

Summary

Rob and Feifei have been to a wedding. Feifei hopes Tim, the groom, might change his bad habits now that he's married but Rob thinks he's like a leopard. What is it about this wild animal that can be compared with Tim's behaviour? Listen to the programme to find out.

Transcript

Feifei

Hello, I'm Feifei and this is The English We Speak. Joining me is Rob.

Rob

Hello everyone.

Feifei

Did you enjoy Jane and Tim's wedding yesterday?

Rob

Yes, it was good wasn't it – especially the party afterwards – all that dancing and drinking.

Feifei

I did notice! I'm really happy for them but I do hope that Jane will help Tim change his bad habits – Tim used to be messy, forgetful and always late for everything!

Rob

I don't think he'll change – a leopard doesn't change his spots.

Feifei

A leopard doesn't change its spots? I think I know that Rob, but what has a leopard got to do with Tim?

Rob

Quite a lot Feifei. The phrase – a leopard doesn't change its spots OR a leopard can't change its spots – means he won't change. He will always be the same person and his bad habits are here to stay.

Feifei

Oh I see. So his bad habits will never change – they will always stay the same. So Rob, you are comparing a leopard, who can never change its spotty appearance, with someone who will never change the way they behave?

Rob

You've got it. Let's hear some examples of how people use the phrase...

Examples

I told Karen she had to study more if she wants to pass her exams but a leopard can't change its spots – she won't do it.

Freddie promised he wouldn't get into trouble at school but I don't believe him – a leopard can't change its spots.

Feifei

A leopard can't change its spots – and someone can't change their habits. So Rob, you don't think Jane will be able to change Tim?

Rob

No – he's stubborn – maybe he's going to have to change Jane – she is very neat and tidy and always turns up on time – maybe he could teach her to relax more – chill out.

Feifei

Hmmm – I don't know if she would change either. Rob, could we say a tiger never changes its stripes?

Rob

Ha ha – yes we could say that – and it would mean the same thing – in that she won't change. Oh dear, I'm not sure if their marriage is going to last!

Feifei

No... or maybe it will. You know what they say? Opposites attract!

Rob

Yes they do Feifei, you're right. Bye for now.

Feifei

Goodbye.