



## All Ears English Episode 167:

### Can You Find Power in Your English Mistakes

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**Gabby:** This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 167: “Can You Find Power in Your English Mistakes?”

[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:** Can’t get enough of All Ears English?

**Gabby:** We can’t get enough of you either. We made a four hour video course with four phrase guides that go together.

**Lindsay:** You’re gonna (going to) learn the four keys to connecting with American people.

**Gabby:** You can instantly download the whole course. Just go to [AllEarsEnglish.com/keys](http://AllEarsEnglish.com/keys), k-e-y-s.

[Instrumental]



**Lindsay:** In today's episode, we'll talk about why your brain is still stuck in caveman days and how that's affecting your English success and your success in life.

**[Instrumental]**

**Gabby:** Hey, Lindsay.

**Lindsay:** Hey, Gabby.

**Gabby:** How you doing?

**Lindsay:** Pretty good.

**Gabby:** Lindsay, I was wondering, are you perfect?

**Lindsay:** Actually, I am.

**Gabby:** I knew it.

**Lindsay:** Why did you even have to ask? (I mean), it's obvious that I'm perfect.

**Gabby:** I just, (you know), I was just wondering because they say no one's perfect, so...

**Lindsay:** Oh, well, that's everyone. (I mean), no one but me.

**Gabby:** Right. So, I wanted to ask you because I really like this topic that you, you brought up just now about vulnerability, and making mistakes, and feeling shame around that when you mess up and you aren't perfect because everyone else besides you...

**Lindsay:** Yeah, right.

**Gabby:** ...makes mistakes.

**Lindsay:** Exactly.

**Gabby:** Isn't it perfect?

**Lindsay:** Yeah, exactly. And so, today, we're actually going to take a couple of ideas that we have heard from the well-known researcher, Brené Brown.



**Gabby:** (Uh-hm).

**Lindsay:** (Um), Brené Brown is a famous researcher who does work on vulnerability and shame, really important academic, (quali-), qualitative research. So...

**Gabby:** That's right. Yeah, so, we'll include an embedded video of her talk on vulnerability. So, you can find that on our blog post at [AllEarsEnglish.com/167](http://AllEarsEnglish.com/167).

**Lindsay:** Yeah. We just think this is really important because we see it coming up over and over again in...

**Gabby:** Right.

**Lindsay:** ...different ways for English learners.

**Gabby:** Right. Well, what we believe is totally different from what you may have learned in school right. In school, teachers sometimes use shame to keep order in the classroom and to (sort of) – I don't wanna (want to) say motivate, but to force you to keep studying, and...

**Lindsay:** Right.

**Gabby:** ...and force you to be a good student.

**Lindsay:** And to make it easier for themselves to, for example, discipline.

**Both:** Right.

**Lindsay:** Discipline is a slightly different issue, but – so I think maybe, (you know), as learners, (you know), as language learners, we...

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** ...have these ideas of shame ingrained in us...

**Gabby:** Right.

**Lindsay:** ...from an early age.



**Gabby:** And shame, actually, can be very motivating because you don't want to feel shame. If you're bringing shame on yourself or shame on your family, that's an awful feeling, but it keeps you from taking, (um), from trying new things, from taking risks and from growing as a person and actually, (um), succeeding on a bigger level than you would if you just play within the space of shame.

**Lindsay:** Exactly. So, let's think about some takeaways that our listeners can use...

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** ...when it comes to learning English and what this means.

**Gabby:** For me the top takeaway is that mistakes are not shameful. Mistakes are powerful opportunities to learn.

**Lindsay:** Definitely. I think – yeah. Absolutely. We learn so much more from your mistakes than we do...

**Gabby:** Absolutely.

**Lindsay:** ...from our successes. And we can – I can say that, (you know), we've learned...

**Gabby:** (Uh-hm).

**Lindsay:** ...a lot from our mistakes here at All Ears English.

**Gabby:** Absolutely.

**Lindsay:** We've made a lot of mistakes even though it might not look like we have.

**Gabby:** Well, also in language learning, too, (I mean), I can think of a couple of really embarrassing mistakes, (um), that I've made in other languages and I'll never forget that mistake, if I'll never forget the, the correction either...

