



All Ears English Episode 161:

Presentation Panic! How to Take Control of Q&A in English

Gabby: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 161: “Presentation Panic! How to Take Control of Q&A in English”

[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: All right, guys. The World Cup finished up, but now it’s time for the World Cup of leaving reviews for All Ears English on iTunes. We noticed that in June we had a lot of new reviews with Spain in the lead as the winner with eight reviews and Japan with seven, US- seven, China- six, and then some other countries left several reviews. But you guys, we wanna (want to) have a competition in August to see which country can leave the most reviews.



Lindsay: This is gonna (going to) be so cool. So we're gonna (going to) be looking for Germany, Thailand, Brazil, Turkey, Russia, Italy, France, Mexico, Argentina, and Korea. Let us see your reviews guys.

Gabby: Step it up and let's see which country can really win for...

Lindsay: Come on!

Gabby: ...reviews in August. We'll let you know the results at the end of August.

Lindsay: Excellent.

[Instrumental]

Gabby: Do you have your presentation phrases all set, but not sure how to handle the unpredictable and scary Q&A (question/answer)? This episode is going to give you back your control and put you in the driver's seat during the question and answer time of your presentations.

[Instrumental]

Gabby: Hey, Lindsay.

Lindsay: Hey, Gabby.

Gabby: How you doing?

Lindsay: Excellent, and you?

Gabby: Great.

Lindsay: Great.

Gabby: So I'm excited because we have a good question that we want to answer today. We got a comment on one of our previous episodes where Carl Kwan joined us talking about how to start and how to end your presentations. We got a question from **G.C. [02:12]**...

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).



Gabby: (Um), and he's asking about how to respond to questions. He says, the most difficult part of the presentation for him is, is not actually presenting, but it's when audience members ask questions.

Lindsay: Right, and, and one of his biggest – the issues that I understood from his question was more, (um), what do I do when – I don't know if I'm going to be able to understand what the audience is going to ask...

Gabby: Right. Or hear.

Lindsay: Yeah, like a fear of not being able to hear or understand the question.

Gabby: Right. So we know how it feels to feel like you're not in control and anything could happen and it's really scary when you can't prepare for those questions you don't know what to expect. So in today's episode, we're going to address that fear and give you some, I think, really great tips for successful presentation including addressing questions.

Lindsay: Absolutely.

Gabby: So, if I can just start with an 'a big picture tip'...

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: ...I think it's so important to reframe the fear here. (I mean), don't let yourself be out of control. This is your presentation. Take control of it. Set up your presentation by telling people *when* they can ask questions and *how* they can ask questions. So, in the beginning of your presentation, tell people, for example, "Please hold your questions until the end of the presentation." Or, "Please ask me questions anytime. I welcome your interaction." Okay, so that's your choice and you're instructing the audience how to behave. Okay.

Lindsay: Exactly.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: I think this goes along with some of the things that Carl has taught us about presentations, (uh), and that key thing that I took away from Carl's,



(uh), episode was bring proactive and anticipating what might happen during a presentation.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: And that means knowing your audience and what Gabby also just said, is setting it up so that you're in control.

Gabby: Oh, that's great. Yeah, so think about what you can control, okay. You can control the directions that you give your audience. You can't control the questions they're going to ask you.

Lindsay: That's right.

Gabby: Right? So – but we can set it up in the beginning so that you can take action to make it a more comfortable and predictable situation for you to act in. Now, the second point is set up your presentation to let the audience know how to ask you questions. So typically during a presentation, the audience will ask you questions, (um), (you know), orally. They'll...

Lindsay: Or on the spot.

Gabby: ...just ask on the spot. However, why couldn't you ask your audience to submit written questions? If you're more comfortable with reading, why not ask them to write their questions and pass them up to you or try, (uh), (uh), an electronic way. Perhaps your audience could post questions online, like...

Lindsay: On Twitter.

Gabby: ...on your Twitter feed or on a Facebook feed if that's preferable to you.

Lindsay: Right. Why not? Why not? It's your presentation. It might not seem traditional or typical...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...but take control, add your own flavor to it...



Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...and people will appreciate it more because it's your way.

