



All Ears English Episode 186:

English Anyone Host, Drew Badger, Shares Three Unconventional Tips for Fluency

Gabby: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 186: “English Anyone Host, Drew Badger, Shares Three Unconventional Tips for Fluency.”

[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: In today’s episode, you’re gonna (going to) meet Drew Badger, who’s fluent in Japanese and he’s gonna (going to) tell you how he did it and give you three top tips to become fluent in English.

[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, 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, that's T-O-P-1-5.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey, Gabby.

Gabby: Hey, Lindsay. How you doing?

Lindsay: I'm doing great, and you?

Gabby: I'm great.

Lindsay: Well, I'm psyched. Today we have Drew Badger from EnglishAnyone.com. Hey Drew. What's up?

Gabby: Hey Drew.

Drew: What's up ladies?

Lindsay: (Tha-).

Gabby: Not much.

Lindsay: Not a whole lot.

Both: Thanks for joining us...

Lindsay: ...today. We really appreciate...

Drew: Oh, it's a pleasure.

Lindsay: ...that.

Drew: Thank you very much.

Lindsay: So I heard that you're fluent in Japanese. That is awesome.



Drew: I try. And I heard, (uh), you two both spent some time in Japanese, so we got that connection.

Gabby: Yes.

Lindsay: We have that...

Gabby: Yes, we do.

Lindsay: ...connection.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: We've struggled with [speaks in Japanese 01:53]...

Gabby: Oh, yeah.

Lindsay: ...and all that good stuff.

Gabby: But you know it's so much...

Drew: Ah, yeah.

Gabby: ...fun to try to learn.

Lindsay: It's really fun, it's really good for you. So since you've reached a really high level of Japanese and you're also an English teacher Drew, we'd love to know about how you did it.

Gabby: (Um).

Lindsay: And I think you're gonna (going to) talk today about three (kind of) core strategies that you could recommend for our listeners.

Gabby: Yeah, we wanna (want to) share those with our listeners because you guys, our listeners, you can use them with your English speaking.

Lindsay: Absolutely. So what can you teach us today Drew?

Drew: All right. Well, (uh), I'll give you the quick and dirty. (Uh), first, when I came to Japan, I was learning the traditional way and this is probably something you guys are familiar with and many of the listeners out there



as well. So this is – I came and I wanted to start, (you know), trying to figure out how to speak and so I, (like), I got all the grammar books. I...

Gabby: (Um).

Lindsay: (Um).

Drew: ...got the listening practice CDs and the flashcards and (s-), and all that stuff and it was just incredibly frustrating for me.

Lindsay: Oh.

Gabby: Yeah.

Drew: And I noticed that, (uh), when I was trying to speak, (you know), people couldn't understand what I was saying. My pronunciation sucked.

Lindsay: (Um).

Drew: (Uh), (you know), and, and it was just a, just a whole bunch of the same typical things that now I hear from a lot of students that are coming from that, that background of learning the traditional way. (Uh), but long story short, after, (like), (you know), (kind of) a lot of, (like) a lot of frustrating evenings in trying to figure out how to do things and not knowing what to do actually trying to do Japanese classes and then just being too embarrassed to speak.

Lindsay: Oh.

Drew: I actually happened to be, (uh), walking through a park one day and this is, (uh), a (real-), really interesting story, but I noticed, (uh), some Japanese children playing with their mother and I started – I sat down and I just started watching them and this is the story I've told to a lot of people. (Um), but it was such a powerful thing that happened to me. I was just out, (like), not even on that day, not even feeling, (you know), particularly happy about Japan because I'd been so excited to come...

Lindsay: Oh.



Drew: I actually came out to Japan, (uh), to study Japanese gardens. So that's why I came.

Gabby: Oh.

Lindsay: Interesting.

Gabby: Yeah.

Drew: Yeah. So that's, (uh), got gardens out here and that's a whole other conversation when you guys start the gardening podcasts.

Gabby: Oh, yeah.

Lindsay: Okay, well we'll get on to that next.

Drew: But, anyways, so I'm out there and I, (you know), kind of feeling a little bit down on myself and I see these kids playing with their mothers and I noticed who the parents are talking to the children, (uh), and I noticed that they're doing everything the exact opposite of the way I'm doing it.

Both: Oh.

Drew: (crosstalk), like wow, they're, they're learning things in like very nice, easy steps. They're learning...

Gabby: Right.

Drew: ...the real conversational Japanese that I wanted to be speaking. (Uh), everything was visual and it was nice and simple, like you would look at a bird and they would just say 'bird'.

Lindsay: (Um).

Gabby: (Aw).

