



All Ears English Episode 150:

Let Go of Your Grammar Obsession and Speak English like a Native

Gabby: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 150: “Let Go of Your Grammar Obsession and Speak English like a Native.”

[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]

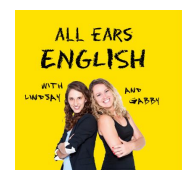
Lindsay: Okay, guys we have an e-book that’s gonna (going to) offer you the 100 most common phrases in English and to become a fluent speaker. So go to AllEarsEnglish.com/100 and download it now.

[Instrumental]

Gabby: In today’s episode, you’ll learn how to let go of your grammar mistakes and your obsession with perfection and you’ll learn how to finally speak like a native.

[Instrumental]

Gabby: Hey, Lindsay. What’s up?



Lindsay: Hey, Gabby. Feeling Good.

Gabby: Good, good. You guys, I'm so excited today because we have a guest, Idahosa Ness. Hey, Idahosa, Idahosa, how are you?

Idahosa: I'm doing fantastic, how (are) you doing?

Gabby: Great, great. Sorry if I, I mispronounced your name. It's Idahosa.

Idahosa: Idahosa (ee - DOW – ssah) that's right.

Gabby: Idahosa. (Uh), and Idahosa is the founder of the Mimic Method, which teaches you how to master foreign languages and in particular English, through sound-training. So if you wanna (want to) learn how to sound more like an American...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

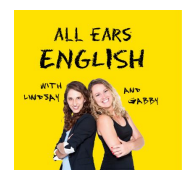
Gabby: ...or (uh), an, a native English speaker, you'd, you'd want to talk to Idahosa. So, (um), Idahosa, you're, you're here today – we're gonna (going to) talk a little bit about, (um), learning English through the, the Mimic Method, through, (um), through lyrics. (Um), so one question we had for you, if we can just get right into it is what are some mistakes that, that you might have seen people making when they try to learn English, (um), in particular through music. (Uh) are there any, (um), mistakes that you see people using or making?

Idahosa: Yeah, I think the biggest, (um) -- issue people have learning language in general, but especially in English, is approaching the language through the written language.

Gabby: (Um).

Idahosa: And the problem with that is that at the end of the day when we communicate in English, we're communicating with sound and when you do it in writing, we don't really write things the way we sound. In general...

Lindsay: That's true.



Gabby: Right.

Idahosa: ...once again, specifically in English. English is very different on paper than it is in real life.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Yeah, very true.

Idahosa: So what happens then is, (um), people, (you know), they'll try and learn song lyrics, or they'll try to learn anything really and they'll see the written words...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: Yeah.

Idahosa: ...and it won't fit into the actual musicality of it. So that's actually how I came up with my technique for teaching pronunciation was (kind of) solving that problem I had personally learning languages through music, which is, 'Oh man, (like) he's saying these words, but he's only saying this many syllables.'

Gabby: Right.

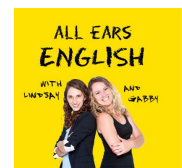
Idahosa: So (cho-), he's chopping words up or he's combining them a little bit. So I think people have, (uh), are trained to focus a lot more on what's on the paper, but if you just (kind of) remove your eyes from the paper and just focus a lot more on sound, you'll be doing yourself a lot, (um), better justice in learning the language, (you know).

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: That's a great point.

Lindsay: That's a great point.

Gabby: Yeah. And so you've learned several other languages, right. Tell us the languages that you've learned.



Idahosa: (Uh), I speak, (uh), Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Chinese, and a little bit of English too.

Gabby: Great. And, and...

Lindsay: Wow!

Gabby: ...did you (kind of) train yourself using, (um), music and learning lyrics with, with those languages too.

Idahosa: (Uh), yeah and to a different degree for each one. The more recent ones a lot more. (Uh), what I've always done is I've always focused on mimicking people. That's always been my priority.

Gabby: Okay.

Idahosa: (You know), (you know), my first language I learned was Spanish. And when I went to Mexico, for example, I, I always wanted to sound just like the people and (um) through that process of really listening and getting all the details...

Gabby: (Uh-huh).

Idahosa: ...it allowed me to learn everything else in the language much faster because I was able to, (you know), interact with people, hear what they're saying and describing...

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: Yeah.

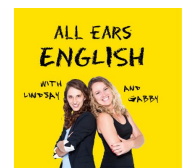
Idahosa: ...and then mimic it and then incorporate it into my own Spanish, or later on Chinese and Portuguese and French.

Gabby: Great.

Both: Yeah.

Gabby: And by mimic, I think you mean, (like) copy and then reuse...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).



