



## All Ears English Episode 208:

### Amy Gillett Shows You Three Easy Ways to Speak English Like an American

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**Lindsay:** This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 208: “Amy Gillett Shows You Three Easy Ways to Speak English Like an American.”

[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 Amy Gillett. She’s a well-known author and ESL teacher and she’s gonna (going to) show you her top three tips to finally start speaking English naturally the way that Americans speak it.

[Instrumental]

**Gabby:** Hey, Lindsay, can you give me an update on that conversation service?

**Lindsay:** Sure, Gabby. So we actually have decided not to create the conversation service here at All Ears English. But you guys have continued to ask us where you can practice your conversation and we have some awesome



ideas for you over on our resources page. Also, you guys have asked us where you can practice your vocabulary, get TOEFL help, IELTS help. Go over to [AllEarsEnglish.com/resources](http://AllEarsEnglish.com/resources) and find all your answers there.

**[Instrumental]**

**Gabby:** Guys, if you wanna (want to) get fluent fast, you need to get help one-on-one. It's so important that you get a lot of time to practice speaking English and also that you get feedback or corrections from your one-on-one teacher. I recently took a few different language lessons on a website called Italki. It's all one-on-one, all online with your choice of teacher for your choice of language that you're learning. One-on-one helped me so much because that teacher's attention was 100% on me and I had to talk a lot. So, I felt like I was getting fluent really quickly. I'd like to recommend that you try Italki for learning English. And now, for a very limited time, All Ears English listeners, will get ten US dollars to use toward Italki classes. So visit [AllEarsEnglish.com/Italki](http://AllEarsEnglish.com/Italki) – that's I-t-a-l-k-i- – to claim your ten US dollars for Italki classes NOW before it's gone.

**[Instrumental]**

**Lindsay:** Hey guys. How are you doing today? I am here today with a very exciting guest. Our guest today is the author of best-selling ESL books *Speak English Like an American* and *Speak Business English Like an American*. She teaches business English to international executives and most recently for ICBC, the world's largest bank. She's done lots of teaching, lots of working with business professionals and today I am happy to introduce Amy Gillett. Amy, welcome. How are you?

**Amy:** Thank you Lindsay. I'm doing wonderful. It's great to be with you today.

**Lindsay:** Excellent. Thank you so much for joining us. I'm excited. I've seen that you've done a lot of awesome things for students in this field and I wanna (want to) ask you to tell us a story about the reason why you decided to publish this fantastic book called *How to Speak English Like an American*.



**Amy:** Great, Lindsay. I'd be happy to. So my first book, as you mentioned, is called *Speak English Like an American*, and that really came about for a couple of reasons. First of all, since, (um), since I b-been about ten years old, I've been very passionate about language myself. So...

**Lindsay:** Okay. Great.

**Amy:** ...I studied, yeah, I studied about eight foreign languages over the years, (um), yeah. Some of them in the classroom settings, some of them, (uh), self-study. And so I really love learning language and comparing these various languages to English. And my...

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Amy:** ...my language study has been (uh) both in the United States and as well as being a foreign exchange student in Russia, in Italy, and working overseas in Russia and the Czech Republic where I also studied a language. So...

**Lindsay:** I see.

**Amy:** Yeah, so, I really have a love for languages and one of the things that I always wanted to do when I was overseas was really connect and learn a natural way to speak with, with the natives, with people there. And I always struggled with that because (um), (you know), a lot of my language had come out of textbooks and formal classrooms and I just...

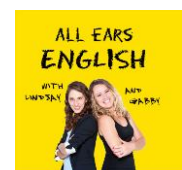
**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Amy:** ...couldn't translate it into being able to have a rich, natural conversation with natives. So that was always the – a need that I felt would be very helpful for me personally. And then after I studied a lot of these languages, I actually taught English.

**Lindsay:** Okay.

**Amy:** Yeah, I taught English at Charles University in Prague. And...

**Lindsay:** I see.



**Amy:** And, and I actually got over there. When I got over there, I was really one of the first wave of English teachers. And I was so early over there that the textbooks hadn't arrived yet. So I didn't even have a book that I could use.