Drew: It's a weird thing that happens to you when you, when you're watching something like that and thinking – because I came out to Japan, as I said, about the, (uh), to learn gardening, but I couldn't get a visa to do that, so I



had to start teaching English as just a way to (kind of) get my foot in the door.

Gabby: Wow, that's interesting.

Drew: And...

Lindsay: I see.

Drew: ...yeah. So that, (like) it was (like), just (kind of), (like), well, I guess I've gotta (got to) do it this way in order to get the visa.

Gabby: Yeah.

Drew: (You know) you can come here and study karate or whatever, but, (uh), (like) you can't do gardening for some reason. That's (like) a little bit weird for the government. But, yeah, long story short, (uh), I learned a completely different way of thinking about languages and it was more how can I take the language, (uh), that they're actually learning and then learn it myself that way?"

Gabby: Right.

Drew: So what I did, I started creating these, (uh), fluency missions. And this is something – I'll just give like one quick example. (Uh), and the first thing I started doing was, okay, I'm gonna (going to) take one thing and just practice it in a way that's really easy for me to do, (uh), and I don't have to worry about being embarrassed. So what I went to, (uh), was a local grocery store and I went and just started asking everyone that was in the grocery store, (like), "Where is the sugar? Where is the salt? Where (crosstalk)..."

Gabby: That is great.

Lindsay: Awesome.

Drew: (crosstalk) ...everybody in, in the grocery store and that, (like), an, (you know), (like) an-and, (you know), they don't care about trying to have a conversation with me. I don't have to worry about them bringing up some



philosophical topic I don't know about. It's just a way for me to build my speaking confidence and actually practice something and then really work on the pronunciation that kind of thing.

Gabby: And I noticed, (you know), asking a question and asking for a little help, like, (you know)...

Drew: Yeah.

Gabby: "Where is..." that's asking for help. That's, that's a really good way to connect with people isn't it.

Lindsay: Yeah. I like that.

Drew: Oh, (abs-), yeah, absolutely and that's, (uh), that's one thing that I, I actually, I have (like) whole, whole fluency missions that I teach, (uh), to students now about that. Like how...

Gabby: Cool.

Drew: ...and how you can go out and ask for help and, (you know), like getting – (like) one, this is (like) a tip I recommend for people, (uh), is asking people to (like) take a picture.

Gabby: Yes.

Drew: So you just walk up and, again, it's just, it's just getting a way to get a conversation started, so...

Lindsay: Oh.

Drew: ...especially people that are living in non-Native speaking countries like myself. (I mean), I can walk up to people and say, "Hey, (like), will you take a picture of me. (crosstalk).

Gabby: Say, "Where's the sugar?"

Drew: (crosstalk)... Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, it's like, where's the camera, where's the sugar, and then (crosstalk)...



Lindsay: Yeah, very cool.

Drew: ...conversation like that. Sometimes...

Gabby: Yeah, I love it.

Lindsay: I...

Drew: (Um). It's-it's-it's – ho-honestly, the parallels are quite similar to (like) the dating world.

Gabby: (Um).

Lindsay: Ooh.

Drew: ...where you just need to figure out a way to get a conversation started because most of the time, (I mean) people want to connect in general...

Gabby: Right.

Drew: ...but, (you know), people are also nervous that maybe you don't speak the language or, (you know), whatever. So people are, (you know), they're nervous for a wide variety of reasons, but in a nutshell, that was how I came to Japan and then when I started thinking about that, I, I kinda (kind of) changed the way I thought about the language and then changed the way I practiced the language as well.

Lindsay: Okay.

Drew: So that's how I – and again, not, not to give the impression that I'm a fantastic, (you know), speaker. I do all right. I can certainly get around, but (uh), the experience that I have now is way different in Japan than, (you know), when I came here over ten years ago and, (you know), now I get invited to like...

Gabby: Wow.

Drew: ...local ceremonies and festivals, and inside...

Gabby: Very cool.



Drew: ...people's homes and things like that, that (I mean), you just don't get to experience unless you actually have fluency.

Lindsay: All right.

Gabby: Well, yeah, and you can go from (like) a simple question, asking, (you know), where is the sugar or the milk or whatever to each time (kind of) building on that. I think you were, you were talking with us before about, (like), each time, maybe this is about speaking, (uh), each time you speak, try to add something more. Maybe that was, or is that...

Lindsay: That was one of your tips?

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Drew: Yeah, we can, we can jump right into that. (crosstalk)...

Gabby: Yeah, tell us about that.

Lindsay: Yeah, let's go right into your tips.