Gabby: ...those phrases in similar situations, (uh), for yourself.

Idahosa: Yeah, (I mean), that's what all language learning is.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: (Uh-huh). Absolutely. And I think one of the...

Idahosa: [crosstalk]

Lindsay: Yeah, go ahead.

Idahosa: Sorry, I was just a little delayed. Yes but, (um), thinking about how babies learn is the same thing really. Just (like) once again, it's not about conjugating in your head or translating stuff, it's just a question of (like), "Okay, this thing, I wanna (want to) eat it." What do you guys call it, you call it an apple?" Sure.

Lindsay: Sure.

Gabby: Exactly.

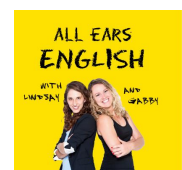
Idahosa: I want an apple. I'm gonna (going to) say the word, I'm gonna (going to) say the sounds *ap-ple*, (you know).

Both: Right.

Idahosa: And bit by bit, you, you start to acquire all the sound pieces of the language.

Lindsay: Exactly. And for students who aren't able to travel to a -- for example, our, our audience, our listeners, who aren't able to travel to an English-speaking country, what (kind of) recommendations -- do you generally have people use music then in that case? Would that be the number one way or TV?

Idahosa: (Um), yeah, (I mean) TV. (I mean), you use music specifically as a tool to get into the very details of the sound, 'cause (because) they allow -- (you know), you can slow down music, go and listen to the different sounds individually, practice it over and over again. But that just builds your



foundation. Ultimately mimicking is through listening to real native speakers, which, (um), if you can't do that in a travel setting, best way is, (uh), (you know), consume as much media as possible whether it's television...

Gabby: Right.

Idahosa: ...movies.

Lindsay: (Uh).

Idahosa: And that's just one end for understanding. The other end is actually speaking with people as well. So you can do that by Skype, different kind of meetups in your hometown as well.

Gabby: Yeah.

Idahosa: But yeah, (I mean), ultimately it's all about maximizing the amount of sound you're creating and sound you're hearing.

Gabby: Okay.

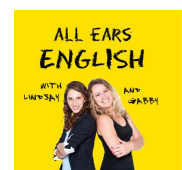
Lindsay: Do you, do you feel like there's an amount of time that people should spend just listening before they start to speak back, or I guess your method is about mimicking and copying, so are – I'm assuming that in your method it's more about immediately copying or is there a point or a period of time that you should just be listening.

Idahosa: Yeah, there -- I've, I've heard of different techniques that say, (uh), you should be quiet, and I don't believe in that because at the end of the day, you have to learn by doing...

Gabby: Right.

Idahosa: ...and (um), there's a misconception - there's a, there's a false thing, idea that if you practice something wrong in the beginning, you're gonna (going to) build a habit...

Gabby: (Um).



Lindsay: (Um).

Idahosa: ...that's not true.

Gabby: Right.

Idahosa: Like anything you learn, you're gonna (going to) suck really bad at it at first.

Lindsay: Sure.

Idahosa: (Like), you'll never get it perfect the...

Lindsay: Sure, sure.

Idahosa: ...first time.

Lindsay: And you...

Idahosa: The only thing you have to worry about is that if you, (uh), you have to keep your ears open so that, (um), when you make mistakes, where you say things wrong...

Gabby: Right.

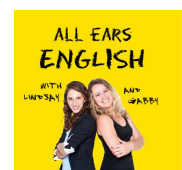
Idahosa: ...you, you can hear yourself doing it wrong and then adjust.

Gabby: Right.

Idahosa: If you don't adjust then that's a problem.

Lindsay: Right. So that's like a meta-skill being able to see yourself make that mistake and make that change immediately.

Idahosa: Yeah, it's more, it's more (kind of) (like), once again, it's based on how much sound you're putting in. For example, if I'm in a place and I, I say something a certain way or I hear someone say something a certain way, (um), like I say, "Oh, I, I don't usually speak that way, but now I will." I'll mimic it under my breath and then I make that quick change, (you know), so...



Lindsay: I really like this. I like...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...this idea. I think it's, it's really important for people to have that internal monitor, (um), to see when they're making that change, the self-correction.

Gabby: (Uh-huh), (uh-huh).

Lindsay: Be really observant...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...of what's going on.

Gabby: And just – like you said, keep your mind open and realize that you have room for improvement.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: (Um), 'cause (because) if you think (like), "Oh, I have enough English, I can communicate. I don't need to, (you know), improve or anything." I know some people who think like that.