**Lindsay:** Oh, you had nothing.

**Amy:** [crosstalk] I really had nothing.

**Lindsay:** Okay. [crosstalk].

**Amy:** Yeah, yeah. [crosstalk] I had nothing and the people were so hungry to learn English and really interested in what I had to say. And what I found was they had been learning English in the classroom, some of 'em (them) for ten years, but most of them were afraid to open their mouths and say anything. Or...

**Lindsay:** Oh.

**Amy:** Yeah. They – or they, they...

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Amy:** ...didn't feel they, they could speak to me in a natural way. So I really just started, (you know), giving them phrases that they could use to speak to me, (uh), just very practical phrases.

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Amy:** And what I –

**Lindsay:** (You know), this is a...

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** Yeah, go 'head (ahead).

**Amy:** I'm sorry. And what I learned was they were really hungry, especially for idioms and expressions that came from America. They really wanted to learn how we speak, (uh), in the United States, and so that's what I got them.



**Lindsay:** Okay. Very cool. Yeah, (I mean), we even hear this a lot today from our listeners. They're often asking us, (you know), what the latest idiom, (like), "How can I sound natural?"

**Amy:** Right.

**Lindsay:** Right. So this is such a key point and (y-you know), when was that that you were back in the Czech Republic, what year?

**Amy:** That was actually 1991.

**Lindsay:** Oh, and wow. So that was a long time ago.

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** But it's still a real need for our listener's today.

**Amy:** It is.

**Lindsay:** (Um), and so that's why I wanted to bring you on today Amy.

**Amy:** Excellent.

**Lindsay:** You could help us out here. So can you give us three tips for how to actually speak English like an American 'cause (because) this is exactly what our listener's want, how to speak naturally. Not textbook English.

**Amy:** Right.

**Lindsay:** Right. Not dictionary...

**Amy:** Right.

**Lindsay:** ...English, but how to do it authentically.

**Amy:** Excellent.

**Lindsay:** So what's your first tip that you can give us?

**Amy:** Okay, so my first tip Lindsay, is to really build your vocabulary by learning common American idioms.



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

**Amy:** Okay.

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

**Amy:** English is very rich with idioms.

**Lindsay:** Absolutely.

**Amy:** And idioms are really tricky. Because as we know, idioms cannot be translated word for word, (right). If you translate word...

**Lindsay:** No.

**Amy:** ...for word, they don't make any sense. Right.

**Lindsay:** And it happens sometimes. We make that mistake and it ends up being very weird.

**Amy:** Exactly. It ends up [inaudible], (uh) lack of comprehension, misunderstandings, general confusion and chaos, (right). So...

**Lindsay:** That's right.

**Amy:** ...idioms – so the linguistic term is a chunk, idioms need to be learned as chunks, as a, as an entire phrase. So phrases like, 'beat around the bush', 'up in the air', 'give someone the ax', those are all examples of idioms that the learner needs to learn, (uh), as a chunk, as a complete phrase and to really understand those.

**Lindsay:** Yeah, one thing that I've seen learners often doing is taking an idiom or an expression from their native language and translating it into English.

**Amy:** Right. Yeah.

**Lindsay:** An-and trying to use that. An-an-and we know what happens when we try to do that.

**Amy:** We know what happens there, (right). Usually ends up being nonsense. Occasionally there will be one that translates okay, but that's really not



very common. So, (um), yeah, every language has its own unique set of idioms that need to be learned. And so...

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Amy:** ...it really [inaudible] the books that I've written is what I've done is give people, given people a shortcut. I said here are 300 idioms. In each of my five books, you get 300, (um), 300 idioms that will, are in use today that are very common that you're very likely to hear that you're probably gonna (going to) wanna (want to) start using and they're all listed there with lots of examples, they're shown in context in... they're put in, into dialogue and the learner can just start lifting those, learning those, lifting 'em (them), listening for them, reading newspapers and trying to find them and then starting to try them out wi-with native speakers as well.

**Lindsay:** Very nice. I like that.

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** It is a shortcut, isn't it?

**Amy:** It is.

**Lindsay:** Why not make things easier...

**Amy:** Exactly.

**Lindsay:** ...on yourself. (Like) just learning it straight from the actual language instead of translating and getting the dictionary and translating word-for-word. I like that Amy.

