



All Ears English Episode 125:

What's My English Level?

Gabby: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 125: “What’s My English Level?”

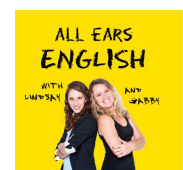
[Instrumental]

Gabby: Welcome to the All Ears English Podcast, where you’ll finally get real, native English conversation with your hosts, Lindsay McMahon, the ‘English Adventurer’ and Gabby Wallace, the ‘Language Angel,’ from Boston, USA.

[Instrumental]

Gabby: Hey, guys. We’re holding a live event called the “Key to Connecting with Americans” because a lot of you have told us that you don’t feel confident; you actually feel awkward and you don’t know what to say at professional networking events in English. So we’re here to help you and we’re holding this event to share with you five real natural English phrases that we use every day in professional networking situations. Also, as a bonus, you’ll learn to avoid one cultural mistake you don’t know you’re making. So join us, Lindsay and Gabby, for this free live event on Tuesday, June 10th, at 9 am EST. That’s New York, Boston time. To reserve your spot, go to www.AllEarsEnglish.com/Key, k-e-y.

[Instrumental]



Lindsay: Are you a number or are you an English speaker? Find out why what you can do through English is more important than your number or your test score.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey, Gabby.

Gabby: Hi, Lindsay.

Lindsay: What's cookin' (cooking)?

Gabby: Oh, not much, just enjoying the beautiful weather today. How are you?

Lindsay: Me, too. I'm feeling great. The sunshine makes me smile.

Gabby: Awesome.

Lindsay: So, we received a question on the blog a few weeks ago, and one of our listeners had a great question. She was wondering how she could know where her level was. (Um), and do you have any thoughts on that?

Gabby: Yeah, well my first thought is, I love when people comment on our blog.

Lindsay: Absolutely.

Gabby: I love when they ask questions. So...

Lindsay: I love it!

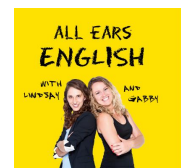
Gabby: ...so remember, you guys can come to AllEarsEnglish.com, and you can comment or question at the bottom -- make it a question -- ask a question...

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: ...at the bottom of any blog post...

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: ...and we actually read those [crosstalk].



Lindsay: We read them every day.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: And we write back to just about everyone. So if you wanna (want to) hear from us directly, come on over. This episode is AllEarsEnglish.com/125.

Gabby: Yeah. You guys hear our voices all the time. We wanna (want to) hear yours.

Lindsay: (Mm-hm.)

Gabby: All right. So, she's asking, what level she is. Okay.

Lindsay: Yes.

Gabby: Well, that's interesting. (Um), I think this is a really difficult question because on one hand, you need to know your progress. You need to be able to measure where you are in order to improve, right? You need to set goals. But on the other hand, what is, what is the reason why you wanna (want to) know your level? What's the point?

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: Is it just a number?

Lindsay: Right. Because we're not learning to have numbers next to our name. We're learning to -- so that we can -- again, we talked about this last week -- so that we can connect with people.

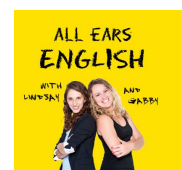
Gabby: Yeah. I think for some people, knowing your level is (like) a source of pride, right? I'm, (uh) -- let's say I got 100 on the TOEFL...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...where, (you know), I'm level C-1 in the European framework.

Lindsay: Right. You wanna (want to) have a benchmark. And I can...

Gabby: Right.



Lindsay: ...understand because when I went to Japan, I took the...

Gabby: JLPT.

Lindsay: JLPT.

Gabby: Me, too.

Lindsay: Yeah, way to go! I took the Level 4. And I was so happy to go home and "Oh, I passed the Level 4!" Great!

Gabby: Me, too!

Lindsay: Yeah!

Gabby: High-five!

Lindsay: High-five! And I wanted that. But, (you know), guys, it's really not about numbers, in my opinion.

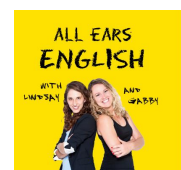
Gabby: Right. Right. So, we both took this test, and we, we passed Level 4, but what, what do we really wanna (want to) do? What, (I mean), it's not that important to me to have this certificate. What's important to me is to be able to speak with Japanese people in their language and connect with them to make friends, to have meaningful relationships with my co-workers and with people I meet from Japan.

Lindsay: (Mm-hm.) And next week, we're gonna (going to) be talking to the TOEFL pro, Bruce Stirling...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...who will tell you himself, he'll tell you that, (uh), these scores really don't translate to your speaking ability.

