about running successful businesses to learn from the experiences of others.

admirer – fan; a person who strongly appreciates, respects, or adores something or someone

* The talented singer had many admirers who loved to hear her sing.

research – intense study about a specific topic; the active pursuit of knowledge about a specific topic

* The student's research on the Civil War was very thorough, and he was able to write a great essay because of it.

top – best; very important or greatly valued

* Rolanda's grades were very good and she was one of the top students at her school.

groundbreaking – new and important information; new information that could lead to a change in the way a subject is viewed or studied

* The scientist has developed a groundbreaking treatment that could completely change the way doctors treat lung cancer.

to sing (someone's) praises – to talk about someone's good qualities; to say how good someone is

* Craig had a very good opinion about the way his manager organized the office and he often sang the manager's praises to the other workers.

to consider (someone) – to think about choosing someone for a position or task

* Only one person could get the promotion at work, and Kayla hoped that her boss would consider her for it.



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attachment – a document, picture, or other file that is sent with an email or letter
* The client wanted an outline of the agreement, so Jerold sent her the outline as an attachment to his email.

CV – curriculum vitae; a document describing one's level of education, previous work experience, training, accomplishments, skills and more
* Shaniqua listed her three graduate degrees on her CV.

qualification – a quality or feature that makes someone capable of doing a requested task or meeting someone else's expectations and demands
* The job required someone with five years of experience doing that type of work, but nobody who applied had that qualification.

academic – relating to education; concerning formal study or education
* Carlos was very serious about his education, and his academic record was very good as a result.

privilege – honor; a special benefit that not everyone is given
* Who will have the privilege of introducing our special speaker for today?



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CULTURE NOTE

Email Attachments

These days, when applying for a job, “applicant” (person applying for something) may be asked to submit their “resumes” (document listing one’s education and job experience) “electronically” (using a computer or computer program).

An “attachment” is anything extra that is added to or connected to the main thing. In an email, an attachment is usually a file that is also included within the email and that one can open by clicking onto an “icon” (small image, picture). Your resume may be attached to an email when applying for a job.

The most common phrases people use are “attached is/are” or “I’ve attached.”

- “I’ve attached three photos for you to choose from.”
- “Attached is the sales report for the month of June.”

If you want to be a little more formal, you can use the phrases “attached please find” or “please find attached.” These are more appropriate for formal business emails.

- “Please find attached the customer lists for our new products.”
- “Attached please find three documents related to the court case we discussed.”
- “Thank you for taking the time to interview me for the new position at your company. Attached please find a list of my former employers.”

If you are sending a letter in the mail, you can use the “attached” phrases listed above when what you are adding/attaching is “stapled” (attached to a piece of paper using a small wire clip that goes through both pieces of paper) to or “paper clipped” (attached to a piece of paper using a small wire clip that binds the two pages together) to the letter. If it is not physically attached but included in the same envelope or package, then use “enclosed” instead.

- “Enclosed is an example of the new packaging for our product.”
- “Please find enclosed the reports from the past six months.”



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 20 – Formal Emails.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 20. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

On this episode, we're going to listen to an email from a student to a professor that uses a little bit more formal language. Let's get started.

[start of story]

Dear Dr. Lee:

I don't know if you'll remember me, but I introduced myself to you after your keynote at last week's conference. As I mentioned to you, I have read all of your work and I am a great admirer of your research. Your article in the top journal Language Learning was groundbreaking.

The reason I am contacting you is that I would like to come to your university to study with you. I met some of your students at the conference and they couldn't stop singing your praises as a professor. I don't know if you are accepting any new students for the next year, but if so, I hope you will consider me.

I have included two attachments to this email. I am sending a copy of my CV, and I am also including a research paper I completed earlier this year. I hope that these will give you an idea of my qualifications and experience. Please let me know if you need more information or more samples of my academic work.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to meet you at the conference, and I hope to hear more about your research at a future conference.

Sincerely,

Lucy Hocevar

[end of story]

Our email begins by the person writing it saying, "Dear Doctor" – abbreviated (Dr.) – "Lee:". A couple things about this first line of the email, what we would call



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the “salutation” – it begins by using the word “dear,” which is very common in writing letters and now emails, especially formal emails or letters. “Doctor,” of course, is a title that a professor might have. It also would be used, of course, for a medical doctor.

“Lee” is her last name. In writing a salutation such as this, you wouldn't use the first and last name. Normally in English, when you're writing a formal note or letter, you're going to just use the title of the person – “Mr.,” “Ms.,” or in this case “Dr.,” and then the last name of the person. So, if this person's name was Judy Lee, you wouldn't say “Dear Doctor Judy Lee.” You would say instead, “Dear Doctor Lee.”

Finally, the colon “:” in the salutation is also an indication that this is a formal email or, in the case of a letter, a formal letter. If you use a comma “,” that's a little less formal. The first paragraph begins, “I don't know if you'll remember me.” This is a common phrase when you're writing a letter to someone whom you've met, but you're not sure if the person will remember you. Perhaps it was many weeks ago or even months ago.

