



All Ears English Episode 128:

American English Pronunciation Podcast Shows How to Self-Correct

Gabby: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 128: “American English Pronunciation Podcast Shows How to Self-Correct.”

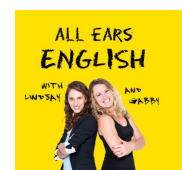
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Gabby: Welcome to the All Ears English Podcast, where you’ll finally get real, native English conversation with your hosts, Lindsay McMahon, the ‘English Adventurer’ and Gabby Wallace, the ‘Language Angel,’ from Boston, USA.

[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]



Gabby: Do you know when you have a pronunciation problem? In today's episode, Mandy Egle is going to show you why it's important to find out when you have a pronunciation problem in English.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey, Gabby. How's it going?

Gabby: Hey. Hey, Lindsay. How's it going?

Lindsay: Excellent, excellent. So today we have Mandy Egle from Pronuncian.com. Thanks for joining us Mandy.

Mandy: Hi guys. It's really great to be here. Thanks so much.

Lindsay: Welcome.

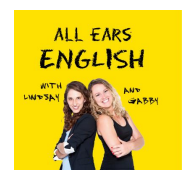
Gabby: Great to have you.

Lindsay: Thanks for being here. So Mandy you're here to provide some value for us and to tell us, (um), three or four tips how -- for how our listeners can improve their American pronunciation. Let's go into the first tip. What could you offer us?

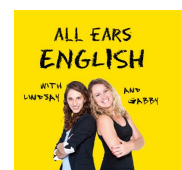
Mandy: (You know), one of the things that I think really helps people when they're struggling with pronunciation is just learning the inventory of sounds that English has. (Uh) from that, it seems like it allows a lot more opportunity for self-correction. If you...

Lindsay: Oh.

Mandy: If you know what the sound is and you, you could recognize it, then you can recognize if you're saying it a different way, and then you hear somebody else say it and you think, 'Gosh, that's not the way that I think I'm doing it.' If you've got this, the sound inventory, you can (sort of) plug in the, the sound that you heard and then say, 'Okay, yeah I understand how that word is said now,' and then you can replicate it on your own much easier.



- Gabby:** So what flashed through my mind is -- this is (kind of) funny, I hope. But, (like), (uh), for, for alcoholics, when you realize you have a problem, then you can start working on it. It's a totally different (kind of) issue, but I think that's the first step when you go to -- I, I've never been to Alcoholics Anonymous, but I think that's the first step is recognizing you have a problem.
- Lindsay:** Totally. So noticing when you're not doing it right.
- Mandy:** I, I think you're right on there and that's a new one. I'll, I'll keep that in mind [crosstalk]. Share that with other people. "It's just like this."
- Lindsay:** Perfect. So understanding the sounds, taking an inventory. How does that actually look for you when you're doing that with a student? What does that look like?
- Mandy:** With, with, with individual students, (uh), what we do, after we first assess them and the assessment that we give them goes through, gives them an opportunity to mispronounce all of the sounds. And from that we can tell what they're missing and within categories of that and then, then it -- it really is (sort of) a teaching process similar to teaching a first grader or kindergartener how to read and how they have to understand the sounds that exist in the language before they can really apply them.
- Lindsay:** Interesting.
- Mandy:** And, (uh), some of my background is working with teaching literacy in elementary schools and so...
- Gabby:** Ah!
- Lindsay:** Ah, that's useful. That's really helpful.
- Gabby:** Yeah.
- Mandy:** Yeah, because once, once, they -- and they do so much time, they're learning to hear sounds and so that's, (uh), really important for older



people who are learning English to understand that “Wow, I guess I wasn’t hearing that sound.” And (um)...

Gabby: Absolutely.

Mandy: ...once, once they know that and the sound that they were using or close to the sound they were using to replace what they (uh) should’ve been doing, it, it all starts to become a lot easier for them.

Gabby: Isn’t that interesting?

Lindsay: Perfect.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: That’s really important. It can be so tough, (uh), with pronunciation for students, (uh), especially if they’re a little bit older. It can be such a challenge.

