



ESL Podcast 626 – Wiring Money to Another Country

GLOSSARY

emergency – an unexpected situation that requires immediate action or an immediate response because it is dangerous or will have other serious consequences or results

* If you have a medical emergency, call 9-1-1.

cash – paper or metal money; not checks or credit cards

* Do you have enough cash to pay for the taxi ride?

to wire – to send something electronically, usually when talking about money or telegraph messages, and usually over a large distance

* Once you sign here and wire the money to our bank, the new house will be yours.

to process – to do the paperwork for something; to respond officially to an application or request

* How long does it take the Department of Motor Vehicles to process a request to renew a driver's license?

Western Union – a company that lets customers send money electronically almost anywhere in the world

* Don't forget to go to the local Western Union office to pick up the money that your sister sent you.

blank – empty; without anything written on a page or in a particular space

* If you don't know the answer to a question on the test, just leave it blank.

to fill (something) out – to write or type information where it is requested on a form

* To create an account, please fill out the form on our website.

money transfer – money sent electronically from one person or bank account to another, usually over a large distance

* Each semester, his parents send him a money transfer so that he can pay the university's tuition

recipient – a person who receives something; the person who gets something from another person

* Have you decided who will be the recipient of your money and other things after you die?



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sender – a person who sends something; the person who arranges for another person to get something that he or she has

* Usually the sender's address is written in the upper left-hand corner of the envelope.

local currency – the type of money used in a particular country, such as dollars, euros, yen, or rubles

* When there was a lot of inflation in the country, people preferred to use U.S. dollars instead of the local currency.

to calculate – to use math to find the answer to something, especially to find out how much something will cost or how much of something there will be

* Do you know how to calculate a 15% tip on the restaurant bill?

exchange rate – the amount of one currency that can be used to buy one unit of another currency

* As the exchange rate increased, people were able to afford more imported products.

fee – an amount of money charged by a government, organization, or business for a particular purpose

* If you don't pay your rent by the fifth of each month, you'll have to pay a \$25 late fee.

business day – one of the days when most businesses are open; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday; not Saturday or Sunday

* We try to respond to all emails within one business day.

control number – a number assigned to a specific transaction so that it can be observed or monitored

* When you go to the bank, take the control number so that they can look up your transaction in case there are any problems.

lifesaver – a person who makes a situation much easier or more pleasant; a person who helps someone out of a difficult or dangerous situation

* If you can work my shift on Saturday, you'd be a lifesaver!

a matter of life and death – something that is very important and serious

* For many sick patients, getting a kidney donation is a matter of life and death.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What should the recipient of a money transfer bring to the office?
 - a) A wire.
 - b) A blank form.
 - c) A control number.
2. Why does Mahmoud say, “it’s a matter of life and death?”
 - a) Because his brother will die if he doesn’t get the money.
 - b) Because seeing the baseball game is extremely important.
 - c) Because he is a doctor who works with people who are dying.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

wire

The verb “to wire,” in this podcast, means to send something electronically, usually when talking about money or telegraph messages, and usually over a large distance: “Whenever you wire money into our bank account, the bank charges us \$35.” A “wire” is normally a thin piece of metal, often used to conduct electricity: “They hung their wet clothes on a wire in the backyard to dry.” The phrase “down to the wire” means with very little time left to finish something: “We’re really down to the wire with this report. It has to be finished by the end of the day!” Finally, the phrase “to get (one’s) wires crossed” means for there to be confusion in communication because two people are talking about two different things: “We must have gotten our wires crossed, because I thought you were talking about this Thursday – not next Thursday.”

blank

In this podcast, the word “blank” means empty, or without anything written on a page or in a particular space: “All of a sudden, the computer screen went blank and we couldn’t get it to work at all.” The phrase “a blank face” is used to describe an expressionless face, or a face that doesn’t show any emotion or interest: “The professor was disappointed to see his students’ blank faces.” If someone’s “mind goes blank,” it means that he or she suddenly cannot remember something and does not know what to say: “Shelby is really nervous about speaking in public because she’s afraid her mind will go blank once she goes on stage.” Finally, the phrase “point-blank” means very directly: “Jane finally asked her boyfriend point-blank: ‘Are we going to get married soon?’”