Lucy says here, “I don't know if you'll remember me, but I introduced myself” – I came up to you and told you my name – “after your keynote at last week's conference.” Okay, so it's only been one week since she has met this professor. Although, the professor may have met many people at the conference, and so it's still a good idea to use this expression, “I don't know if you'll remember me.”

“Keynote” (keynote) refers to a speech at a large conference or convention that is given to a large group of people. A “conference” is an event where people who are interested in the same topic, the same ideas, meet together and talk about those ideas. Almost every professional group has its own conference where you go and you can learn more about your particular area of interest, or your particular type of job, by talking with other people who have those same jobs or those same interests. This was clearly an academic conference – a conference for university professors.

Lucy says, “As I mentioned to you” – as I said to you in our conversation – “I have read all of your work.” “Work” here means “all the things you have written.” “And I am a great admirer of your research.” “To be an admirer” (admirer) means to be a fan, someone who really appreciates and respects someone. You can be an admirer in a professional sense. You could also be an admirer in a personal sense. We have the expression “a secret admirer.” This would be someone who likes you in a romantic way but doesn't say who they are. They may send you a



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note but not sign the note, or send you a flower but not say where the flower is from. That would be a secret admirer.

Well, Lucy is not a secret admirer. She's an admirer of Dr. Lee's research. "Research" refers to scientific studies, in this case, that professors do so they have something to do with their time. As a former professor, that's not too far from the truth, let me tell you. Anyway, Dr. Lee had an article in a "top journal." That is what Lucy says in her formal email. A "top journal" would mean a very important journal or one of the best journals. A "journal" is a scientific magazine where scientific studies, articles, are published.

This was a study in a journal called Language Learning that was, according to Lucy, "groundbreaking." Something that is "groundbreaking" – one word – is something that is new and important. New information about a certain topic would be groundbreaking. We often use this when we are talking about information that may start people researching in a completely different direction or in a completely different area. Some of the earliest studies in a particular scientific field are often called groundbreaking.

Lucy says the reason she is contacting Dr. Lee is that she would like to come to her university to study with her, to be her student. She says, "I met some of your students at the conference and they couldn't stop singing your praises as a professor." "To sing someone's praises" (praises) means to talk about someone's good qualities, to say how good someone is at what they do. Lucy is saying that she met some of Dr. Lee's students at the conference and they were telling her about how wonderful a professor Dr. Lee was.

Lucy says, "I don't know if you are accepting any new students for the next year" – I don't know if you will allow new students to study with you next year. "But if so" – if you are – "I hope you will consider me." "To consider someone" means to think about choosing them for a position, or for a job, or for a task. "I am considering John as our next president." I'm thinking about him and making him our next president. This verb, "to consider," is used in this case in formal situations by people who are in authority, who have the power to make decisions.

Lucy says, "I have included two attachments to this email." When you have an "attachment" (attachment) to an email, you have a document or other file that you are sending with the email. You could be sending a photograph. You could be sending a Microsoft Word document. You could be sending a text file, a PDF file – all of these things would be called attachments.



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She says, “I am sending (you) a copy of my CV.” “CV” stands for curriculum vitae. It’s a document that describes your level of education, your previous jobs, your accomplishments, your publications if this is an academic position, and so forth. “CV” is usually used to refer to what in most companies is simply called a “résumé” (resume). “CV,” however, is used for very high level positions or any position that involves being a professor or a teacher at the university.

Lucy says, “I am also including” – I’m also attaching, she could say – “a research paper I completed earlier this year. I hope that these will give you an idea of my qualifications and experience.” Your “qualifications” are the things that make you capable of or that show that you are able to do something. She says, “Please let me know if you need more information or more samples of my academic work.” “Academic” here refers to university- or college-level work that is part of your – either schoolwork (your school assignments) or research that you’ve done at the university.

Finally, she says, “It was a pleasure and a privilege to meet you at the conference, and I hope to hear more about your research at a future conference.” Lucy said it was a “privilege” to meet Dr. Lee. “Privilege” (privilege) is the same as honor – a special benefit that is not given to everyone. She is saying it was very nice to meet her. This expression, “It was a pleasure and a privilege,” is a very formal one that you would use in cases like this, where you’re talking about someone who is important or who you want to say is important.

Lucy ends her email by saying, “Sincerely” and then a comma “,” – “Sincerely,” is followed on the next line by the name of the person sending the email. If this were a letter, you would have a few spaces after the “Sincerely,” and you would sign your name. But we don’t sign our emails, typically. So, you would just put your name. In this case, it’s Lucy Hocevar. Hocevar is her last name in this story.

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

[start of story]

Dear Dr. Lee:

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It was a pleasure and a privilege to meet you at the conference, and I hope to hear more about your research at a future conference.

Sincerely,

Lucy Hocevar

[end of story]

I'm an admirer of our scriptwriter, Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you, Lucy.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again right here on ESL Podcast.

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