



ESL Podcast 732 – Preferring Different Work Styles

GLOSSARY

to work out – to be successful; to be effective; to be the way people hope or expected it would be

* Ahmed tried to become a rock musician, but when that didn't work out, he went back to school.

work style – the way one completes projects, working alone or with others, accepting or rejecting feedback, finishing work early or waiting until the last minute, and more

* The interviewers asked Hilda a lot of questions about her work style, because they wanted to know whether she would be able to work with the rest of the team.

to clash – for two things to not match or not go well together; for two things to be very different so that their combination is bad or ineffective

* The heavy metal music in his headphones clashed with the peaceful, natural setting of the garden.

to butt heads at every turn – to often disagree; to fight frequently

* Antonio and his roommate have been butting heads at every turn, so he's finally looking for his own apartment.

to partner up – to put people in groups of two for a particular purpose; to pair up

* Have you ever thought about partnering up with Kyoko to start a new business?

to complement – to be a good match for someone or something; to go well with someone or something else

* This lamp would complement the décor in your living room.

strength – something that one does very well; something that one is especially good at; a strong skill or ability

* Shawn's greatest strength is his creativity.

collaborative – doing things as part of a team; working well with other people

* Are most inventions the result of a collaborative process, or the work of a single inventor?

to talk things out – to explore one's ideas by talking about them with another person, usually so that things become clearer and one can decide what to do

* When Charlotte has trouble making a decision, she usually talks things out with her brother.



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to go solo – to do something by oneself, without involving other people

- * - Do you want help shopping for a new suit?
- No, thanks. I'm going to go solo this time.

to consult (someone) – to ask for someone's opinion before doing something or making a decision

- * I can't believe you bought a new car without consulting your wife first!

autonomy – independence; the ability to do things without involving other people or asking for their opinion or permission

- * This company is known for giving its employees the autonomy they need to solve customers' problems as quickly as possible.

the sum is greater than the parts – a phrase used to mean that people who work together are able to accomplish much more than those people could accomplish by working alone

- * Our company relies on teamwork, because we all know that the sum is greater than the parts.

to pool – to share or combine; to use two or more things together or at the same time

- * If we pool our money, we'll be able to rent a nice home on the beach.

to team up – to pair up; to begin working with another person when only two people will be involved

- * Do you want to team up and work on this report together?

overrated – valued higher than the actual value of something; not as good or impressive as something is generally thought to be

- * Jim believes that honesty is overrated and that telling the truth brings nothing but trouble.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Who isn't very good at working as part of a team?
 - a) Hugo.
 - b) Melissa.
 - c) Leo.

2. What does Hugo mean when he says, "Two people pooling ideas will make the product better"?
 - a) The product would be better if it could be used in a swimming pool.
 - b) Two people working together will come up with a better product.
 - c) Betting the on the product will make it better.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to clash

The verb "to clash," in this podcast, means for two things to be very different so that their combination is bad or ineffective: "Her outgoing personality at work clashes with the traditional stereotype of how a librarian is supposed to act." The verb "to clash" also means for two colors or patterns to not look good together, especially for clothing: "Does this red blouse clash with these purple pants?" The verb "to clash" can mean to fight or to begin fighting: "Do you think the police will clash with the demonstrators, or will everything remain peaceful?" Finally, the phrase "to clash over (something)" means to disagree on something and argue about it: "Most of our family reunions end with a clash over politics or religion."

to pool

In this podcast, the verb "to pool" means to share or combine, or to use two or more things together or at the same time: "If all countries could just pool their resources, we could put an end to world hunger." A "carpool" is an arrangement where a group of people travel to and from work in a single car, usually to save money on gas and parking: "Why don't you and Jan start a carpool, since you live in the same neighborhood?" Finally, a "tide pool" is a shallow rocky area that is below the surface of the ocean only part of the day, so that people can see sea creatures when it is not covered by water: "Look at the colorful starfish we found in that tide pool!"