Gabby: Well, some of that, I think comes from you, you already know your first language, and so you (kind of) interpret everything. (Like), you interpret your second language. You would, well, you would interpret the sounds of English through -- let’s say I, I, I grew up speaking French, so it’s like you have that, those – you have your French glasses on.

Lindsay: Right. Right.

Gabby: You have to take off those glasses and see English, (like) with new eyes.

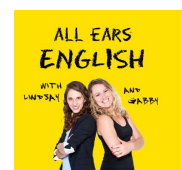
Mandy: That’s exactly it.

Lindsay: Excellent. Okay, so that’s perfect. Do you have another tip that you could offer our listeners?

Mandy: Yeah, (a-), another thing that I see people do a lot of is, (uh), they, they’ve been taught how to over produce sounds and make them really dramatic...

Lindsay: (Um).

Gabby: (Huh).



Mandy: ...and what I have found is that a lot of students who come from that background, (uh), we can't do it. (Uh), you, you can't actually move your mouth that much to over produce the sound and so they just end up going back to what they were doing before anyway because they, they feel they look ridiculous if they were actually doing these very dramatic shapes of their mouth. (Um), and also once they get into conversation, it's just too much effort to go into all of it...

Gabby: Yeah.

Mandy: ...and so (uh) yeah, when we're working with students, we, we really teach them the most minimalistic way of making a sound...

Gabby: Oh, wow!

Lindsay: (Hm).

Mandy: ...and having it still come out correctly, so that it's much easier to actually produce and continue doing.

Gabby: That's great.

Lindsay: I like that. It's a different perspective.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: I like that perspective.

Gabby: Yeah, yeah. Me too. Easier.

Lindsay: How 'bout (about) one more idea, would you happen to have?

Mandy: Sure, (uh) – well, if I -- there's – well, there's kind of two that are...

Lindsay: Sure.

Mandy: One, one that's, one that's another -- here's a, a technical tip and then another one that's (sort of) an emotional tip.

Lindsay: Feel free.



Gabby: Feel free.

Mandy: (Uh), so another thing is regarding the rhythm of English and how to, how to notice the rhythm of English and again, this sort of goes with the “don’t over produce sounds,” but learning how to reduce sounds that should be...

Gabby: Oh, yeah.

Mandy: ...reduced and how to make our function words smaller and how to reduce syllables of words that should be reduced in order to have your English have the rhythm of, of a native speaker or a more native-like is really important and if that’s not done then everything, again, is over produced and that can lead to that sounding more choppy staccato because the small syllables aren’t made small enough.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: (Hm).

Gabby: Yeah, that’s huge. I think that’s confusing sometimes for learners to understand, “Which syllables am I supposed to be stressing and (like)...”

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: “...which words are important to stress?” So...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...(it) takes a lot of practice and even, (you know), strategies and tips like the ones you’re, you’re providing here.

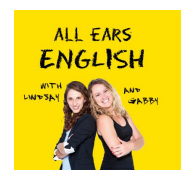
Mandy: (Uh-huh), yeah. And it’s -- a lot of times they’ve heard make the stress syllable bigger and louder...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Mandy: ...and so they do, but they don’t reduce...

Gabby: Oh.

Mandy: ...the other syllables around it.



Gabby: Everything just gets louder and louder.

Mandy: Everything is loud and shouted. It's like, "Well, that's not really how you have to do it."

Gabby: Yeah.

Mandy: "You can make the other syllables small, you don't have to really shout the stress syllables."

Gabby: Great.

Lindsay: Yeah, so we know that learning pronunciation can be very humbling and challenging. So what's your (sort of) emotional tip? You said you had something to that end?

Mandy: Yeah. (Um), (you know), a lot of people are really afraid of sounding fake.

Gabby: (Uh-huh).

Lindsay: (Um).

Mandy: And when they, they'll say something and it just really sounded perfect and I'll say, 'Gosh, I thought it, that was fantastic,' and they'll say, "Yeah, but it didn't sound like me."