Drew: ...content. All right, well, (uh), just to give a quick overview of this. I want to give all the listeners out there three things that they can really do, that they can start using immediately to start seeing more progress and, and start seeing a little bit more fluency and again, it's something you have to build every day, but it's something that you can use to start, (uh), right now and actually start building that fluency.

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: Great.

Drew: So, the, (uh), this is all about the little change to give you bigger improvement and the first one is really making sure that you're listening to Native content and this could be, (you know), something as basic as Sesame Street or something as advanced as (like) a TED talk or like a full movie with lots of idioms and phrasal verbs and things like that. And the



key really is just to find something that's at a level where you understand at least 80-90% of that information.

Gabby: Okay.

Lindsay: Okay.

Drew: And that way, you're able to take the information that you already know and then the new information that's coming into your brain is understood, basically, (you know), automatically intuitively. So that's the...

Gabby: I like that.

Drew: ...the first part of, (uh), changing the way, (uh), you learn because a lot of students, (you know), they're learning English from English lessons and I know that sounds like a (kind of) counterintuitive (kind of) thing where you don't – it's almost like you don't wanna (want to) be using English lessons to learn English.

Both: Right.

Drew: What you wanna (want to) be doing is using Native content, the same way that Native speakers learn.

Gabby: Yeah.

Drew: Because if you've learned like Natives, you get fluent like Natives.

Lindsay: Right. I've found that most things that are true in life are counterintuitive, right Drew.

Drew: Yeah, yeah.

Lindsay: Absolutely.

Gabby: So (like) when you were sitting in the park and you were listening to the, the children and the mothers' talk, that's actually an example of listening to Native content, right.

Drew: Exactly.



Gabby: Great.

Drew: So I was, I was listening to Native content and so were the kids and that – and I was like how the hell can these little kids speak better Japanese than I can.

Gabby: Well, I know the feeling.

Drew: It doesn't make sense, (like), and I, and so, I'm just thinking (like), okay, I must be doing something wrong.

Gabby: Right.

Drew: And really when you look at the way most people teach things, (uh) in the traditional or the typical way, they're – it's almost like they're just transmitting rules from one person to the next.

Both: (Um).

Drew: And if you're good at knowing rules and that's your thing, then you do very well in the system, but...

Lindsay: Right.

Drew: ...I find, (you know), a lot of people, myself included, just don't. So that's why I teach the way I teach now.

Lindsay: Ooh, I like that. I like that.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Its' a very different idea, a different way of looking at it, but I love it.

Gabby: Yeah.

Drew: Yeah, well that's, that's what that we do. All right, well I know you guys don't have a lot of time, so...

Lindsay: Yeah, yeah

Drew: ...I'll keep going.



Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Yeah. Let's keep going.

Drew: So I believe – was that, (uh), Gabby that was mentioning the, the different ways like adding to, (uh)...

Gabby: Yeah, yeah. That was me. That was Gabby, yeah.

Drew: Okay. So, (uh), I-I-I'll get back to that. (Uh), so this is, again, changing the way you speak – and just a little bit, the first part of that is practicing, (uh), building connections with words.

Gabby: (Uh).

Drew: So as a, a very simple example like using sentence connectors like the word 'and'.

Gabby: (Uh).

Drew: So I can take two ideals like (uh), 'red' and, (uh), I don't know 'strawberry' or something like that.

Gabby: Okay.

Drew: So maybe they're (like) linked and I could figure out a way to link them like, (uh), "The strawberry was red and sweet." And so I'm just taking a basic sentence, like, "The strawberry was red."

Gabby: Yeah.

Drew: ...and then making it just a little bit longer, "The strawberry was red and sweet." And it really doesn't matter how you do that, but you can move from basic sentence connectors to something more advanced like (uh), "Be that as it may..." which is a, a really great...

Gabby: Oh.



Drew: ...phrasal verb and [inaudible 11:20] all the, (you know), it's, it's just a fantastic phrase that you use, but you wouldn't really learn it in a textbook.

Lindsay: Right.

Drew: It needs more advanced things and I call them 'English fluency bits' for a lack of a better way to describe them.

Gabby: That's great.

Drew: (Uh), but it's the little connections between the sentences that you make and because English Native speakers know these things are able to have longer, (uh), sentence and they're a-able to speak in a more continuous way.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: That's a little bit more eloquent

Drew: So the second, second part of that – yeah, yeah. So the second part of that is when you're introducing yourself or just talking in general a lot of people will have similar conversations or similar questions or topics will come up. So that's an opportunity for you to – instead of replying in the am way to come back with a little bit more. So I was, (uh), giving you guys an example earlier of (like), (you know), you introduce your name and then when somebody just asks who you are, you say, "Well, my name is Drew Badger." The next time you hear that, "My name is Drew Badger and I'm from Chicago."