**Lindsay:** (Uh-huh).

**Gabby:** I'll never forget the right way to say what I wanna (want to) say in Spanish or Portuguese from these embarrassing situations. So mistakes can be



very memorable, they can be a powerful way to remember a lesson. They can, they can also be pivotal moments where you can make a choice whether you're going to learn from that mistake and grow or if you're gonna (going to) sit in your shame and stop trying.

**Lindsay:** Right. So, in that case, the louder they laugh, the better, right?

**Gabby:** Ooh yeah, I like that.

**Lindsay:** Because...

**Gabby:** Explain that.

**Lindsay:** Well, I just mean that if you're with a group...

**Gabby:** (Uh-hm).

**Lindsay:** ...of, (uh), (you know), of other English learners or maybe native speakers...

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** ...(you know), maybe they laugh at you when you make a mistake because sometimes it might sound funny.

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** But – okay, so they laugh at you.

**Gabby:** Right.

**Lindsay:** And they point it out and you feel shame, but the deeper that experience is, (like), the louder their laughter actually is...

**Gabby:** (Mm).

**Lindsay:** ...the more you'll remember it.

**Gabby:** Right.

**Lindsay:** And the more that motivation...

**Gabby:** It's a lot of emotion. Yeah.



**Lindsay:** ...becomes a learning opportunity.

**Gabby:** Now, you were telling me about a student in Brazil who experienced his friends laughing at him when they spoke English, what, what...

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Gabby:** ...happened there?

**Lindsay:** I think the story was, (uh), this particular student said that when he – so he'd be speaking English in class and in his English class in Brazil with other Brazilians, but when he would step out of the class he would want to continue speaking and...

**Gabby:** In English with his...

**Lindsay:** In English.

**Gabby:** ...Brazilian friends.

**Lindsay:** Right.

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** And they might, (you know), they might start speaking within – there was a lot of shame that came up because they felt very embarrassed, (um)...

**Gabby:** They would make fun of him.

**Lindsay:** Yeah...

**Gabby:** Okay.

**Lindsay:** ...of him or each other.

**Gabby:** (Mm).

**Lindsay:** So it's a shame environment, right.

**Gabby:** (Hm).

**Lindsay:** So our recommendation is to not accept people's shame, (right).



**Gabby:** Right.

**Lindsay:** Either walk out of that circle and go find people who are not gonna (going to) laugh at your mistakes.

**Gabby:** Right.

**Lindsay:** Or just say, "No, listen, I don't want this circle to have this feeling."

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** "I wanna (want to) be able to try to speak."

**Gabby:** Yeah. Shame does not have to be the status quo or the normal way to react when you make a mistake. So, don't accept that as normal, (right). When someone tries to shame you or make fun of you because you made a mistake just brush it off.

**Lindsay:** Exactly.

**Gabby:** And you may want to, (you know), find other people to be around if they continue to try to shame and they can't open their minds to a, a, a world where mistakes are powerful opportunities.

**Lindsay:** Exactly, because if you're surrounding yourself with people who are shaming you all the time, it becomes hard to move above that.

**Gabby:** Right.

**Lindsay:** So maybe just moving out of that circle and finding new friends.

**Gabby:** Yeah. So, putting yourself in vulnerable situations where you could be shamed or you could make mistakes is actually a situation, it's an opportunity to grow. So, if you think about situations where people would commonly feel afraid like public speaking or maybe traveling or studying or working abroad.

**Lindsay:** (Uh-hm).

**Gabby:** (Um), what else?



**Lindsay:** Well, (I mean), doing this podcast, I had wanted to do a podcast for a few years...

**Gabby:** Wow.

**Lindsay:** ...and I was afraid.

**Gabby:** Right.

**Lindsay:** (You know).

**Gabby:** Right.

**Lindsay:** It's scary getting behind the microphone thinking that 20,000 people are gonna (going to) listen to this every day.