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CULTURE NOTE

Collaboration Between Thomas Edison and J.P. Morgan and the Vanderbilts

Many people know that Thomas Edison “invented” (created something for the first time) the first “practical” (able to be used in real life) “light bulb” (the round, glass ball that produces light when screwed into the base of a lamp). But that is only part of the story. Edison had a lot of creative ideas, but he didn’t have enough money to “realize” (make something happen) them on his own.

Edison needed “financial backing” (money that makes something possible), so he had to collaborate with “wealthy” (rich) people or businesses. Many “investors” (people who give their money to a project because they believe it will be successful and will make them money) gave Edison “funding” (money to be used for a particular purpose) in the 1870s and 1880s. These investors included J.P. Morgan and the Vanderbilts.

J.P. Morgan was a wealthy banker and an art collector. The Vanderbilts made their money in the “railroads” (companies related to transportation by train) and “shipping” (sending goods across large distances). Their funding led to the creation of the Edison Electric Light Company, which later “merged” (joined another company) with the Thomson-Houston Electric Company to create General Electric, which is still “in operation” (in business) today.

Edison’s funders supported him in other ways, too. For example, J.P. Morgan’s home in New York City became the first “private residence” (a home owned by an individual or family, not a business or government building) to have electric lighting in New York.

Edison’s success would not have been possible without collaborating with J.P. Morgan, the Vanderbilts, and other investors.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast episode 732: Preferring Different Work Styles.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 732. 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. Join us now on Facebook; our Facebook address is [Facebook.com/eslpod](https://www.facebook.com/eslpod) – makes sense! You can get a Learning Guide for this episode on our website by becoming a member of ESL Podcast. When you become a member, you get all the cool, secret stuff that only members get like our Learning Guide.

This episode is a dialogue between Hugo and Melissa. They're going to talk about the way that people work – the style, the manner that different people work, describing those different work styles that you might find at a job or in life generally. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Hugo: How do you like working with Leo? Is it working out?

Melissa: No, it's not. Our work styles completely clash and we butt heads at every turn.

Hugo: Really? I thought you were partnered up because you complemented each other's strengths.

Melissa: Yeah, but that doesn't mean we can work well together. I'm collaborative and like to talk things out. Leo likes to go solo. He goes off on his own and comes back with a finished product, without consulting with me at all.

Hugo: Yeah, I've worked with Leo before and he likes having autonomy, but he has to realize that the point of collaboration is that the sum is greater than the parts. Two people pooling ideas will make the product better.

Melissa: That's the idea, anyway. Hey, I have a better idea. What do you think of you and me teaming up? We're both collaborative. We'd make a great team.



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Hugo: Yeah, but we also have the same skills. That's why you're working with Leo and I'm working with Lamar, remember?

Melissa: Yeah, I remember. I'm starting to think that collaboration is overrated.

[end of dialogue]

Hugo begins by saying, "How do you like working with Leo?" He's asking Melissa, "Is it working out?" "To work out" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning, in this case, to be successful, to be effective, to be the way that you hope or expect something to be. "I hope this relationship works out with my girlfriend; I really like her." Or, "I hope my new job works out," I hope things go well. "To work out" can also mean to exercise at a gym, for example.

Melissa says, "No, it's not (it is not working out). Our work styles completely clash and we butt heads at every turn." Oh dear, sadness here in our story. Melissa says that her work style and Leo's work style completely clash. "Work style" is the way that you work. Some people like to work with other people, some people like to work alone, some people like to do everything early, some people like to do everything at the very end, and so forth. When we say something "clashes" (clash), in this case it means the two things don't go well together, they don't match; they're very different, so it is a very bad combination of elements or of things. "Clash" can have several other meanings, and you can find those in the Learning Guide.