Gabby: (Uh-huh).

Drew: "My name is Drew Badger, I grew up on the Southside of Chicago." So each time I'm introducing myself or saying something I'm taking that as an opportunity to practice, but it's with a different person, (you know), so, each time you get to really, you get to review the things and practice using something and maybe you make a mistake, but, (you know), it's not about perfection.



Gabby: Yeah. Exactly.

Lindsay: Right. Right. 'Cause (because)....

Gabby: Exactly.

Lindsay: ...that's a common problem for a lot of our listeners. They feel like they continue to repeat the same 20 phrases...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...over and over again and they're not branching out and I feel that when I practice Spanish also.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: It's terrible.

Drew: Yeah.

Lindsay: You feel like you never get done.

Drew: Yeah. Tha-tha-that's exactly right. And so instead of – and, and that was a, a big thing that happened to me when I really started to developing my fluency in Japanese was when I changed the way that I looked at that. Now you could be like, “Aw, why do people keep asking me the same questions?” And you can be, (uh), frustrated by that or you can look at that as an opportunity and think (like), “Oh, okay this is another opportunity for me to practice my thing, but change it in a way or add something to it it'll really build my fluency.

Gabby: I love that.

Drew: When you take control of that, like that has a – it's a great way to think about it...

Gabby: I...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: I've seen... (crosstalk)



Drew: It's again, and this, this whole podcast is about taking little changes...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Drew: And just the way you think about things and then that's gonna (going to) help you have a much bigger difference in (uh), a much more dramatic improvement in your fluency.

Gabby: Yeah, you can't...

Lindsay: Absolutely.

Gabby: ...control what other people ask you, but you can control how you respond.

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: And it just – push, push yourself to respond...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...in different ways maybe in a longer answer. I really like that.

Lindsay: It puts the control back into your hands...

Gabby: Yes.

Lindsay: ...not into the Native speaker's hands...

Gabby: (Uh-huh).

Lindsay: ...or the teacher's hands. It's about you and what you do...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...in your learning situation.

Drew: Sure.

Lindsay: Awesome.



Drew: (I mean), that, that's it perfectly and then again, that's what gives students confidence because a lot of them are worried about, 'What am I gonna (going to) say? What if I don't understand what people are talking about? How am I going to respond?' So instead, what I teach students is to control the conversation with questions and you figuring out, okay, like maybe this time when somebody introduces themselves and I introduce myself, I'm going to reveal a little bit more about (like), "I have a pet rock collection," or...

Lindsay: Yes.

Drew: ...(you know), just something interesting...

Lindsay: Yes.

Drew: ...where I've already (like) thought about that or I can talk about that kind of thing. (Uh), because, (you know), and, and it's the same thing, even with, with Japanese. Like, I don't really know much about mask design. I wouldn't really be able to have much of a conversation about that...

Gabby: Right.

Drew: ...but you get into talking about gardening, and I can go on...

Lindsay: Oh.

Gabby: Nice.

Lindsay: Okay.

Drew: ...(you know), about that kind of thing.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Okay.

Drew: So you can control the conversation, you can steer the direction of the conversation and have a much better...

Lindsay: Awesome...



Drew: ...(um), (you know), much better conversation.

Lindsay: Okay.

Drew: But to get to the last (crosstalk).

Lindsay: Yeah. What is – (uh-huh).

Drew: (Uh), the part, part three of this is to change the way you practice and this is, again, a small change in the way you think from thinking of yourself as an English learner to thinking of yourself as an English speaker...

Gabby: Yes.

Lindsay: (Uh-hm). Love it.

Drew: ...and you don't have, (you know), high level of fluency. (Uh), and when you do this, you stop thinking about "Okay, I am an English learner, so I must go into English forums and learn that way.

B: (Uh-hm).

Drew: What I really should be doing is, (you know), what would a Native speaker do. A Native speaker doesn't go to an English learning forum, they go to (like) a tennis forum...

Gabby: That's right.

Drew: ...to learn about tennis.

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: That's right.

Drew: Or they go to (like) watch YouTube videos in English about how to fix cars or whatever.

Gabby: (Uh-hm).

Drew: And so when you start doing that – (like) one of the tips that I give for my members and my learners, (uh), is when you're looking on, (uh), YouTube



for things, you find things you're interested in, begin commenting on, (you know), videos and especially looking for videos that don't have a lot of views because the people that are producing those are gonna (going to) be much more likely to comment back.

Gabby: Oh.