**Amy:** Yeah, thank you. Yeah, absolutely. And I, and I've also got them apps that do the same thing. Like *Speak English Like an American* is now available as an app (application). So again, that's another way, another tool that people can use to, to really have a shortcut to master these important idioms.

**Lindsay:** Very cool. And what would be your second tip for how our listeners can speak English more like Americans...



**Amy:** Okay.

**Lindsay:** ...to sound more natural.

**Amy:** Absolutely. So my second tip is to really work on your American pronunciation. And I've got a few...

**Lindsay:** Okay.

**Amy:** ...I've got a few little sub-tips here under that. So...

**Lindsay:** Great.

**Amy:** ...what you really wanna (want to) do is learn how to form your mouth, so you're pronouncing vowels and consonants the way that native speakers do. Right?

**Lindsay:** (Umm).

**Amy:** Because in a lot of cases, (uh), people who don't speak English as a native language and, and they're using their mother tongue, they're using that as (kind of) their guide about how to make these vowel and consonant sounds and in some cases, it's just different. Right? The sounds...

**Lindsay:** Right, right.

**Amy:** ...are different. So, (um), you can do this through using an accent reduction system that shows you on video how to form your mouth.

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

**Amy:** (Um), you can really watch native speakers as they form their vowels and consonants and see what they're doing and try to copy them.

**Lindsay:** (Hmm), interesting.

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** Yeah, I like the idea of watching and observing. You're actually watching the person's mouth. I think maybe we don't do that quite enough.



**Amy:** Yeah, yeah. Watching the whole mouth and I mean lips, the tongue, the chin. Wh-what's going on there? How were they forming the sound? How were they forming their, their mouths to (m-), produce that sound?

**Lindsay:** (Hmm), I like that.

**Amy:** Okay. Great.

**Lindsay:** I like that.

**Amy:** Great.

**Lindsay:** Yeah. okay.

**Amy:** All right and the second part of this pronunciation piece is really learning informal American speech patterns. For example, 'want to' – so you 'want to' often sounds like 'wanna'. Right.

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Amy:** It gets shortened in every day speech.

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Amy:** So for [crosstalk]. So for example, "Do you 'want to' grab a cup of coffee?" Right. That doesn't sound natural. That's the way...

**Lindsay:** No.

**Amy:** ...[crosstalk].

**Lindsay:** Sounds like the textbook.

**Amy:** Sounds like a textbook or a robot, right? Or a (tr-), or, or a machine translation.

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

**Amy:** It's actually, it's not "Do you 'want to' grab a cup of coffee?" It's gonna (going to) become, "Do you wanna grab a cup of coffee?" Right?

**Lindsay:** (Um).



**Amy:** Do you see how that 'want to' became 'wanna'? And that 'cup of' became 'cupa'?

**Lindsay:** That's key.

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** That's key. Absolutely key.

**Amy:** Right. Okay. Right. And the third sub-tip under the American pronunciation is really to pay attention to the rhythm of English.

**Lindsay:** (Umm).

**Amy:** Right. Every language has its own unique rhythm.

**Lindsay:** And how can we do that? Would you recommend listening every day for a certain amount of time or how would we, how can we absorb the rhythm...

**Amy:** You can...

**Lindsay:** ...of English.

**Amy:** ...you listen, you can – movies, YouTube, (uh) talking in conversation with native speakers and really listen to music that native speakers make when they're speaking English. Kind of play their sentences back in your head and think when are their voices rising, when are their voices falling? When are their voices steady? Right?

**Lindsay:** Well, I think that piece that you just said "playing the voices back in your head," we've talked a little bit on the show about thinking in English...

**Amy:** Okay.

**Lindsay:** ...but what you just said, "playing the voice back in your head," is a form of speaking in English. It's something that I've always done when I've learned languages.

**Amy:** Right.



**Lindsay:** That's why I've had, had an easier time comparatively speaking to actually learn Spanish and sound more natural 'cause (because) I just automatically repeat it back in my head.

