TRANSCRIPT · EPISODE 205

They Made Me the Boss of People Older Than Me | Juan's Second Year, Chapter 1

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

111 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

Welcome to Your English Toolbox, the podcast that trains your English while you live your real life.

I am Martin.

And I am Julia.

You met Juan earlier in our final Small Talk conversation.

Today, he is back to tell his own stories.

Hello, I am Juan.

I am twenty-four, and I am from Sants, a neighbourhood in Barcelona.

I moved to Wolverhampton to study business.

I also work in a café near the station.

How did you feel after that conversation?

I liked it very much.

It was strange to hear my story on a podcast, but I loved talking with you.

We spoke about my first year here, when I could understand English but could not always join the conversation.

I understood almost everything, but I still felt outside the room.

And you think some listeners know that feeling.

Yes.

Maybe you have studied English for years, and you still hesitate when somebody speaks to you at work.

Maybe you know the words, but your voice disappears when the moment is important.

That happened to me.

I was good at exercises, but becoming fluent with real people was much harder.

I had to learn how to ask for help, how to make friends, and how to speak when I was afraid of making a mistake.

Is that why you wanted to come back?

Yes, and because you invited me.

I enjoyed our last conversation so much that I am joining the team in two new programmes.

During the week, I will share a short episode about a phrase or a misunderstanding from everyday life.

On Sundays, I will spend more time with Martin and Julia telling you what happens in my second year here.

I will share the things that helped me, and the things I got wrong, so you can use them in your own life.

These are small moments from real life, not perfect conversations from a textbook.

The short weekly show is called What Does That Even Mean?

And this longer Sunday conversation is Juan's Second Year.

That gives us a reason to follow you each week.

And you do not have to hear the earlier episodes to join us today.

Although I hope you will.

So, what happened at the café?

A few Saturdays ago, my manager Dawn took me into the back room.

It is not really a room, just some boxes and one chair.

I thought I had done something wrong.

And had you?

No.

She asked me to run the Saturday shift.

She told me I was the person who asked questions when I did not understand.

That is quite a change from your first year.

A year ago, I nodded at everything.

Now, asking questions helped me get this job.

Did you tell your mother?

On our Sunday call, at seven, as always.

I knew the English words shift supervisor immediately.

I had to stop and remember the Spanish word encargado.

And then came your first shift in charge.

Yes.

At eleven, the empty glasses came back from the tables.

Usually, I carry them to the back.

This time, I needed to ask Sue to do it.

Who is Sue?

She is fifty-six and has worked there for eleven years.

She knows that café better than I do.

What did you say?

I said, take the glasses to the back.

The instruction was clear.

What happened next?

She took the glasses.

But she looked at me, and I thought I had sounded rude.

I did not ask her, so I cannot know exactly what she felt.

Still, I felt uncomfortable, and I carried everything myself for the next four hours.

That must have been exhausting.

It was.

On the number four bus home, I remembered how Sue had asked me to carry glasses in the past.

What did she say?

She said, do you want to take the glasses to the back?

And you realised it might have been a request.

Yes.

I had heard the words as a question about what I wanted.

But in that situation, she probably meant, please take the glasses to the back.

That is easy to miss when you are learning the language.

It is also worth checking the situation before deciding what somebody means.

Words, tone, relationship and urgency all matter.

And a direct instruction can be appropriate, especially when something needs doing immediately.

I wish somebody had told me that a year ago.

Let us practise two useful ways to make the request.

Listen, then repeat during the pause.

Could you take the glasses to the back?

That sounds like a request, especially with a friendly tone.

Would you mind taking the glasses to the back?

After would you mind, use a verb ending in I-N-G.

Taking, not take.

You can add when you get a chance if the task is not urgent.

Could you take the glasses to the back when you get a chance?

That gives the other person some flexibility.

More words do not automatically make a request more polite.

Choose a sentence that fits the person, the moment and the work.

And if someone asks you, do you want to take the glasses to the back, listen for the context.

It may be a real question, or it may be a gentle request.

And if I cannot do it immediately, I can say, I can do it after I finish this.

Exactly.

You can also ask, would you like me to do that first?

What will you do differently on your next shift?

I will ask Sue instead of guessing what her look meant.

And I will remember that being in charge does not mean I have to sound like somebody else.

What is coming next Sunday?

I need to talk to someone about coffees that were made incorrectly.

I have been thinking about it since Tuesday.

Then we will work through that together next week.

Before you go, there is another episode you can listen to.

Who Are You in English? explores why speaking another language can make you feel different from your usual self.

I knew every word I said to Sue.

I still did not sound like the person I wanted to be.

That is why these two episodes belong together.

Find the transcript, the vocabulary and the free study materials on yourenglishtoolbox.com.

Thank you for spending this time with us.

Thank you for listening to my story.

See you next Sunday.