



All Ears English Episode 144: Copy a Celebrity for English Success

Gabby: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 144: “Copy a Celebrity for English Success.”

[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]

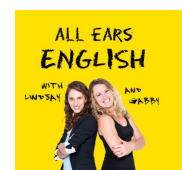
Gabby: Hey, guys. So Lindsay has made a really awesome e-book, and I just wanna (want to) thank her and also to let you guys know where you can get the “Ten Ways to Learn English with a Podcast.” (Uh), you get that at AllEarsEnglish.com/free. So what's good about this e-book?

Lindsay: Oh, it's awesome. So it shows you how to use any podcast, specifically even our podcast, to improve your English. So go over and get it guys. It's at AllEarsEnglish.com/free.

[Instrumental]

Gabby: Do you have an English character? Today, we interview Josh Plotkin of Brazilian Gringo, and he will tell us why you need an English character.

[Instrumental]



Gabby: Hey, Lindsay. What's up?

Lindsay: Hey, Gabby. Feeling good.

Gabby: Great! I'm so excited because we have a guest today, Josh Plotkin. What's up, Josh?

Lindsay: Hey, Josh!

Josh: Hey, Gabby. Hey, Lindsay. How (are) you guys doing?

Gabby: Great.

Lindsay: Excellent.

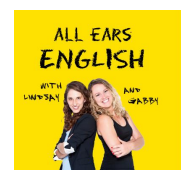
Gabby: So Josh is a language teacher at BrazilianGringo.com and he helps people to learn Portuguese through video courses at his website. And in the past, he's also taught English. So he has a lot of good experience with learning language and culture. Right, Josh?

Josh: That's right.

Gabby: Awesome. Awesome. So we wanted to have you on, (uh), the podcast today to share with our listeners, (you know), not learning Portuguese 'cause (because) we're only learning English. (Um), but learning culture along with language because this is really applicable for learning any language. (I mean), it's -- I think we, we all agree, (uh), Lindsay, you and myself that, (um), culture is so key. It's -- learning language is not just about the phrases, it's not just the vocabulary, it's not just grammar, but there's that other element of understanding how people interact and the behaviors, (you know). Little things like how you greet each other or what -- how to behave in different situations, (um), and how do we learn that because it's not usually covered very well in a textbook or the, the traditional classroom, right?

Josh: Yeah. I think this is the missing link...

Gabby: Yeah.



Josh: That a lot of language schools don't really focus on. And you can't learn a language and you can't get fluent in a language if you don't understand the culture of that language. It's -- what is language, really? Language is a tool of communication between people.

Gabby: Right.

Josh: And a lot of language schools, they focus on the language itself and they forget the people who are using it.

Gabby: Right. Yeah.

Josh: So if you really want to get fluent in a language, you have to think about the people that you're going to be using that language with.

Lindsay: Absolutely. I like that.

Gabby: Totally. Yeah. And, and what's interesting, I was just thinking that in a, in a traditional classroom, (I mean), you're (kind of) stuck inside that classroom atmosphere. So it's really great if you wanna (want to) learn English to use in a classroom.

Lindsay: Yeah.

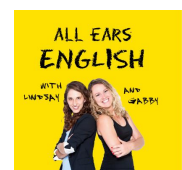
Gabby: But then once you get out of the classroom, what do you do? How do you interact with people? So, (you know), we're curious because you're, you're really fluent in Portuguese and you've helped people learn English really well, (you know). What, what is one of your, (like), secrets for learning the culture along with the language?

Josh: So when we talk about culture, you, you almost have to go a step further and think about a certain subculture of that culture.

Lindsay: (Mm).

Josh: 'Cause (because)...

Gabby: Oh yeah.



Josh: ...within Brazilian culture, there are a lot of different cultures. There's Samba culture, there's Jiu jitsu culture, there's office culture, there's college kid culture. So...

Gabby: Yeah.

Josh: ...you really gotta (got to) to think about -- when you're learning a language, what type of people are you going to be using that language with and...

Gabby: Yeah.

Josh: ...which type of person do you want to be, (uh), perceived as in that language.

Gabby: Absolutely.

Lindsay: (Um).

Gabby: That's great.

Josh: And then seek out a group of people that, that speak that language and immerse yourselves in, you immerse yourself in the culture of that group.