**Amy:** Excellent.

**Lindsay:** (Um), and it helps. It's amazing the progress you could make just within your own head.

**Amy:** Exactly. Exactly. Use what you've got, right?

**Lindsay:** Use what you've got. So what would be Tip #3, Amy, in terms of sounding more natural?

**Amy:** Okay, my Tip #3 is to practice with native speakers. Okay.

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Amy:** So we've talked first about really enriching your vocabulary, improving your vocabulary by adding American idioms and expressions and we talked about really working and being mindful of your pronunciation. Now take the two of these and practice. And you should let your American friends and colleagues know that you want to practice and that you want them to correct you when they hear you pronouncing a word wrong. (Um), you should try out your new idioms and your new vocabulary on native speakers to see how it works out. (Um)...

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

**Amy:** ...you really need to start [crosstalk], yeah, you really need to start using the language. If you don't use it it's just in the back of your head. You may not understand idioms when you read them, but in order to own the language and to make it active, you need to start using it. So...

**Lindsay:** Yeah, and I...

**Amy:** Yeah.



**Lindsay:** Yeah, that's so important and I know a lot of our listeners really wanna (want to) speak, but they feel like it's hard to find places to practice and we actually do have one recommendation for them. So, you guys, if you wanna (want to) practice today and get a native speaking partner, you can go to [AllEarsEnglish.com/Italki](http://AllEarsEnglish.com/Italki), I-t-a-l-k-i. And you can actually find a teacher right away. And I like this suggestion Amy because it's not enough just to listen.

**Amy:** Right.

**Lindsay:** Or just to practice your pronunciation. You've got to take it to that next step and practice.

**Amy:** Right. It's essential to practice. To be, to make mistakes, be corrected, and then, (you know), integrate those corrections into your, into your speech going forward, (right). You've...

**Lindsay:** I love it.

**Amy:** ...got to practice.

**Lindsay:** I love it. Did you have, did you find an easy – was it easy for you to find practice partners when you were out in the Czech Republic and trying to learn Czech, did you – were you learning...

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** ...(uh) the native languages out there?

**Amy:** Yeah, I was.

**Lindsay:** Did you have a hard time? (Uh-huh).

**Amy:** Yeah, I did, I did find a practice partner. And I worked with him every week very diligently and found material, read newspaper out loud and found (con-), (you know), we identified topics to conversations we could discuss that got us both engaged. And so it was a very fruitful exchange and it really helped my language. So, of course, I was still using textbooks, and, (um), I was still relying on books to build my vocabulary and textbooks for



grammar, but there's nothing like taking that knowledge and applying it and practicing it.

**Lindsay:** Completely. Well, this has been great Amy. Thank you so much for your tips. So just to recap what you've told us is first we want to focus on vocabulary, but we want to learn idioms in chunks, not individual words, right?

**Amy:** Exactly.

**Lindsay:** Right, and then next we want to look at the pronunciations. We want to watch native speakers and see how they form the sound in their mouth, (um), learn those informal speech patterns, which we've talked about a few times on this show – things like 'want to' becomes 'wanna', right?

**Amy:** Right.

**Lindsay:** I like that. And then the third one was to practice with natives as much as you can. That's awesome Amy.

**Amy:** Excellent.

**Lindsay:** Thank you for that. And yeah. An-and where can I – so you have some really cool resources out there. I know you've been in the field for a long time. You've done some fantastic things to help listeners, or help learners feel better about their English, improve their English. So where can they go to find what you have to offer?

**Amy:** So, they should go to [languagesuccesspress.com](http://languagesuccesspress.com) where they'll find all five of my books as well as a bunch of apps that I helped work on as well.

**Lindsay:** Awesome, awesome. And also, if listeners want to specifically find your book, *How to Speak English Like an American*, which is the most popular one, (uh), on – I think it's one of the top, (sort of) ranked books in Amazon, (um), you guys can go to [AllEarsEnglish.com/Amy](http://AllEarsEnglish.com/Amy). But head on over to [languagesuccesspress.com](http://languagesuccesspress.com) to find all the other products that she has. Very cool. Amy, I want to say thank you for coming on the show today. This has been fantastic chatting with you.



**Amy:** Thanks, Lindsay. It's been a pleasure.

**Lindsay:** Yeah. Thanks a lot. Take care.

**Amy:** You too. Bye-bye.

**Lindsay:** 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.

