



All Ears English Episode 162:

Can You Learn English in Your Sleep

Gabby: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 162: “Can You Learn English in Your Sleep?”

[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: So, Gabby, a lot of our listeners are asking me where they can see and get the transcript from this podcast.

Gabby: Right, because reading while you listen to the episodes will help you improve your listening skills even faster. And we do have text transcripts of every single episode. So if you haven’t seen those yet, don’t miss out. You can find them at AllEarsEnglish.com/conversations. That’s c-o-n-v-e-r-s-a-t-i-o-n-s.

[Instrumental]



Lindsay: In this episode, we're gonna (going to) question some research that just came out that says you can actually learn a new language in your sleep.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey, Gabby. Hey, Gabby!

Gabby: {snoring}

Lindsay: Wake up!

Gabby: {snoring} Oh! Oh! Oh, I was just studying, (uh), German.

Lindsay: You sleep too much.

Gabby: No! No, really! I just read this article in *WIRED* magazine online that you can actually learn a new language better when you're sleeping.

Lindsay: Is that true?

Gabby: Well, that's what the article says.

Lindsay: (Um). Okay, where's the research behind this?

Gabby: All right. Well, let me give you like a quick summary of the article. So there was this group of Swiss scientists and they made this study with a group of 60 German speaking students, and they asked the students to learn some words in Dutch. So, around 10:00 pm, (uh), all of the, the 60 students started learning some new vocabulary words in Dutch. Okay?

Lindsay: (Mm-hm).

Gabby: And then one group was allowed to go to sleep...

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: ...and they continued to hear these vocabulary words while the other group had to stay awake...

Lindsay: Oh, that sounds hard.

Gabby: ...and continued to hear the vocabulary words.



Lindsay: So which group performed better the next – when they were woken up?

Gabby: Well, right. So at around 2:00 am both groups were, (uh), given a test. (You know), the, the group that was sleeping was woken up and the group that stayed awake, well they just, (you know), they stayed awake. And actually the group that was sleeping...

Lindsay: (Mm).

Gabby: ...performed better than the group that had stayed up listening to this vocabulary all night.

Lindsay: Oh! Okay, so what does this mean for our listeners? What about if someone's preparing for a presentation the next day? A meeting? A test? What can you learn?

Gabby: Well, it means that you should learn in your sleep? No, not exactly. (Um), I'm being a little silly. So what it means actually is – for me the take away is the importance of sleep.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: Right? It's important to get six to eight hours of sleep each night.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: And we understand that you're busy. We're busy too, but don't underestimate the power of sleep on your performance the next day.

Lindsay: Yeah...

Gabby: So...

Lindsay: ...it's incredible.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: (I mean), (you know), I know, (you know), having lived in Japan, I remember seeing people staying up really late...

Gabby: (Mm-hm).



Lindsay: ...at work and like out drinking...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...and I just wondered like how that – how does that go the next morning?

Gabby: Well...

Lindsay: Maybe you guys can let us know. I don't, I don't know how you do it.

Gabby: It's serious. (I mean) there are serious complications that can happen from exhaustion.

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: Exhaustion means when you're not getting enough sleep.

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: So, the take away from this for me is it's better to prepare a little the night before, or ideally much...

Lindsay: Yeah, right.

Gabby: (You know), much more time.

Lindsay: Confidence comes from preparation.

Gabby: Exactly, but if you have to choose between, (um), staying up all night and preparing, or just preparing for, let's say, an hour and then going to sleep, the latter would be the better choice.

Lindsay: Right. So going to sleep and trusting that the next day, (wha-), when you need those phrases, you'll be able to do it. You'll know them.

Gabby: That's, that's really what the science is showing here. (Um), we're not saying don't prepare. We're saying prepare for an hour or two, or whatever you can. Do, do your best, but sleep is going to be very important to your performance the next day. I know, for me, getting sleep is very important. If I don't sleep, I just, I have no energy. It's like I can't connect ideas as easily.



Lindsay: It's tough, yeah.

Gabby: (Um), so you want...

Lindsay: Cloudy, right?

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: In the mind?

Gabby: Yeah, that's right. That's right. I definitely perform better when I've slept six to eight hours. (Um), (I mean), it's, it's a necessity, right? Have you ever...

Lindsay: Oh, man.

Gabby: Have you ever experienced a lack of sleep?

Lindsay: Sure I have! Absolutely, and it doesn't feel good, (you know).

Gabby: (Mm).

Lindsay: I really – Oh, I just do so much better in life in general when I sleep well...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...when I sleep enough.

Gabby: Yeah, so, (you know), we wanted to talk about this article because it came out recently, (uh), just, (you know), a, a month or two ago, and I think it's a little bit misleading. You're not actually learning new languages while you sleep. What I think is happening is that you're able to remember what you learned the night before better because your brain has been able to take a rest. Now, the researchers might argue with me here, but this is what I think is happening.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: What do you think Lindsay?



Lindsay: No, I agree. I think this is more about the importance of sleep, which can kind of spread across our entire lives, not just in terms of language learning, but relationships...

Gabby: (Mm).

Lindsay: ...quality relationships, (right), business and personal relationships, communication. Are you gonna (going to) be able – are you gonna (going to) have the rest that you need to communicate and be effective?

Gabby: Yeah, that's right. (I mean), it's a, it's a, it's a very interesting idea that we could just learn a new language while we're sleeping. Wouldn't that be great? That's real multi-tasking.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: (Um), and, (I mean), hey, why not try it? I'm not saying you shouldn't try it, (uh), but I'm not sure that's the real take away from this study.

Lindsay: Right, right. Yeah. Well, I'm gonna (going to) sleep more tonight than I have the last few nights after reading this article.

Gabby: Are you gonna (going to) play some Spanish tapes or something while you sleep?

Lindsay: Maybe I'll try it and I'll let you know how it goes.

Gabby: Let us know. All right guys. Well, thanks for listening and we hope you get a great night's sleep tonight.

Lindsay: Sweet dreams!

[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.