Gabby: Absolutely.

Lindsay: (Um-hm).

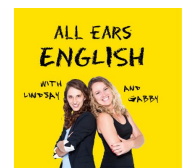
Gabby: That's a great point.

Lindsay: That's important.

Gabby: Yeah. Yeah.

Josh: So, (like), when I was learning Portuguese -- (you know), I didn't do this from the beginning, but as I went along, I started to think, "Okay. Well, I'm an entrepreneur, so I wanna (want to)..."

Gabby: (Um-hm).



Josh: "...I wanna (want to) be able to speak the language that entrepreneurs speak." So...

Gabby: Right.

Josh: ...once this, once my Portuguese got really good, (uh), I started looking for materials in Portuguese made by entrepreneurs. And I wanted to understand all of the language that they used and understand the jokes that they made.

Gabby: (Hm).

Lindsay: (Hm).

Josh: And I listened to, I listened to all the podcast that they listened to. I watched, (uh), the videos they listened to.

Lindsay: Wow!

Josh: And also, I think a really useful tip is to model after somebody in your target language.

Lindsay: Ooh.

Gabby: (Mm).

Lindsay: What does that mean? Can you explain that...?

Lindsay: Yeah, tell us more.

Gabby: ...a little bit more?

Josh: So if for somebody who's learning English, it might be useful for them to look for maybe a TV show character or movie character that...

Gabby: Yep.

Josh: ...they can really relate to. And (kind of) -- when you speak English, stop being your normal self in, in your native language...

Gabby: Right.



Josh: ...and become that person when you speak English. And it -- you're going to be faking to some level here, you're going to become a different person.

Gabby: (Um-hm).

Lindsay: (Um-hm).

Josh: But that happens anyway when you speak a language.

Both: Right.

Lindsay: That's right part of the game, isn't it?

Josh: Yeah. And so, in, in the beginning, it's better to be somebody who's already established and (kind of) figure out what they do that you like. And then once you've been speaking English for a while and you can (kind of) develop your own personality within the framework that you've borrowed from somebody else.

Gabby: Well, I think that's a great point. And it's (like) when you learn a new language, you have this opportunity to model yourself off of someone you want to be more like, (um), in that -- in, in English, (you know).

Lindsay: Yeah. And we wanna (want to) really encourage our listeners to try this guys. Give this a try because we had Mandy Egle on the show, (um), in Episode 128...

Gabby: (Mm).

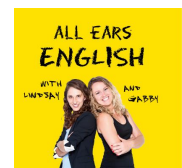
Lindsay: ...“The Pronunciation Expert.” And she talked about how this is a common stumbling block for a lot of students when they want to...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ... become native. They wanna (want to) sound like a native speaker.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: (Um), but then, all of a sudden, when the pronunciation starts to sound native, students will often get nervous and they, "Oh, this isn't me."



Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: "I, I seem fake. I'm not authentic." So if you have your alter ego or your character that you're modeling after, that's not gonna (going to) be an issue.

Gabby: Right. It's almost like you're acting, right?

Lindsay: Yes. Exactly.

Josh: Yeah. And it, it's, it also gets -- this is also really helpful too if you are switching between languages because...

Gabby: (Mm).

Josh: ...(like) if, if I just started to speak Portuguese while trying to maintain the character that I have in English, then my accent would sound really funny.

Gabby: (Huh), that's interesting. Yeah. (Mm).

Josh: But if I, if I can, (like), flip the switch and turn on my Brazilian character...

Gabby: Yeah.

Josh: ...then my accent will sound more Brazilian.

Lindsay: That's cool.

Josh: And, and so if I'm going between, (like), Portuguese-Spanish, then it gets really complicated because I don't really have the character in Spanish, so...

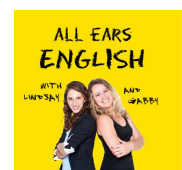
Gabby: (Mm), you have to find that...

Lindsay: You gotta (got to) work on that.

Gabby: ...character. Yeah.

Josh: Yeah. I, I almost sound Brazilian when I speak Spanish.

Lindsay: They're so (such) similar languages.



Josh: Right. It's...

Gabby: Well...

Josh: It's -- yeah.