Gabby: Absolutely. So let's go another step forward here, and go a little deeper with the spoken question. So let's say you, you tell people that they can ask questions.

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: Now, what can we do – first of all, if you can't hear the question, what could you say?

Lindsay: Yeah, so the first thing I might say is – be honest, say what's happening. "I'm having a hard time hearing you, could you speak up please?"

Gabby: (Uh-huh). Perfect.

Lindsay: 'Speak up'.

Gabby: 'Speak up'. Yeah, or 'speak a little louder'.

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: (Mm-hm).

Gabby: Perfect. Okay. I think that, that, that works really well. (Um), let's say you don't understand the question. I think that's the biggest fear here is, what if you just don't understand what the person is asking. First of all, this is normal. Okay, even for Native speakers, sometimes we'll get questions that we don't understand and it's not just about language ability...

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

Gabby: ...it's about really connecting and understanding what the person is trying to ask.

Lindsay: Yeah, everyone thinks in such a different way.



Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: So people just come, can come to your topic from different angles.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: But you – it's hard – yeah. It's hard to predict. People think in such different ways.

Gabby: Yeah, so first of all, relax.

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: Stay calm...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: ...and understand that it's very normal to have some anxiety about what people will ask and it's very normal to not understand or, or misunderstand a question from the audience. So we're gonna (going to) give you a few phrases here to help you to clarify the situation. The first phrase – actually preface these phrases by first saying how you feel or what you're thinking, you could say, "I'm not sure I understand."

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: And then, "Sorry, could you repeat that?" or "Could you rephrase that?"

Lindsay: What's the difference between 'repeat' and 'rephrase'?

Gabby: Right. There is a, an, an important difference. Thanks for asking. (Uh), 'repeat' is simply exactly...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: ...repeating verbatim exactly the same thing. 'Rephrase' is to give you the question again, same meaning, but different words.

Lindsay: (Um). So that might be a great thing to ask for because maybe you didn't understand exactly as it was said, but if the person rephrases it maybe you can understand it in that way.



Gabby: Right. Okay, and we have a few other questions that you could use. (Um), one is “Could you clarify?”

Lindsay: Right. “Could you clarify?” “Could you please be more specific?”

Gabby: (Uh-hm). Or “Could you give an example?” Okay. So those are some phrases to use when you’re not sure you understand. So, again, just to repeat. “I’m not sure I understand. Could you repeat that?”

Lindsay: “Could you rephrase that?”

Gabby: “Could you clarify?”

Lindsay: “Could you please be more specific?”

Gabby: Or, “Could you please give an example?” Okay, and, and just, (you know), just in case you *still* can’t understand, what do you do?

Lindsay: Good question. Oh no!

Gabby: You’ve asked for clarification, you’ve asked for repetition. (You know), maybe you’ve asked two or three times...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...for, for the, the audience member to repeat themselves or to rephrase, then what do you do if you still don’t understand?

Lindsay: I would just – I would move on.

Gabby: (Uh-huh).

Lindsay: I would say “Can you please follow-up with me by email and I would be happy to answer that question tomorrow.”

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: Right. And because you’re wasting everyone else’s time by sitting on this question trying not – you’re getting more nervous and it’s turning out to be not such a good thing...



Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: ...or situation. So move on.

Gabby: I agree. Just say, (you know), "I'm sorry, " or "Unfortunately, I really can't understand, so I'm going to move on, but please, if you'd like to contact me later, we can discuss this later."

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: And move on.

Lindsay: Exactly.

Gabby: Keep it moving!

Lindsay: Keep it moving!

Gabby: Great. Just remember you're in control here and you decide when to move on. So if you don't like the question – look politicians do this all the time.

Lindsay: Oh, my god, they're masters of this.

Gabby: If you don't like the question, just say, "I'm sorry. I can't answer that right now. (Uh), let's address that later..."

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: "...and move on."

Lindsay: Exactly.

Gabby: Great. So I think this was hopefully helpful for you guys who may have presentations coming up. Let us know what you think in the comments on our blog and share this episode with your friends if you find it helpful.

Lindsay: Thank you for listening guys.

[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.

