



## All Ears English Episode 174:

### How to Think in English with Shayna from Espresso English

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**Lindsay:** This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 174: “How to Think in English with Shayna from Espresso 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:** Finally, we’re going to answer your question, “How can I think in English?” In this episode, you’ll learn three levels to start thinking your way to fluency.

**Lindsay:** So, Gabby, who is today’s AEE Super Fan?

**Gabby:** Our Super Fan is Sergio Luiz A. Silva from Brazil.

**Lindsay:** Sergio is awesome. He is truly curious about learning languages and finding out what works. He’s active on our blog, and our Facebook, Google Plus. He’s all over the place. He’s engaging with All Ears English. Gabby, what exactly is Sergio doing to use All Ears English?



**Gabby:** Yeah, he tells us he loves repeating the audio episodes and his brain is actually becoming used to the natural flow of English and that's even affecting his own pronunciation. So his understanding of English is getting really fluent.

**Lindsay:** And even better. He has shared All Ears English with about 12 people (mou-), word of mouth. That is awesome. We asked Sergio what the key is to success in English and life. He believes in our potential in – it's the – he says that the key is believing in your own potential and working hard towards your dreams. Thank you so much Sergio for that brilliant piece of advice.

**Gabby:** Thanks Sergio.

**Lindsay:** And thanks for being a Super Fan.

**[Instrumental]**

**Gabby:** Hey, Lindsay, I was thinking that our listeners might want to see all the TOP 15 ways to improve their English, in an e-book.

**Lindsay:** I know. This is a great Tuesday series that we're doing here to dissect and tune-up the TOP 15 mistakes that people are making, but if you want to see them all at one time, you can get them in an e-book.

**Gabby:** Yeah, just come to [AllEarsEnglish.com/TOP15](http://AllEarsEnglish.com/TOP15), that's T-O-P-1-5.

**[Instrumental]**

**Lindsay:** Hey, Gabby. How are you doing today?

**Gabby:** Hey, Lindsay. I'm doing fantastic. How are you?

**Lindsay:** Excellent, excellent. I want to welcome Shayna Oliveira today from EspressoEnglish.net. Thanks for coming Shayna.

**Shayna:** My pleasure. Hello from Brazil.

**Lindsay:** Yeah.



**Gabby:** Yah!

**Lindsay:** So you're in Salvador, you said.

**Shayna:** That's right. In Northeastern Brazil.

**Lindsay:** Excellent. We're excited. So you've built up an awesome business teaching English online at EspressoEnglish.net and you've also written some interesting articles about how to think in English and this is a huge topic. There are a lot of our listeners – I know they're curious about it and they really want to know how they can break into that next level of learning English. (Um), do you think you could let our listeners know your top three tips for thinking in English?

**Shayna:** Yeah, definitely. (Uh), before I start, I'd just like to say that I think a lot of learners think you have to be advanced to think in English or almost fluent.

**Gabby:** Right.

**Shayna:** But I think you can actually start developing that skill even when you're a beginner.

**Lindsay:** Ooh.

**Gabby:** Oh, yeah. That's great.

**Lindsay:** I like that.

**Gabby:** Yeah, so any level this is, this is applied.

**Lindsay:** Right. I like it.

**Shayna:** Exactly. And my three steps that I normally teach people – the first step is super simple. It's just to think in individual English words. So for example, if your listeners just take a moment and just look around the room, I bet they could think of at least 20 words. (I mean), that could be 'computer', that could be 'chair', that could be 'house', (um), could be verbs and adjectives, just really simple. No need to get into sentences, just single words.



