



All Ears English Episode 203: How to Reflect Your Way to English Fluency

Gabby: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 203: “How to Reflect Your Way to English 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]

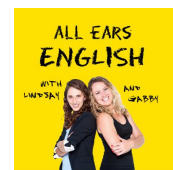
Gabby: In today’s episode, you’ll learn why doing 15 minutes of one specific action will save you hours in the long run when it comes to learning English.

[Instrumental]

Gabby: Lindsay, how do you do?

Lindsay: Gabby. Why are you using that old school English? It sounds like you need to learn some common, real English.

Gabby: Oh, my!



Lindsay: Gabby, seriously. You need help and I know the perfect place you can go. You can go to AllEarsEnglish.com/100 to get the 100 most common phrases in every day English, real English.

Gabby: Goodness.

[Instrumental]

Gabby: Hey, Lindsay.

Lindsay: Hey, Gabby.

Gabby: How are you doing?

Lindsay: Excellent, and you?

Gabby: I'm doing well. Thank you.

Lindsay: Glad to hear it.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Glad to hear it.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Are you (fee-), are you feeling reflective today?

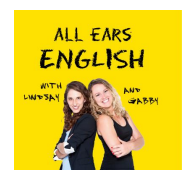
Gabby: I am. I'm, I'm feeling reflective. I actually wanted to talk a little bit about reflecting. I want to talk about how much it's helped me. And also, just that I've observed how it's helped other people too.

Lindsay: (Mm).

Gabby: So, I don't...

Lindsay: So how is it...? (Uh-hm).

Gabby: Yeah, I was just gonna (going to) say I don't know if you've ever – well, I think you have, (you know), if you've reflected, which could be like meditation, it could be journaling, it could be...



Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: ...many...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...many forms. But...

Lindsay: Yeah. Sure, I, I think it's important to reflect. (I mean), (you know), we've talked about gratitude.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: I'm still doing the gratitude journal.

Gabby: Nice.

Lindsay: When I meditate I try not to think. So...

Gabby: Oh, got it.

Lindsay: ...I try not to reflect. It's (sort of) the opposite of reflection. But, but it can be contemplation – meditation, there can be different ways of meditating, I suppose. (Um)...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: But yeah, I wanna (want to) share an interesting quote about reflection before we jump in this...

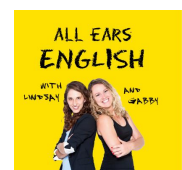
Gabby: Sure.

Lindsay: ...just to kick this off.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: And, so here it is. It's by Margaret Wheatley and I don't know who that is, but she says, "Without reflection, we go blindly on our way, creating more unintended consequences and failing to achieve anything useful." Oh, my god.

Gabby: Wow!



Lindsay: That sounds like a threat.

Gabby: That's powerful.

Lindsay: Ooh, I think so. I think so.

Gabby: And I just found out she's an American writer and management consultant.

Lindsay: Oh. Well, we gotta (got to) listen to her then.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: In that case, she knows what she's doing.

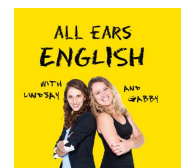
Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: So reflection, there must be something to this reflection thing. How 'bout (about) you Gabby. When do you use reflection?

Gabby: I use reflection all the time and I have to say it's been really helpful for me. I like to reflect about a lot of things like everything from my schedule, (you know), how my week is going. Am I doing the things that I want to do that I need to do? (Um), from my learning, (you know), how is my language learning going, which is definitely helpful for English language learners. And I like to do reflection about, (you know), how is my work going, are there things that, (um), I'm improving or things that I need to improve. So I started this practice several, several years ago. (Um), (I mean), I could say even when I was a kid, I was reflecting because if you've ever kept a journal or a diary, that's a kind of reflection, but when I really started to think seriously about how reflection could help me, it was in college because one of my professors assigned me this reflection paper.

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: And, it was actually not a paper, sorry, it was a journal. So every week, (um), when I had to do student teaching, I had to reflect on the student teaching...



Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...and just ask myself some simple questions like, 'How did it go? What went well? What didn't go very well? How would I do things differently next time?' And those are guiding questions that you could use for any situation.

Lindsay: Yeah, and I think one thing that's important to remember is reflection is good to do on your own, but it doesn't have to be done on your own, (you know).

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: I actually get a lot of value out of reflecting, out of thinking out loud.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: (Um), I often don't totally form my thought before saying it.

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: So I'm kind of thinking and I need to be (kind of) in partnership with someone when I'm, when I'm reflecting. (I-I), I find it...

Gabby: Ooh, that's great.

Lindsay: ...just... Yeah.

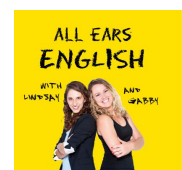
Gabby: Well, that's where a coach or a mentor comes in.

Lindsay: A coach.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Absolutely. That's huge. So you guys have to know yourselves, and know where you do your best reflecting. Maybe it's by yourself somewhere serene or maybe it's in partnership with someone else.

Gabby: Yeah. Well, let's talk for a minute about how we could use that specifically with language learning because, (um), it might seem a little strange, (you know), about keeping (like), a, a, a journal about your language learning. (I



mean), maybe, maybe it doesn't seem strange, maybe it does, but let's talk about that a little bit. (Um), I think in a lot, or in most English classes, we don't think about reflection. I think, (uh), maybe your teacher would assign you a journal. (You know), that's pretty typical like keep an English journal, maybe write about, (um), your day or write about, (uh), your hobbies. That's one kind of journal, but when I say a reflection journal, what I mean is actually asking yourself those questions that I mentioned just a minute ago, like 'How is my language learning going?' (You know), what do I want to be doing?' This is about goal setting, and 'How is that going? Am I actually achieving what I want to do? Wha-what is lacking? What do I need to do differently, so that it could go better?'