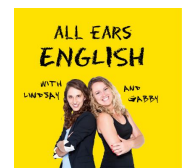
Idahosa: Yeah, that's the good thing about the mimicry approaches that (um), (um), when you focus too much. And then we don't really focus too much on learning grammar rules or anything.

Gabby: (Uh-huh).

Idahosa: It's just -- once again, just mimicking. You get it wrong most of the time, eventually you get it right. But if you focus more on constructing sentences by conjugating in your head, it restricts your ability to, to pick up new things.

Lindsay: True.

Idahosa: So, and (like), (you know), for example, I, I, I don't believe, once again, in, (uh), (like), proper grammar or anything. I just think...



Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Idahosa: I just believe in communicating with people the way they are used to communicating.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: Exactly.

Idahosa: And, (uh), so if you have a strong rule on your head (like), oh, you have to conjugate this way and then you go to, (you know), some space in Boston and somebody says something differently from what you learned in a textbook...

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Idahosa: You don't wanna (want to) swear by your text book. You wanna (want to) communicate the way that guy does 'cause (because)...

Gabby: Right.

Idahosa: ...that guy's gonna (going to) like you better if you sound the way he does.

Lindsay: (Um).

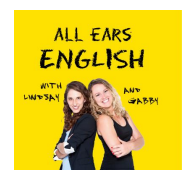
Gabby: Right, so, (you know), what would you say to people who advise *not* to learn English through music because sometimes lyrics are not grammatically correct?

Idahosa: (Um) so grammar, (uh), (uh) I have my own viewpoints on grammar and people think of grammar as (like) written in law, like it was written...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Idahosa: ...in the Bible or in the Constitution.

Gabby: Right.



Idahosa: And (uh), grammar changes all the time. There's so many rules. I'm sure you remember...

Lindsay: Right. Yeah.

Idahosa: ...from school, (like), "Don't ever end a sentence with a preposition..."

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: Right, right.

Idahosa: ...which everybody does now.

Lindsay: Yes, especially in spoken language.

Gabby: Yeah.

Idahosa: Especially in spoken language. So, (you know), things change all the time and ultimately the main goal is not about following some rule that some old guy wrote in a book a long time ago.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: Absolutely.

Idahosa: It's about communicating with people and connecting with people. So...

Lindsay: Absolutely.

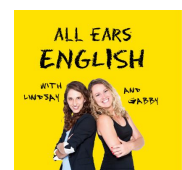
Idahosa: ...for me the focus is always, "How do I, how can I best connect with this person?" (Um), he's gonna be different, from a different background and language is always super diverse no matter where you go.

Gabby: (Uh-huh).

Idahosa: So if you just open your mind, forget about the rules and just focus on the person you're speaking too, that's all that really matters at the end.

Lindsay: Totally. We love that.

Gabby: Absolutely.



Lindsay: We love that. I think that one of the things that, (you know), a lot of our listeners struggle with is perfectionism...

Gabby: (Uh-huh).

Lindsay: ...right, the perfectionist...

Idahosa: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...paralysis and this is a great antidote to that.

Gabby: Right.

Idahosa: Definitely.

Gabby: Focus on the other person...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: ...focus on, (you know), what interests you about them, maybe ask questions. We're...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: ...we were just talking about this. (Uh)...

Lindsay: Get into a new mindset.

Gabby: Yeah. It's all about connecting with people. We're exactly on the same page there.

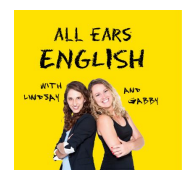
Idahosa: Yeah.

Gabby: And, yeah, (I mean), if, if you're taking, (like) a, a test, like the TOEFL, or the IELTS, then this is not for you, right?

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: This, this is...

Lindsay: Yeah.



Gabby: ...about conversation...

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: ...with real people.

Lindsay: Right because as we said last week, the TOEFL's not a, a speaking test, it's a...

Gabby: Well, well...

Lindsay: ...more of a strategy.

Gabby: ...it is a little bit but it's more. Well, yeah it is, yeah, exactly.

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: You're gonna (going to) have to know more grammar rules, but if your goal is to connect with people then you just need to let go of those...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: ...grammar rules and just [crosstalk]

Idahosa: And also on top of that as well, (like), for the people who are interested in TOEFL, and, (you know), the more standardized versions of, of (you know), academic English and what not...

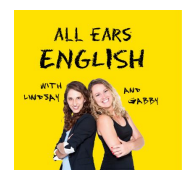
Gabby: Yeah.

Idahosa: ...it's always easier to become fluent in conversational, like street English or in any other language and then from there, learn the standardized academic, 'cause (because) once again, that's how we all did it as children and we all spoke whatever we did in the playground...

