

EPISODE 16

LEVEL B2

READING COMPREHENSION



COMPLIMENTS



"How do I look?" asks Timothy anxiously, turning back and forth in front of the mirror. Julia looks at him, slightly amused.

"Are you **fishing for compliments**, dear?" (= creating a situation where somebody has to tell you a compliment), she asks with a note of disbelief.

"I am, aren't I", admits Timothy, a bit embarrassed. "It is just that I really need some **praise** here (= good, kind words about yourself). I have the **performance appraisal** with my boss today - you know, this conversation when she tells me what I did well, where I need improving and how much money I'll be making next year. My colleague Danielle had hers yesterday and was **praised to the sky** by the boss (= **highly praised**)."

"How do you know?"

"Well, she told me herself, but I don't think she was lying. The boss always **heaps praise on her**. Whereas with me, the last thing she told me was that I was "doing a great job, for such a young person," which somehow failed to make me jump up with joy."

"It was a **double-edged compliment** - on the one hand, it was nice of her to say so, but on the other hand does it suggest that the older employees work better?"

"Exactly. A part of the problem is that I am always afraid to **pay her a compliment** myself. She might think that I am trying to **flatter** her (= tell somebody nice things which you don't mean, usually because you want this person to do something for you), and with her, **flattery** is a cardinal sin."

"I am sure that if you compliment her on something really **praiseworthy**, something that really **deserves praise**, she will not see it as an attempt to flatter her. I suggest you give it a go one day."

More contexts for the new words:

- A **praise junkie** is a slightly joking term for somebody "addicted" to praise, i.e. somebody seeking praise all the time.



EXERCISE 1

Complete the sentences with the words from the text.

1. She complained that her husband never her any compliments any more.
2. I was really pleased when he said how well I'd done, because he isn't known for f.....
3. She paid me the double-..... compliment of saying my work was "excellent for a woman".
4. He was h.....praised for his research on heart disease.
5. Many companies operate regular performance a....., often on an annual basis.
6. He's always f..... for compliments.



EXERCISE 2

Match the two parts of the questions and then answer them.

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. When did you last pay | a. praise? |
| 2. Do you have regular | b. someone a compliment? |
| 3. Which politician deserves | c. performance appraisals? |

ENGLISH IN USE



Look at this sentence from the text:

I suggest you give it a go.

What would happen if we wanted to replace "you" in this sentence with "he"? The sentence would read:

*I suggest **he give** it a go.*

Did you notice that "give" has no -s ending here? That's right, even though it is a verb used with the pronoun "he", we do not give it this ending. The reason is that we are using a special structure here - **the subjunctive**. It is used to emphasize urgency or importance. You can imagine that the full version of this sentence is:

*I suggest that **he should give** it a go.*

Of course, after "should" there is no need for the -s ending. The subjunctive means - in a slightly simplified view - that we can eliminate "should" from this sentence, but the rest of it will remain intact, producing the unusual "he give" chunk. This structure is possible here because of the verb SUGGEST. Only a few more words in English can be used in the subjunctive; we are going to look at them in the following lessons. Here are some more examples of the subjunctive with SUGGEST:

*She suggests that **we go** home now.*

*Mark suggested that **she stay** in Rome for another week.*

IDIOM CLOSE-UP



A/ You look great in your new dress! It makes you look almost slim!

*B/ That's a real **BACK-HANDED COMPLIMENT**. You really needn't be so sarcastic.*

A back-handed compliment is one which really is an insult.

PHRASAL VERBS CLOSE-UP



1. If you **BUTTER SOMEBODY UP**, you are nice to someone so that they will help or support you.

*You'll have to **butter them up** a bit before they'll agree.*

2. If you **SUCK UP TO** somebody, you try to make someone who is in authority like you by doing and saying things that will please them.

*If you compliment her on something really praiseworthy, she will not see it as an attempt to **suck up to her**.*



EXERCISE 3

Decide if the sentences are true or false.

1. When you butter somebody up, you invite them to a restaurant.
2. When you suck up to somebody, you try to be nice to them.
3. A back-handed compliment is a true compliment.

NEWS



THE PRESIDENT COMPLIMENTED

Our President has received lots of compliments during his last visit to France. His French **counterpart** congratulated him, first of all, on his good taste in fashion. It seems that our President's recent decision on hiring a personal image consultant is really paying off. Secondly, our **head of state** has received **lavish** praise for the way he leads his family life. The French widely admire him for the great amount of time he devotes to his wife and children, as well as the weekly trips to the countryside, where he spends **quality time** with his nearest and dearest. Finally, he was praised for his **shrewd** political decisions, and the unique ability to manage conflicting interests in the parliament. Are the French honest in their compliments, or are they just trying to butter us up?

GLOSSARY

- **counterpart** – equivalent
- **head of state** – the most important person in a country
- **lavish** – great
- **quality time** – time you spend with someone, giving them your full attention
- **shrewd** – clever

KEY TO EXERCISES

Ex.1

1. paid
2. flattery
3. edged
4. highly
5. appraisals
6. fishing

Ex.2

1. b
2. c
3. a

Ex.3

1. F
2. T
3. F