Gabby: Right. It's a very focused speaking task on the TOEFL, and he's going to share exactly what you need to know in order to, (you know), ace the TOEFL as they say. (Um), but you'll have to listen next week to get that, that episode.



Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: So, (you know), we, we think that language is not – it, it can't always be based on level. Sure, (you know), you, you start as a beginner and you have to learn some basics, but after you reach the intermediate level, it's very organic growth. That means, it's not like Math, right?

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: You don't – (like) in Math, maybe you have to learn Algebra, then Geometry, then Pre-Calculus, then Calculus, but language is not exactly as, as a direct of a path. (I mean), it's very organic. You can, you can learn vocabulary from different parts of life and for different situations, right?

Lindsay: Right, right. I think it's about how well can you communicate in any given situation.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: 'Cause (because) you could know 1500 vocabulary words, but (de-) -- are you able to pull that out of your mind, that vocabulary word that you need in a conversation.

Gabby: Yeah.

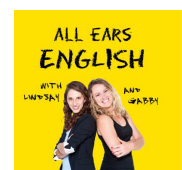
Lindsay: For example, phrasal verbs. We know that phrasal verbs are a real challenge.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Can you use the right phrasal verb at the right time?

Gabby: That's right. And, (um), I, I wanted to share an interesting, (uh), point about some of my students, (um), who come here from another country. They, (you know), in their home country, they, they are in the advanced-level English class.

Lindsay: (Mm).



Gabby: They've gotten to the top. And then, they come to the US, and they take a placement test at the university where I work, and they're placed into beginner or low-intermediate English classes. It's a...

Lindsay: Wow.

Gabby: ...huge difference.

Lindsay: Okay.

Gabby: Right. So, (I mean), why is that? (Uh), maybe the standards are different...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...when you're in a, (uh), an English-speaking country...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: ...when you're in a university as opposed to a high school.

Lindsay: (Uh-huh). It could also be that they want them to go through the whole program.

Gabby: Well, right. And also, (you know), we're preparing them to go to university.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: So that's a different level of English.

Lindsay: (Mm-hm).

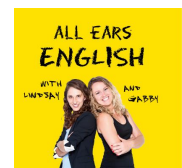
Gabby: So just be aware that level and scores are completely relative to your situation. And don't get too stuck on, "Oh, I am a 80 on the TOEFL." That's not you.

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: That's about the TOEFL.

Lindsay: You could never be a number. You could...

Gabby: That's right.



Lindsay: ...never be a number.

Gabby: That's right. (Uh), so just focus on developing your communication skills to connect with people.

Lindsay: (Mm-hm).

Gabby: It's gonna (going to) be more motivating. And, and also, (you know), think about what potential you have to, (um), to expand your English for communicating because if you focus on, 'Oh, I got a low score on a test.' Let's say you didn't get...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: ...the score you want. If you think, 'Oh, (you know)...' (Like), for example on the JLPT...

Lindsay: (Mm-hm).

Gabby: ...I actually didn't pass the first time. I took it...

Lindsay: Oh.

Gabby: ...twice.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: So, the first time, (you know), I got a little down, I was thinking, 'Oh, I'm never gonna be able to speak Japanese. My score, (you know), is so low. I didn't pass.' So, I started thinking negatively.

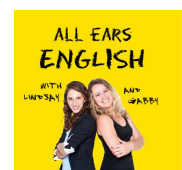
Lindsay: (Mm-hm).

Gabby: And that did not help my, my Japanese.

Lindsay: Oh yeah.

Gabby: So you have to keep focusing on the positive. What can you do? How, how are you able to communicate?

Lindsay: Absolutely. And focus also on learning based on the situation, right?



Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: So, okay, can you order a coffee in Starbucks? Yeah.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: Probably at a very basic level but you can also take that to a deeper level. Can you use phrasal verbs to order coffee in Starbucks? Can you use idioms? Can you -- there are different levels of sophistication even with one situation.

Gabby: Right. So I think the takeaway, as you said, is what can you do through English? How can you use English as a tool to do these things you want to do, to...?

Lindsay: To have the life you want.

Gabby: Yes.

Lindsay: Do bigger and better things.

Gabby: Exactly.

Lindsay: Perfect.

Gabby: Awesome. Thanks, Lindsay.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: If you wanna (want to) put your ears into English more often, be sure to subscribe to our podcast in iTunes on your computer or on your smartphone. Thanks so much for listening and see you next time.