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CULTURE NOTE

When traveling “overseas” (to another country), travelers want to get the best possible exchange rate to “make their money go as far as possible” (get the best value for their money). “Fluctuations” (changes) in the exchange rate are usually “beyond the traveler’s control” (something that the traveler cannot influence), but travelers can do certain things to get the best possible exchange rate.

Airport currency exchange “booths” (small stores or tables) are “notorious” (famous in a bad way) for having very high exchange rates. Travelers who fly into a country without the local currency need to exchange money quickly, and these businesses “take advantage of” (use for their benefit) the situation to charge “exorbitant” (extremely high and expensive) exchange rates.

Travelers don’t need to exchange their money at the airport if they arrive in their “destination country” (the country they are traveling to) with a small amount of the local currency. “Savvy” (smart; clever) travelers are also aware of the current exchange rates so that no one can “scam” (trick) them into paying a higher exchange rate.

Travelers can also use “ATMs” (automated teller machines; machines that let people take cash out of their bank account) or debit or credit cards to get good exchange rates. However, the benefits of the lower exchange rate might be “canceled out” (made unimportant) by high fees. Many ATMs charge fees for each transaction, and some banks charge “foreign transaction fees” for any “transactions” (sales or withdrawals) in another country. It is important to know what these fees will be “ahead of time” (before one conducts the transaction) so that there aren’t any surprises on the monthly “statement” (a report of all the transactions in one’s bank account).

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 626: Wiring Money to Another Country.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 626. 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. Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode that will help you improve your English even faster than just listening.

This episode is called "Wiring Money (or sending money electronically) to Another Country." It's dialogue between Mahmoud and Sharon using a lot of vocabulary you would need to know in sending wires. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Mahmoud: My brother emailed about an emergency situation. He needs \$300 by tomorrow, but how can I get cash to him within 24 hours if I'm here in Mexico City and he's in New York?

Sharon: That's easy. You can wire him the money from here and he can pick it up immediately there.

Mahmoud: You mean wire him money through the bank? I already checked with my bank and it'll take at least five days for them to process the wire.

Sharon: You can just use a private wire service like Western Union and the money will be available to him immediately. I wire money all the time using Western Union. Here is a blank form. I can help you fill it out if you want me to.

Mahmoud: That would be great. Hey, this form is for a money transfer. Is that the same thing as a wire?

Sharon: Yes, it's the same thing. Fill out the receiver or recipient information here and the sender information there.

Mahmoud: Can I pay in local currency? I don't have that much cash in U.S. dollars.



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Sharon: Sure. When you go to the Western Union office, they'll calculate how much you'll have to pay according to the current exchange rate.

Mahmoud: Is there a fee?

Sharon: Yeah, there is, and it's a little higher if you want the money to be available immediately. If you have more time, you could save a little by using the slower service that makes the money available in three business days. All done?

Mahmoud: Yeah, I think so. Now what?

Sharon: Now you take this to the nearest Western Union office. They'll give you a copy of this form with a control number. Your brother can use that control number to pick up the money from any Western Union office in New York.

Mahmoud: Sharon, you're a lifesaver.

Sharon: So, what's the emergency?

Mahmoud: Tickets go on sale tomorrow for my favorite baseball team. My brother and I have to get tickets.

Sharon: That's the emergency?!

Mahmoud: For us, it's a matter of life and death.