Drew: (Uh), and, (you know), if you have like a, like somebody with millions of views and you post a comment, it's gonna (going to) be lost, but someone with like ten views about, (you know), an interesting topic that you care about, you post a comment, that's how you can begin a conversation.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: I like it.

Gabby: That's great.

Lindsay: I like it.

Drew: Yeah. So you shouldn't be looking for people and (like) absolutely, absolutely do not tell anyone that you'd like them to help you with your English. Do not tell them (crosstalk).

Gabby: Thank you. Thank you (crosstalk). Because that's a, that's a big turnoff.

Drew: I just got a mail today, I'm gonna (going to) respond to him a little bit later, but (uh), he was like, "Well, (um), I'm, I'm trying to find friends," and (like) so I said okay, "What's the problem, tell me about you situation."

Gabby: Yeah.

Drew: I said, "Did you ask them to help you with their, with your English?" And he was like, "Well, yes, I did." So I'm gonna (going to) write him back and (kind of) yell at him a little bit.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Good.



Drew: 'Cause (because) I really wanna (want to) get that idea into his head, that you don't wanna (want to) be doing that. You want to forget the fact that you're learning English and you want to be using English with Native speakers.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: There you go.

Drew: So get out of those forums, (you know), get into the real, the real world and start finding people because they're all over the place.

Gabby: Yeah.

Drew: And they're happy to connect with you just as long as you're another person that's interested in doing that thing without worrying about the English so much.

Gabby: Right. Don't obsess over English itself so much. You want to really connect with people through English.

Lindsay: Right. So stop. We're not here to learn English, we're here to live life and live better live.

Drew: Yeah, exactly.

Lindsay: Right.

Drew: It's just a tool.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Drew: It's a different way of connecting...

Gabby: That's right.

Drew: ...and, and once you forget about using the language that way you can get much more into the connection part worrying about how do I actually find people and make real friends that, (you know), the Native speakers that you really wanna (want to) to be spending time with.



Lindsay: Okay. Awesome.

Gabby: Awesome.

Lindsay: All right. So cool. So Drew just to sum up what we've talked about today. So we want to learn English with Native speakers and get the right level that, for the appropriate level. We wanna (want to) try to understand about 80-90%, is that right, of what we hear.

Drew: At least.

Lindsay: Okay.

Drew Yeah.

Lindsay: Great. And we also wanna (want to) to stop repeating the same phrases over and over again.

Gabby: (Uh).

Lindsay: We wanna (want to) try to add a little bit more information in that common introduction when we talk about ourselves, so we expand our vocabulary. And we also want to get out of the English community forums and go out and figure out what we love and learn English through that, through that activity.

Drew: Exactly.

Lindsay: Is that pretty much what we...

Drew: Yeah. You guys, you guys, you guys will be fantastic English's learners **[inaudible 17:43]**.

Lindsay: Thank you. I'll get started tomorrow.

Gabby: So where, where can our listeners find you if they want more information about what you're doing and, and how you're teaching online.

Drew: Sure, (uh), well, I've made, (uh), something special for people, (uh), especially, your learners because we're talking about how to get out and



meet people. (Uh), I wanted to give people five of my favorite – or I've got so many, but five of my favorite, (uh), fluency missions. So these...

Gabby: Okay.

Drew: ...are the things that I talk about, about how they actually go out and meet Native speakers. So we talked about the asking, (you know), to take, (uh), (like), a photo of somebody and I mention...

Gabby: Right.

Drew: ...how it's going out practicing in the grocery store.

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Drew: (Uh), so these are all things that you can use online. It doesn't matter where you live in the world. I, I always produce those every month for my members so that people no matter where they're living they can actually go out whether it's online or actually in the real world and meet people.

Gabby: Great.

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: (Uh), so they can find that at EnglishAnyone.com/AllEars. And this is...

Lindsay: That's great.

Drew ...just a-l-l-e-a-r-s. So it's easy to remember, (uh), All Ears and then another slash after that...

Lindsay: Excellent.

Drew: ..and they will be just fine.

Gabby: Great.

Lindsay: Excellent. Thank you for that. We appreciate that. I think our audience is gonna (going to) love that.

Gabby: Yeah. Great.



Lindsay: Very cool. Well, it's been awesome talking to you and very eye-opening today what we've learned.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: (Um), we really have so much.

Drew: Well, I hope it's (uh) been beneficial and, and everyone listening out there enjoys it.

Gabby: Totally.

Lindsay: Thanks so much for your time today Drew. Great to talk with you.

Drew: Yeah, you bet.

Lindsay: Have a great day.

Drew: Yep, you too.

Gabby: 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.