Lindsay: Sure.

Idahosa: After school we got good at, (you know), how to write and stuff.

Lindsay: Absolutely.



Idahosa: It's always better to go that way because that's the refinement of what we naturally know. If you go the other way, you, you notice a lot of people who study purely by textbook and they can write well, but there's always things that are kind of off and they sound weird, because you don't have that, that, that backbone of the actual conversational language.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: Exactly.

Gabby: And in the end it's more difficult, perhaps, to have a regular conversation.

Lindsay: I love it. I think...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...these ideas are really gonna (going to) resonate...

Idahosa: Exactly.

Lindsay: ...with our listeners.

Gabby: Yeah, yeah. I think that's great.

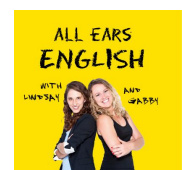
Idahosa: Yeah.

Gabby: Do you have (um), maybe any recommendations of (like) where to start. (Like), do you have a favorite song or, or resource you could share with people.

Idahosa: (Uh), sure, well, I check, (um) -- I recommend people who go to my website, MimicMethod.com, I have a free e-course called "Flow Theory 101."

Gabby: Okay.

Idahosa: And I give a lot of detailed, (um), things of what you can do on your own to hack the sounds of English or any other language and actually I focus on



English in the course and, (um), from there is a tool that I use a lot called Audacity...

Gabby: (Uh-huh).

Idahosa: ...which allows you to take any sound so it can be a phrase you found online or from a movie or, or a sound lyric as well. And then you slow it down...

Lindsay: Right.

Idahosa: ...and repeat it and just listen as closely as possible and (um), that's a really good tool 'cause (because) once again, (um), English is too (fa-), is too fast, (you know), when you start off.

Gabby: Right.

Idahosa: And we try to approach that problem normally by writing it down word by word...

Lindsay: (Um).

Idahosa: ...where that can mess you up because once again, we don't speak the way we write.

Gabby: Right.

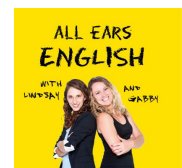
Idahosa: So instead of slowing it down with words, you can slow it down physically with Audacity.

Gabby: Okay.

Idahosa: And then things that don't seem clear to you on the first time around, when it's (like) full speed, you can hear it in slow motion, (like), "Oh, that's what that guy is saying," and it's a lot easier.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: Super.



Lindsay: And I think you can actually do that on your iPhone as well, can't you?
[crosstalk]

Gabby: Oh, with the voice recorder or...?

Lindsay: Like when you're listening to something, you can often...

Gabby: Oh, yeah.

Lindsay: ...go back and slow it down...

Gabby: Slow it down to like...

Lindsay: ...half-speed...

Gabby: Half-speed.

Lindsay:5 speed.

Both: Yeah.

Lindsay: That's a great method.

Idahosa: Oh, on iPhone you can do that?

Gabby: Yeah, yeah.

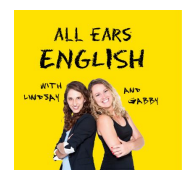
Lindsay: (Uh-huh), (uh-huh).

Idahosa: Well, there you go, that's even better. It's even more convenient if they can do that.

Gabby: But yeah, Audacity is a great resource if you don't have a smartphone, maybe if you're using a computer and, (um), also you mentioned your website is, (uh), MimicMethod.com, correct?

Idahosa: Yeah, and like I said, I have a free e-course on there and, (uh), we're just finishing up a kick starter right now for an app, that's -- basically approaches all these problems in a more, (uh), comprehensive way...

Gabby: Very cool.



Idahosa: ...of slowing it down, breaking things bit by bit so you can go and see exactly what, (I mean), (you know), what an American person does with their mouth to make a sound...

Gabby: Cool.

Idahosa: ...and what you're doing differently. So, (uh), yeah, you can check that out as well...

Gabby: Awesome.

Idahosa: ...through that page.

Lindsay: Excellent.

Gabby: Awesome, that sounds very helpful.

Lindsay: This has been really interesting.

Gabby: Yeah. Thanks so much for joining us and talking a little bit about your method and how to go about, (you know), learning language so you can actually connect with people.

Idahosa: Exactly.

Gabby: Awesome.

Idahosa: Thanks for having me on.

Gabby: Thanks so much Idahosa.

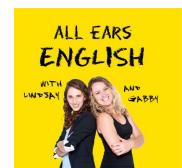
Lindsay: Great. All right. Have a great day

Idahosa: All right. You too. Bye.

Gabby: Bye.

Lindsay: See ya' (you).

[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.