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Mahmoud saying, "My brother emailed about an emergency situation." "Emergencies" are unexpected situations or events, things that require that you have an immediate response; you have to take care of them right away because they are very serious or dangerous. Mahmoud says that his brother needs 300 dollars "by tomorrow," meaning before the end of tomorrow. He asks, "how can I get cash to him within 24 hours if I'm here in Mexico City and he's in New York?" So our dialogue today is in Mexico City. "Cash" is money that you put in your wallet or your purse. It usually consists of either "coins," round metal objects, or piece of paper we call "bills" (bills). The term is used more generally to mean money.

Mahmoud is wondering how he can get this money to his brother in one day if they are in different cities. Sharon says, "That's easy. You can wire him the



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money from here and he can pick it up immediately there.” “To wire” as a verb means to send something, usually money, electronically; it could also mean sending someone a message. In the old days, we had telegraph messages that were sent electronically. With the Internet and better phone service we don’t do that very much. I don’t think they do it all anymore; I might be wrong about that. But nowadays the word is used to refer to sending money electronically either through a bank directly or through another private company such as Western Union, which we’ll talk about in a minute. The word “wire” has several meanings in English, and those can be found in, of course, our Learning Guide.

So Sharon says that Mahmoud can wire his brother money. Mahmoud says, “You mean wire him money through the bank? I already checked with my bank and it’ll take at least five days for them to process the wire.” “To process” is a general verb meaning to do all the necessary actions, often things that require what we would call “paperwork” – forms to fill out, permissions to get. To process, for example, an application means that you look at it, you give it to the appropriate people, they review it, they give it back to you, and so forth. So, taking care of the necessary steps is what this verb is meant to convey – is meant to communicate to you.

Mahmoud says that it will take at least five days to wire money through his bank. That, by the way, is generally true internationally; it takes a longer time to use your bank to wire money, a longer time than a private service and that’s what Sharon recommends. She says, “You can just use a private wire service like Western Union and the money will be available to him immediately.” “Western Union” is the name of a company that lets you send money electronically almost anywhere in the world, and the person you are sending it can pick it up usually within a day, sometimes less. Sharon says, “I wire money all the time using Western Union. Here is a blank form.” Boy, Sharon is pretty amazing; she actually has the form for wiring money to Western Union with her! I guess she carries those around. Anyway, she gives him a blank form. A “blank form” would be an empty form, one that doesn’t have anything written on it yet. So the place where you put your name is empty – it’s blank; in general “blank” means empty. “Blank” has a couple of other meanings however, and those are also in our Learning Guide for this episode.

Sharon says, “Here’s a blank form. I can help you fill it out if you want me to.” “To fill (something) out,” or “to fill out (something)” is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to write or type information where it is requested on a form. So, when you come to the United States you have to fill out a form for a visitor: you need to put your name, the country where you live, where you are going in the U.S., how



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long you will be there, and so forth. That's to fill out something or to fill something out – to put the information onto the document, paper, or form.

Mahmoud says, "That would be great. Hey, this form is for a money transfer. Is that the same thing as a wire?" "Yes" is the answer. A "money transfer" is money sent electronically from one person to another; it is the same as a wire. Sharon says, "Yes, it's the same thing. Fill out the receiver or recipient information here and the sender information there." She's obviously pointing or indicating on the form where Mahmoud should put this information. There are two kinds of information: the first is for the recipient. A "recipient" (recipient) is someone who receives something, someone who gets something from someone else. If you give someone a gift, the person you give the gift to is the recipient. Or you could win, for example, a prize; we would talk about the recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize. Those are the people who have received prize. The recipient of the money is Mahmoud's brother. Mahmoud is the person sending the money, and so we call him the "sender." Remember in English we sometimes add an "er" at the end of a verb to make it the person who does that thing. "To play" becomes "player" when we talk about the person who plays, and so forth, and that's what is going on here.