- Lindsay:** Okay. I like that. So you're taking a minute to just be silent with yourself and just run through the words in your mind.
- Shayna:** Exactly. And you can take inspiration from what you see. (I mean) if you're on the train and you have a minute and you can look around and you can think, (you know), (um), if you see a child, you think, (you know), boy or a girl, or you see somebody carrying an umbrella and you think 'umbrella'. And I think it's super powerful because you actually connect the word with what you're seeing directly, right, without translating.
- Lindsay:** I love that.
- Gabby:** Yeah. So it's when you, you've already learned some vocabulary, then you can start to do this.
- Shayna:** Exactly. (Um), and it's good 'cause (because) you can also see the gaps in your vocabulary.
- Gabby:** Right.
- Shayna:** (You know), if you're, if you're in your kitchen, and you say, 'Okay, I know fork, I know knife, I know spoon.' And then you look at your blender and you say, "Oh, I don't know the word for that in English." You can then go to your dictionary and, and fill in that gap, right...
- Gabby:** Oh, that's great.
- Shayna:** ...that you're trying to learn.
- Gabby:** Or, if you don't have your dictionary or your smartphone with you, you could just make a note of that. You could write down, 'Oh, gosh I need to, (you know), when I get home, I need to look up the word for blender 'cause (because) I want to know that and I don't know it.'
- Lindsay:** Yeah. I like this.
- Shayna:** Exactly. Exactly. Well, it helps you discover what are the things you're seeing in daily life that you don't know the words for yet, or you can't bring them to mind in English. So that's level one. It's super simple. You



don't have to worry about grammar or anything else. It's just (kind of) practicing, brining that vocabulary to mind.

**Lindsay:** Yeah, it sounds like this is just a slight mindset shift that we need to take on. And it sounds like it's just a habit that we need to build and we know that habits build relatively (quick-), quickly, (right), if we're diligent about setting them up. So I like this idea.

**Shayna:** Exactly. And it's something that you can do, even if you don't live in an English-speaking country 'cause (because) you're just practicing in your own mind.

**Lindsay:** (Mm). Awesome.

**Gabby:** Yeah, that's great.

**Lindsay:** So the first one is just thinking about the words for individual objects on the train or in your house. What's the next tip Shayna?

**Shayna:** Okay, so the next level is trying to make some really simple sentences. Again, only in your mind, and you can just think really simple like, "That car is red," or "My blender is broken." (You know), very simple, no need to get into complicated, convoluted structures. The idea is just to practice putting the words you know together into sentences.

**Lindsay:** (Mm). Very cool. So you're just progressing one level deeper making it a little bit more difficult.

**Shayna:** Right. And this is also a way to kind of practice forming sentences without that fear of "I'm going to mess up," "Somebody's not going to understand me."

**Lindsay:** Right.

**Shayna:** "They're gonna (going to) laugh at my sentence," because nobody's judging you, right. You're just practicing to yourself.



**Gabby:** Okay, so this is you're just walking around, or you're on the train or whatever, you have a minute to think, so you're gonna (going to) think in English...

**Lindsay:** Right.

**Gabby:** ...to yourself, you're just going through some words or maybe creating your own sentences. And you're saying it doesn't matter that they're perfect. They don't need to be perfect, you're just bringing that English to mind and, (you know), maybe later you could get some feedback on it to make sure it's correct, right.

**Shayna:** Exactly.

**Gabby:** Okay.

**Shayna:** And you can also discover gaps here too. Like if you want to say, "I just bought ice cream," and you realize that you don't – remember the past tense of 'buy' is 'bought'. You can, again, go look that up later or refresh your memory on, "How, how is it that I wanted to say that?" And so it's another way to discover maybe a couple of those things you might be missing and then to learn them in a very real, very concrete way because that sentence you're thinking and you're filling in any gaps in your knowledge.

**Gabby:** Yeah, that's great.

**Lindsay:** Yeah, I like it. I like it. And it's like your mind becomes your learning lab.

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** (You know), and it's a private learning lab. No one has to hear your mistakes. It's you and yourself. Excellent.

**Gabby:** It's also really important to review and repeat, and so this is a very helpful practice to do that.

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



**Shayna:** Exactly. And all of these steps are kind of moving towards being able to speak without thinking in your native language and translating. So when you do this kind of mental practice, the next time you need to say in English, (uh), “I would like to buy an ice cream,” or something like that, you can just say it, (right), you don’t have to think about the words in your native language before translating and thinking about the sentence structure.