Gabby: (Huh).

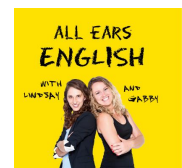
Lindsay: (Mm).

Mandy: And, and then they start to say, "Well, now people are going to think that I'm, (you know), pretending that I'm, I'm being somebody else."

Gabby: Wow.

Mandy: And so that's a, a really important barrier to get past is that one, your listeners don't notice it and, (you know), it's -- they don't really notice your improvements, which is a little bit disheartening sometimes.

Lindsay: Yeah.



Gabby: (Uh-huh).

Mandy: (Um), but they don't say "Gosh. All of a sudden you sound so different."

Gabby: Right.

Mandy: And it, it really does seem like a (sort of) a head game...

Lindsay: Oh, yeah.

Mandy: ...for the, the learner to step back and say, "(You know), it's okay that this doesn't sound like I sounded like before."

Lindsay: Wow.

Mandy: And it is accurate and with that, they can get the confidence to keep doing it. (Uh), but otherwise, people, once they start to really improve, they'll back off a little bit because they'll say it just doesn't sound like me.

Lindsay: That's so interesting.

Gabby: You have to develop your identity in English.

Lindsay: Yeah.

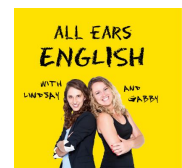
Gabby: (I mean), you might have (like) your German identity that you grew up with and then all of a sudden (like) if you're learning English as an adult, it's like "Oh my gosh, I have this new English personality that I can have," and it's (kind of), it's exciting. It doesn't have to be a bad thing, (you know).

Mandy: Right. Right. But if people are a little bit, a little bit timid or shy,

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Oh my gosh.

Mandy: ...(uh), they back off from that for a little bit. Usually people – (you know), once, once they're, they're aware of that, that's really actually very normal for people to feel that way. (Uh), they'll, they'll embrace it a little bit more and then, then they can really take off sometimes with their improvement.



Lindsay: Wow.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: That's so interesting. That's part, a big part of why pronunciation is such a huge challenge for so many students. It's a psychological game...

Gabby: Absolutely.

Lindsay: ...that we're playing with ourselves here. It's (like) on one end we want to sound like a native speaker, we hear that all the time, right?

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: But then on the other, other end when I start to sound like a native speaker, I don't sound like myself, and, "Who am I?"

Gabby: "Who am I?"

Lindsay: Oh, my god. Wow! I'm so glad you brought that up. It's so important.

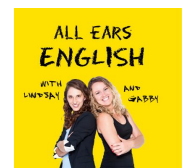
Gabby: Yeah. Great. Great point. Great.

Lindsay: Yeah. Very interesting. All right. Great. Well, thank you so much Mandy for these tips. And so where can our listeners find you online? Where would they, if they want to hear more from you?

Mandy: (Uh), they can, they can see all of our online lessons on pronuncian.com. (Uh), and that's spelled P-r-o-n-u-n-c-i-a-n.com and that has a full inventory of all of the sounds of English, (uh), including the common spellings and things like that and it's – we've got over 10,000 audio samples on there. So there's a lot of listen and repeat...

Lindsay: Wow!

Mandy: ...and activities and then there's also information on there for, for rhythm and stress and intonation, things like that. (Um), and then I have the podcasts that we've been producing for a number of years, (um), and that can be found, probably easiest on iTunes. If you just search American English pronunciation podcast, it usually pops right up.



Gabby: Great.

Mandy: And that is also available on the website with transcripts.

Lindsay: Perfect.

Gabby: Fantastic. Great resources.

Lindsay: Thank you so much. This has been so valuable today. We really appreciate, (uh), your taking the time to come and chat with us. And (uh), we'll, we really appreciate it. So thank you.

Gabby: Thanks Mandy.

Mandy: All right thank you so much, guys.

Gabby: Bye.

Lindsay: Thanks so much.

Mandy: Have a great day.

Lindsay: You too.

[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.