Mahmoud says, "Can I pay in a local currency?" "Currency" is the type of money that you use in a particular country. In the United States we use the dollar, in most of Europe – Western Europe they use the euro, in Japan they use the yen, and so forth. "Local currency," then, is the currency of the place where you are sending your money. Mahmoud wants to know if he can pay in local currency, meaning can he pay in Mexican pesos even though the person is going to pick up the money in dollars, and the answer, of course, is yes. Sharon says, "Sure (meaning yes). When you go to the Western Union office, they'll calculate how much you'll have to pay according to the current exchange rate." "To calculate" means to add, subtract, multiply, or divide; that is, to use mathematics, or math, to find the answer to something. The "exchange rate" is the price of one currency in another currency. It's what, for example, if you come to the United States with a euro – one euro, and you go to a place – a bank where they exchange money (they give you the local currency of that country), they would give you say \$1.20 or \$1.30 – 1 dollar and 30 cents. That's the exchange rate – that's the price of a dollar in euros or the price of a euro in dollars.

Mahmoud says, "Is there a fee (fee)?" A "fee" is the amount of money that you pay a business, an organization, or the government for a particular purpose. If you want to, for example, play golf at a public golf course – a government-owned golf course in Los Angeles – you have to pay a fee. That's money that you pay



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for that particular thing. This is somewhat different than taxes; “taxes” are usually a percentage of some other amount of money that you either make or spend. A fee is a particular price of doing something that only that one person would pay.

Sharon says, “Yes, there is (a fee), and it’s a little higher if you want the money to be available immediately.” If you are sending money by Western Union and you want the person to be able to pick up the money today instead of tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, they charge you more money; they charge you a higher fee. Notice we use “high” and “low” in talking about fees because they represent money, which is represented or counted by numbers which can be high or low. “If you had more time,” Sharon said, “you could save a little by using the slower service that makes the money available in three business days.” A “business day” is typically Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. The weekends, Saturday and Sunday, are not considered business days since many businesses are closed. So if someone says, “We will send that to you in five to seven business days,” and today is Wednesday, they mean that they will send it to you not by Sunday, which is five normal or calendar days, but five business days, which would be next Wednesday, or possibly even Friday if it is seven days.

Sharon says to Mahmoud, “All done?” meaning all finished – are you finished? Mahmoud says, “Yeah, I think so. Now what (now what do I do)?” Sharon says, “Now you take this to the nearest Western Union office. They’ll give you a copy of this form with a control number.” When you send a wire with Western Union they give it an official number that they use to keep track of – to put it into their computer, and that control number is what you give the other person, the recipient. They put that control number – it’s called a “money transfer control number” – on the form that they fill out, and that’s how they can find it easily in the computer. So that’s a control number specifically for a wire “via,” or using, Western Union. Sharon says, “Your brother can use that control number to pick up the money from any Western Union office in New York.” Western Union will also ask you for your name and your address and your phone number, but the control number is the most important piece of information.

Mahmoud says, “Sharon, you’re a lifesaver.” When we say someone’s a “lifesaver” we mean that person has helped us a great deal. They’ve saved our life – they prevented us from dying. Of course, that’s not literally true – it’s not actually true, but we say that when someone has helped us a great deal: “You’re a lifesaver.”



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Sharon said, “So, what’s the emergency?” Why do you need to send this money to your brother? Mahmoud says, “Tickets go on sale for my favorite baseball team.” They go on sale, meaning they will start selling them, tomorrow. Mahmoud says, “My brother and I have to get tickets.” Sharon says, “That’s the emergency?!” She cannot believe that the emergency is the fact that Mahmoud’s brother has to buy some baseball tickets. Mahmoud says, “For us (meaning for my brother and me), it’s a matter of life and death.” When you say something is “a matter of life and death” you mean it is very important, it is very serious. Sometimes you mean that literally – you mean the person could die if something doesn’t happen. Often however, just like the term “lifesaver,” we use it as an exaggeration really, to say it’s very important, it’s very serious.

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

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[end of dialogue]

Our scriptwriter is a real lifesaver for us here at ESL Podcast. We could not do what we do without her, so thank you Dr. Lucy Tse.

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

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