**Lindsay:** (Mm).

**Gabby:** By the time they do all that, the ice cream is gone.

**Lindsay:** Yeah. Let me, let me ask...

**Shayna:** That, or it’s melted.

**Lindsay:** Let me ask you a quick question. What do you think the barriers are for students – why don’t they do this automatically? (Like), what holds us back from doing this intuitively?

**Shayna:** (Um), some of it, I think is that belief that you need to be advanced to do it.

**Both:** (Mm).

**Shayna:** Some of it is also just, (uh), simply, it’s not occurring to somebody during the day. (You know), I think there are a lot of, (like), little moments, (you know), when you’re just walking somewhere or when you’re waiting in line at the supermarket, that maybe people think about other things, but they don’t think, ‘Oh, here’s an opportunity for me to try to practice thinking in English.’”

**Gabby:** Right.

**Lindsay:** Wow, I like this. This could be a super useful episode in that case, if we can just get people to start to think about this. I love it.

**Gabby:** Well, and don’t wait until your English teacher tells you now speak English.



**Lindsay:** Right, right.

**Gabby:** Right, this is something that you can do whenever, wherever you want, so take charge.

**Lindsay:** Yeah, I like it.

**Shayna:** Exactly. It's part of making English part of your daily life, right.

**Both:** Yeah.

**Shayna:** The more you do that, the faster you'll advance and progress.

**Gabby:** Well, this is what we do in our native language. (I mean), don't we all (sort of) talk to ourselves in our minds.

**Lindsay:** Oh, yeah.

**Gabby:** Like, 'Oh, gosh I forgot to buy milk,' or, (you know), you're thinking these things in your native language, but when you want to learn a second language, you need to start building that habit of doing it in your second language.

**Lindsay:** (Mm). I like it.

**Shayna:** And that's actually a perfect transition into the third level, which is to just take that internal dialogue, your normal thoughts and try to think them in English. So maybe if you're thinking about something stressful at work. (Um) instead of thinking through it in your native language, try to just take a minute or two minutes and think of that in English. (Um), it's a little bit tricky and it's (kind of) mentally difficult at first, but it's super, super key because this is what's really gonna (going to) have – help you get more fluent mentally because this is your normal thought process just in English now, instead of your native language.

**Gabby:** You can probably start replacing certain phrases that you know and then, (you know), as you notice where the gaps are you can look those up and throw them in, but I'm just – I'm thinking (like), (you know), when you learn a language, you might learn key phrases like "Very good." (I mean),



you hear people say “Oh, very good. Very good.” And so, and of, and of course I’m thinking in Portuguese, too, when people say, “Oh very good.” And I would, I would say that to myself, “(You know), oh, very good, (you know). Good job Gabby. You studied for an hour.” Whatever it was I would say to myself, “Very good,” in Portuguese and just like that little thing makes a difference I think.

**Lindsay:** Absolutely. Instead of translating, (right) – so that’s the difference. So, you’re taking the phrase, if you’re learning Portuguese...

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** ...the way it would be said in Portuguese, not taking the way you would say it in English and putting it into Portuguese, right.

**Gabby:** Right. Well I would, I would tell myself in my mind, I would say “Muito bom, muito bom.”

**Lindsay:** Right, right.

**Gabby:** (You know), and it’s just like a little thing, but that repetition helps, I think.

**Lindsay:** (Mm). I like that.

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** Awesome.

**Shayna:** A-another (kind of) mental trick you can use is to just imagine your English teacher asking you a question like, (um), “How was your day?”

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Abigail:** And then you need to respond in English and of course instead of responding out loud, you’re just doing it in your head or imagine you’re telling your English teacher about a memory you have or a funny story that happened to you last week, and just think through how you would tell your English teacher in English and sometimes that little bit of visualization helps, (uh), bring English, (you know) more to the surface of your mind.



**Gabby:** I love it. It's like rehearsing for (uh), (uh), an event or rehearsing for a presentation. (I mean), everyday conversation is not so formal, but what I mean is when you wanna (want to) do something well, you rehearse it.