Gabby: ...this is something I struggle with because I've, I've been, (you know), learning Portuguese -- not really (like) focusing on learning it, but just (kind of) absorbing it through things like, (uh), Brazilian music, (um), practicing Capoeira and learning the songs and then friends who speak Portuguese around me. And so, I, I've learned it to a good extent, but the thing is I'm also an entrepreneur and I want to be able to use professional Portuguese, but I don't learn those professional phrases of vocabulary through most samba music or through...

Lindsay: (Mm).

Gabby: ...Brazilian rap, which I really enjoy. But like you said, I need to immerse myself in those situations or with those people or (like) following a, a character that I like to really learn those useful phrases that, that I want to be able to use, so, I'm not just (like) having a conversation using lyrics from my favorite song 'cause (because) that's a little limiting.

Josh: Yeah. Well, ultimately, we're talking about just reconstructing your personality...

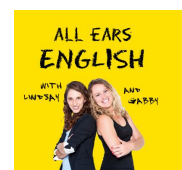
Lindsay: Yeah.

Josh: ...in a different language. And you, you do all these different things. You, you, you dance samba, you train...

Gabby: Yeah.

Josh: ...Capoeira. (Uh), (you know), you're an entrepreneur, you're an English teacher, (you-), (you-), you're a person with many different sides to your personality.

Gabby: Yeah.



Josh: So, for each sides of (tho-), or each parts of those personality that you want to represent in a foreign language you can find someone to model it after. (You know), maybe you...

Gabby: Oh, that's great.

Josh: ...could model parts of your, your samba teacher, maybe you model parts of, (uh), an entrepreneur whose videos you, you listen to on YouTube. Maybe you have a friend who has (like) a really fun personality that you...

Gabby: Yeah.

Josh: ...borrow...

Lindsay: (Uh-hm), (uh-hm).

Josh: ...parts of. So you just incorporate all of this, and you – borrow a little bit from everybody...

Gabby: (Uh-hm).

Josh: ...until you've built your personality in that foreign language.

Lindsay: Yeah. And maybe this is something that we do but we don't know it. So by becoming more intentional about it and actually...

Gabby: (um).

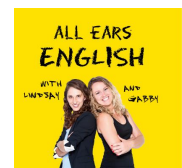
Lindsay: ...designating an actual person or an actual character, we can take it one step further and use it...

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: ...as a tool for increasing our language skills.

Gabby: Yeah.

Josh: Absolutely. Yeah. Awareness is a huge part of this. And I think probably many of your listeners have been doing this already, but they, they didn't know that other people were doing it.



Lindsay: Exactly.

Josh: Now they do.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: Right. I (com-)...

Josh: They can talk about it.

Gabby: ...completely agree. And also, I think if you're feeling a little nervous about...

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: ...(you know), speaking a second language, if you (sort of) pretend to be this other person, it can relieve some of that pressure.

Lindsay: Exactly.

Gabby: Yeah.

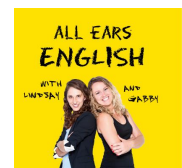
Lindsay: So, all around, it's a good experiment.

Gabby: Yeah. Yeah. I, I love that tip. I think it's really, really helpful. (Um), (you know), for, for our audience, I know, I know you teach Portuguese, but maybe, (um), they would know someone who wants to learn Portuguese, and, and we'd love to share, (uh), where, where our listeners can find you and, and more, (um), tips for learning language. So where, where can people find you, Josh?

Josh: Yeah. They can find me at my website BrazilianGringo.com.

Gabby: Great.

Josh: (Uh), that's the easiest way to get in contact with me. If anybody is going to Brazil, just send me a message. I, I love meeting people who are, (uh), traveling to Brazil.



Gabby: Awesome.

Lindsay: Okay.

Gabby: That's great. And you'll be back there for the World Cup?

Josh: Yeah. I'll be back in a couple of days and I'll be there for the World Cup.

Gabby: Exciting.

Lindsay: Wow. Enjoy.

Gabby: Awesome. Great. Well, it's so great talking with you, Josh, and thanks for sharing your tip for, for really learning language and the culture.

Josh: Well, it's been a pleasure to be on the show. So thank you guys for having me on.

Gabby: All right.

Lindsay: Thanks, Josh.

Gabby: Bye.

[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.