Lindsay: (Uh-hm). 'And where am I headed if I continue to do these same actions every day and am I moving in the right direction?'

Gabby: Yeah, and so those are (kind of) big picture goals. You could also ask yourself more, (um), (like), weekly, weekly questions such as, (you know), 'How did my English language study go this week? Am I using English as much as I would like to or when I used English this week, how did it go?'

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

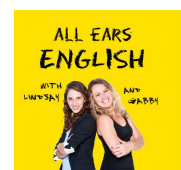
Gabby: 'Did I feel confident in my English or not and why? What can I do to change that? What kind of help do I need to get, or what resources do I need?'

Lindsay: Yeah. This might be a habit that might not feel natural to you guys to (kind of) step back from your daily experience...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...but give it a try. But I wanna (want to) play devil's advocate here for one second here...

Gabby: Sure.



Lindsay: ...and to see how – I-I-I’m guessing our listeners are having a thought right now and they might be thinking this: ‘If I don’t have enough time to even practice English...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...or study English, how do I have time to reflect on my English studies...

Gabby: Ah.

Lindsay: ...and my English work?’

Gabby: The thing is I’ve learned that 15 minutes of reflection will save you hours in the long-run.

Lindsay: (Uhn). I like that, I like that – making sure we’re doing the right thing.

Gabby: Exactly.

Lindsay: (Uh-hm).

Gabby: Making sure you’re doing the right things, redirecting your studies, perhaps, maybe you’ll figure out through your reflection that something isn’t working for you. Maybe it’s a certain book, or a learning method, or a teacher or just the way that you are acting. Maybe it’s not working...

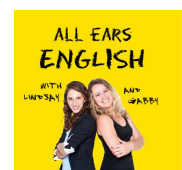
Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Gabby: ...and you need to change that. These are the kinds of (um), realizations that come from reflection.

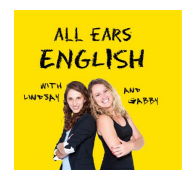
Lindsay: Absolutely. So we need to be able to step back. Otherwise, we’re just blindly following something...

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...that we decided was the right path at one point and maybe it’s not anymore and then we’re just gonna (going to) end up in a place where we don’t wanna (want to) be.



- Gabby:** Right. Well, and you could ask yourself questions like, 'Well, how much time have I actually spent speaking English this week and maybe you'll realize, 'Oh my gosh, I went seven days without speaking English.' Are you kidding?
- Lindsay:** (Uhn).
- Gabby:** No, no wonder you're frustrated about not being able to speak fluently.
- Lindsay:** Absolutely. So you can catch yourself when you're moving into a bad (kind of) pattern.
- Gabby:** Right.
- Lindsay:** And you can cut that off right away and redirect the energy.
- Gabby:** Yeah. Absolutely. So, I would recommend once a week spend 15 minutes – if you have to set a, a stopwatch, do it. Give yourself 15 minutes, no stopping, no excuses, it's just 15 minutes, get out a piece of paper, or, (you know), you could do it digitally on your laptop, but ask yourself three questions: 'How is my English language learning or improvement going this week? (Uh), what's going well, and what's not going so well? How could I improve that?'
- Lindsay:** (Uhn).
- Gabby:** Just start there.
- Lindsay:** I like that. And if this has to be done in a mobile format, (you know), guys find – (the-), there might be an app out there...
- Gabby:** Yeah.
- Lindsay:** ...that will help you do this, or just on your iPhone, you can pull up the, the note taker on your, on your iPhone or your Android.
- Gabby:** Well, and that's a good point. The format is not so important. You, you have to do what makes sense for you. You could even speak, you could even record yourself speaking. You could talk this out. You don't have to



write it, although I do like writing because it makes you slow down a bit because you can't write as fast as you think or as fast as you speak usually.

Lindsay: Do you prefer writing with a pen, or writing...

Gabby: I...

Lindsay: ...on a computer? (I mean), do you...

Gabby: ...do.

Lindsay: ...feel like...?

Gabby: I...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: ...really like writing with a pen, but I'm not....

Lindsay: You're so old school.

Gabby: I know, I know. I know. Because it really makes me slow down.

Lindsay: Yeah, yeah. You can't, you can't write as fast as you think, so you have to slow down the thinking.

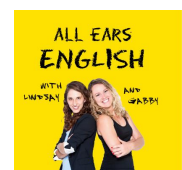
Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: And that is part of reflection. As you said before, we mentioned meditation. It's a (for-) – in some ways it is a form of meditation because it's slowing down, noticing your thoughts...

Gabby: Right.

Lindsay: ...noticing what's going on and being aware.

Gabby: Yeah. And Lindsay, you mentioned a gratitude journal, which we talked about in a, an earlier episode. I don't remember the number right now, but we talked about keeping a gratitude journal and when you ask yourself the question, 'What's going well?' this is exactly the same idea, is to think about the wins that you've had, think about something good that's



happened this week. It could be something very small, it doesn't matter, but make sure that you do take into account the things that are going well.

Lindsay: Oh, yeah. That's so important, so important.

Gabby: Yeah. Well, great. I just wanna (want to) encourage everyone to take 15 minutes to reflect and I really think that it will change your week ahead for the better.

Lindsay: So let us... yeah, let us know how it goes. So come on back to this episode. Which episode is this Gabby?

Gabby: It's 203.

Lindsay: Okay. AllEarsEnglish.com/203. Come on back and in the comments let us know if you've been reflecting and let us know if it's helping.

Gabby: Thanks guys. We can't wait to hear from you.

Lindsay: Thanks 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.