**Lindsay:** Right. And this is getting English practice internally. People often say that they don't have an opportunity to practice.

**Gabby:** Right.

**Lindsay:** Well, you have all day to practice inside your mind.

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** I love it. Awesome.

**Shayna:** And it does, it does take some getting used to. And, (you know), it might be something that you can only do for two minutes at first and then later it's ten minutes and then later maybe you can do it for an entire hour, until eventually, (you know), if you wanted to, you could think fluently in English. But it does take practice.

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Shayna:** (Un), but the important thing is to start small and to keep going and keep persisting so that you can just develop that ability.

**Gabby:** So have you suggested this technique to some of your English students.

**Shayna:** I have, and what they tell me is that it is difficult. (You know), they say that they, they struggle at first, (right), to break the habit of translating.

**Gabby:** Right.

**Shayna:** But the result is that it ends up with English sentences that are faster and also more natural because you start to speak in the way, the phrases that, that native English speakers use instead of those, (kind of) awkward strange phrases that get translated from your native language.

**Lindsay:** That's right.



**Gabby:** Absolutely.

**Lindsay:** Exactly. That's the key.

**Gabby:** Well, that's fantastic. I think, so long-term, it's much, much better.

**Lindsay:** Yeah. This is a good way to build a really solid foundation in the language and natural solid foundation.

**Gabby:** Great. Cool.

**Shayna:** And in fact, it's easier if you do it early on, (right). It might be more difficult if you're quite advanced, to start...

**Lindsay:** Right.

**Shayna:** ...(you know), putting this into practice, but the earlier you start, the better you can get and it's still some ability just like speaking, just like vocabulary, just like listening. The more you train, the better you'll be.

**Gabby:** Well, you know what's funny is I think I've don't this a little bit, just, (you know), not realizing that it's a technique, but maybe doing this – like when I was learning Japanese, or Portuguese, and now, when I try to think of certain words, they'll come to me first in Japanese, and then I'm like, 'Oh, shoot what is that in English, my native language?' I don't know. I think that happens to us because you get used to, (you know), saying these words to yourself in another language.

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Gabby:** And it's not a bad thing. I'm just saying it's funny.

**Lindsay:** You never lose your language.

**Gabby:** You'll never lose your native language.

**Lindsay:** That's right.

**Gabby:** Yeah.



**Shayna:** But it shows a real strong identification of that concept or that idea or that word, right, with the language that maybe you learned it in.

**Gabby:** Absolutely.

**Lindsay:** Absolutely. I love it. Oh, this has been so cool. All right. So just to (kind of) recap here what we've talked about today. So, Shayna, you first of all suggested thinking, starting off by thinking with individual words, thinking a – (kind of) looking at things, 'Okay, what's that. It's a whiteboard, it's a, it's a cup.' And then moving on to making simple sentences, something a little bit (lo-), that's longer, observing what's going on. And then the final step would be taking that internal dialogue that's already going on in your head, in your native language and turning it into English, right.

**Shayna:** Absolutely. Yep, those are the three steps from going, for going from nothing to thinking fluently in English and that will definitely have a huge, huge impact on speaking fluently and speaking faster.

**Gabby:** That's awesome.

**Lindsay:** Fantastic.

**Gabby:** So if our listeners want to find out more about you and Espresso English, where should they go?

**Shayna:** They can go to [EspressoEnglish.net](http://EspressoEnglish.net).

**Gabby:** Okay.

**Shayna:** That's my main website, and I also have a YouTube channel, which is just [YouTube.com/EsspressoEnglish.net](http://YouTube.com/EsspressoEnglish.net).

**Gabby:** Awesome.

**Lindsay:** Aw. Very good. Wow! Thanks so much for coming on today Shayna. This has been fantastic, really useful.

**Shayna:** Thanks, it was great talking with both of you.

**Gabby:** Thanks, Shayna.



**Lindsay:** Thanks a lot.

**Gabby:** Take care.

**Shayna:** Bye-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.