**Gabby:** Every day. Yeah.

**Lindsay:** (Uh-hm).

**Gabby:** Yeah, so those are situations where you're putting yourself out there for people to say whatever they wanna (want to) say and not everyone is nice.

**Lindsay:** That's right.

**Gabby:** And we've, we've been lucky to get a lot of great reviews from our listeners and we really appreciate that, (you know), but there's always one out of, (you know), one hundred or, (you know)...

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Gabby:** ...that one percent...

**Lindsay:** Right.

**Gabby:** ...who is negative.

**Lindsay:** Right. And, and the problem with the way our brains are set up we know that we have out reptile brain, (right)...

**Gabby:** (Um).



**Lindsay:** ...which focuses on the danger that goes back to the caveman days when he had to scan for the lion ready to eat us.

**Gabby:** Right.

**Lindsay:** So we focus on that one negative comment when there a hundred other good comments. So just understand that that's what your brain is doing...

**Gabby:** Wow.

**Lindsay:** ...from developmental – right?

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** That's the way we're developed.

**Gabby:** Shame is not a lion or a bear or a...

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Gabby:** ...predator. Shame is not going to kill you.

**Lindsay:** Right. So now, we're not – we're in the modern world. We're not running from lions anymore. We actually...

**Gabby:** Most of us are not.

**Lindsay:** Hopefully not. Yeah, yeah. So, we don't need that reflex or that mechanism anymore, but we're actually carrying that into our lives today.

**Gabby:** So, actually, vulnerability is not a weakness anymore as it used to be for our ancestors or cavemen who were running away from predators who were going to eat them. Nowadays, we need to change our mindset and see vulnerability and mistakes as power.

**Lindsay:** Yes. And the final thing that I would like to mention is...

**Gabby:** Sure.



**Lindsay:** ...it's real – So, I think that it's very common nowadays, especially in online internet space to hear a lot of rhetoric about the importance of being vulnerable...

**Gabby:** (Uh-hm).

**Lindsay:** ...and opening up to shame, going into what you fear. If you read anything about personal development, you're gonna (going to) hear it all the time.

**Gabby:** Right.

**Lindsay:** But my question is – so it's – so also as women, I think it might – maybe – this is my hypothesis.

**Gabby:** (Uh-huh).

**Lindsay:** Let's see what you guys think.

**Gabby:** (Uh-huh).

**Lindsay:** I think as women it's a little bit easy for (u-), easier for us to promote this idea, to encourage you. But I wonder, for men, if it's as easy to actually follow through...

**Gabby:** (Uh-huh).

**Lindsay:** ...because of what society expects of men versus women.

**Gabby:** Right.

**Lindsay:** What do you think, Gabby?

**Gabby:** I would like to open up this question to our listeners.

**Lindsay:** (Uh-hm).

**Gabby:** So, listeners, do you feel that it is more difficult for men to see mistakes, shame, or vulnerability as power?

**Lindsay:** (Uh-hm).



**Gabby:** Are there expectations in society or in your family that maybe you feel you can't show your vulnerability?

**Lindsay:** Right.

**Gabby:** I'd like to hear your comments because I have my opinion, but I think as a woman, I don't know what it's like to be a man and so, I would rather hear from some of our listeners.

**Lindsay:** Yeah. So you can come back to our episode at [AllEarsEnglish.com/167](http://AllEarsEnglish.com/167) and you can answer that question in the context of English learning...

**Gabby:** (Uh-huh).

**Lindsay:** ...or, of course, we're always linking English Learning to life.

**Gabby:** (Uh-huh).

**Lindsay:** So you can answer it in the context of your larger life.

**Gabby:** Right. So come back to the blogpost or you can make a comment on twitter at [AllEarsEnglish](https://twitter.com/AllEarsEnglish) or at [facebook.com/AllEarsEnglish](https://facebook.com/AllEarsEnglish). I really hope to hear from you on this interesting topic.

**Lindsay:** Yeah, let's have a conversation, guys. See you there.

**Gabby:** See you there.

**[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.