Melissa says that she and Leo butt heads at every turn. The phrase "to butt (butt) heads at every turn" means that you are always fighting, you're often disagreeing about things, you're constantly having arguments. Hugo says, "Really? I thought you were partnered up because you complemented each other's strengths." "To partner up" is a phrasal verb meaning to put people in groups of two for some purpose. We might also say, "to pair up." A teacher in a classroom might partner up the students to work on an activity: "Johnny, you work with Julie; and Bobby, you work with Billy," and so forth. Melissa and Leo in our story were partnered up because they complemented each other's strengths. "To complement" (complement) means to be a good match or combination for someone or something. If you like to draw and I like to write, and we have to make a children's book, our talents – our abilities complement each other. They complete each other, you might think of it as. "Compliment" can also be spelled with an "i" in the middle (compliment). That "compliment" is when you say something nice to someone: "You have beautiful red shoes on today my dear, my beautiful wife." I always compliment my wife on her shoes and her hair, and that's what a good husband does. And if you want to be a good husband, and



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you don't compliment your wife, well, you just need to go back and study the book on how to become a good husband. Unfortunately, they no longer make that book I think!

Anyway, our story talks about Melissa and Leo complementing each other's strengths. Your "strengths" are things that you do well. Melissa says, "Yeah, but that doesn't mean we can work well together. I'm collaborative and like to talk things out." "To be collaborative" means to do things as part of a team, to work well with other people. "To talk things out" means to talk about your ideas with another person so that you can get better ideas, or perhaps you can become clearer in your thinking. Someone who likes to talk things out likes to have long conversations about something because they think that will help them do a better job, and that's what Melissa likes to do. Leo is completely different; "Leo likes to go solo." "To go solo" means to work by yourself. "Solo" is one, or by yourself. Melissa says that Leo goes off on his own (meaning he goes somewhere else and works by himself) and comes back with a finished product (a completed project), without consulting with me at all. "To consult (someone)" means to ask someone's opinion before you do something or before you make a decision. Leo doesn't consult with Melissa, he just does his project without asking her opinion.

Hugo says, "Yeah, I've worked with Leo before and he likes having autonomy." "Autonomy" (autonomy) means independence, the ability to do things without having to ask other people for their opinion or for their permission. This word is often used in politics. In certain countries there are groups that want autonomy, or different parts of the country that want autonomy; they don't want to be controlled by the national government. Here in the United States, each of our 50 states has a certain autonomy, things it can do by itself. Hugo says that Leo has to realize that the point (or the purpose) of collaboration (of working with each other) is that the sum is greater than the parts. This phrase, "the sum (sum) is greater than the parts," while in some ways a logical impossibility, is used to mean that people who work together are often able to accomplish more than those people working by themselves. It can also be used, this phrase, to mean that a situation is very complicated and can't be described by individual elements or factors, or that when you put all those things together you get something greater than what you would expect by just looking at the individual elements or parts. So Hugo says that the point of collaboration is that the sum is greater than the parts. "Two people pooling ideas will make the product better." "To pool" (pool), used here as a verb, means to share or combine, to use two or more things together at the same time. There are other meanings of the word "pool." You can find out what they are by looking at the Learning Guide for this episode.



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Melissa says, “That’s the idea, anyway. Hey, I have a better idea. What do you think of you and me teaming up?” “To team up” is a phrasal verb meaning the same as to pair up, to partner up, to work with someone else as a team. Melissa says, “We’re both collaborative. We’d make a great team.” Now, I’m not sure if Melissa actually wants to work with Hugo because he’s a good worker. Perhaps Melissa is interested in Hugo, and doesn’t like Leo. You never know. In an office, there are always these romantic attractions or connections.

Melissa wants to work with Hugo. Hugo says, “Yeah, but we also have the same skills (we know how to do the same things; they don’t complement each other). That’s why you’re working with Leo and I’m working with Lamar, remember?” Lamar is, I guess, another worker – a male worker. Melissa says, “Yeah, I remember. I’m starting to think that collaboration is overrated.” When we say something is “overrated” (one word), we mean that we think of it more highly than it deserves to be, or we value it more highly than it deserves to be, than the actual or real value of something. When people say someone or something is “overrated,” they’re saying that people say it’s good, they say it’s great, but it’s not as good as people say. So for example: “That movie I saw last week was overrated. Everyone said it was great, eh, it wasn’t that great.” Or, “This restaurant is overrated. The food is good, but it’s not great.”

Now let’s listen to the dialogue at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

There's nothing overrated about our scriptwriter; she's the best in the world of podcasting, Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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