



All Ears English Episode 226:

How to 80/20 Your English to Make More Friends with iTalki Teacher, Nick Vance

Lindsay: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 226: “How to 80/20 Your English to Make More Friends with iTalki Teacher, Nick Vance.”

[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’ll learn how to make more friends at social events in English using this scientifically, validated principle, with our guest Nick Vance.

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[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey, guys. Welcome. Thank you so much for joining us today at All Ears English. Today, we have an exciting guest on the show. Our guest is originally from Kentucky in the US. And he's lived in North Carolina, Washington, D.C., San Diego and Portland. So he's lived all over the US. He's now living in Berlin, Germany. Our guest is an online teacher with iTalki and his name is Nick Vance. Welcome Nick, how are you today?

Nick: I'm doing great. How are you doing?

Lindsay: Awesome. I'm happy that you're here. It's great to meet you.

Nick: Yeah, nice to meet you too.

Lindsay: Yeah. So, so I heard that you're gonna (going to) talk to us today about this cool concept that we've mentioned a couple of times on the show already. But I'm excited to dive into it with you a little bit more here. So you're gonna (going to) talk to us about the 80/20 rule. What is that Nick?

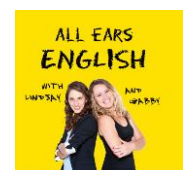
Nick: Yeah, so the 80/20 rule is this principle where 80% of the positive benefits of something really come from just 20% of the inputs and this happens in a wide variety (uh), (um), a lot of different places in our lives. For example, in business, not all customers are equal. Some earn the company a lot of money, some not as much, or, (um), with friends, you know a lot of people, but only a few friends have a really, really big influence, (uh), on your life.

Lindsay: Right, right. So we wanna (want to) focus more of our time, for example, in business, on catering to those clients who actually bring in the most money for our business or who fulfill us professionally the most and in our social lives with friends, the people who fill up our hearts, right?

Nick: Yeah, exactly.



- Lindsay:** Ooh, I like that. I like that. So it totally applies to, to business, to life, and what about our listeners. So our listeners are intermediate to advanced English learners all over the world, trying to push through to that advanced level and we want to help them Nick. So how can the 80/20 rule help our listeners?
- Nick:** Yeah, (um), I think one of the first places, (uh), for language learners that this applies is in terms of grammar. (Um), for example...
- Lindsay:** (Um), grammar. Ooh, scary.
- Nick:** Yeah, that's what a lot of people think. (Uh), and there's hundreds of grammar rules and a lot of times it can seem overwhelming, but for most people most of the grammar rules aren't that important yet. (Uh)....
- Lindsay:** Yes.
- Nick:** And yeah, so if someone, (uh), might be making a lot of mistakes, but they're making the same kinds of mistakes, so if they can just correct one, or two, or three mistakes that they constantly make, (um), their language will sound a lot better.
- Lindsay:** Ooh, interesting. So is this true for the levels or is this really a personal thing. (Like) if you think about intermediate students, are there (like) two or three common mistakes that come to your mind or is it more about individual students?
- Nick:** (Um), it's a lot about the individual students and actually one of the things I've noticed, it goes by country a lot. (Um)...
- Lindsay:** Yes.
- Nick:** For example, I have a lot of Russian students and they, (um), have a lot of problems with articles, which makes sense because Russia doesn't have articles, so here's this new thing. Or, German students, they'll a lot of times say, "I have been there yesterday," instead of...
- Lindsay:** Oh, right, right.



Nick: ...“I was there yesterday.”

Lindsay: Right, because in Western European languages I think they use that form more often right than in English, in American English.

Nick: Yeah, exactly. In German, you use the present perfect tense all the time. (Um)...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Nick: ...and there's no real difference between that and the simple past. But in English, as you, of course, know, there is.

Lindsay: So, so a lot of times these mistakes come from just translating directly then from our native language, which is what we do naturally.

Nick: Exactly, and, (um), of course when you're a beginner, (uh), you can do that, but as we're moving intermediate and advanced levels, that's when we really need to be fixing these mistakes.

Lindsay: Okay, so your suggestion in terms of how we can use this awesome 80/20 rule in our grammar skills, (like) within grammar is to (f-), find those two or three very specific grammar mistakes that we keep making over and over again. And do you recommend working with a teacher to do that? Is that the best way?

Nick: Yeah, I think that working with a teacher is the most efficient way. (Um), sure you could do some research on your own, but in, for example, just an hour or two with a, (uh), native-speaking teacher, they'll be able to tell you, “Okay, these are your three or four biggest mistakes,” and at that point, if you'd like, you could continue working with a teacher and they'll help you work through these, but even after that point, you wanna (want to) end the instruction with the teacher and go right into self-study, (um)...

Lindsay: Absolutely.

Nick: ...and really try to learn that grammar topic on your own.



Lindsay: Yeah, and it's very 80/20 because you spend less time conquering those rules and then you're so much forward ahead because you've got it straight. You can move forward there and you're right, you don't necessarily need to keep working with a teacher, but just getting things straight with a teacher. And, I know, Nick, you're a teacher on iTalki, right, and towards the end of the episode today, we're gonna (going to) let people know how to find you on iTalki if they wanna (want to) work with you specifically.

Nick: Yeah, exactly and most of my students, we just have conversation and then at the end I say, "Here are your biggest mistakes," and then (kind of) try to, (uh), work through that and then a lot of them – this is again the 80/20, is that they really focus on what a teacher brings them and then they are able to do the rest, (um), by themselves in self-study.

Lindsay: Yeah, so it's actually really cost-efficient because, (you know), sometimes I talk with students and they say, "I don't spend any money on my English, but I spend 200 hours a month." It's just crazy, (right), this idea of, "Well, what about spending a little bit of money and then going ahead and saving time?"

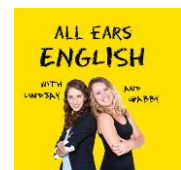
Nick: Yeah, exactly. And especially – (I mean), most of (um), (uh), my students are adult learners and yeah, they have busy lives so being able to save, (you know), ten hours a month studying by having one hour with a teacher that might cost a little bit of money definitely is, (uh), cost and time effective.

Lindsay: Yeah, this is awesome. So grammar is the first place where we can apply this very cool 80/20 rule and can you remind us, just to go back one more time what the 80/20 rule is. Can you say it one more time just to...

Nick: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...so we can remember? (Uh-huh).

Nick: So, yeah the 80/20 is that 80% of the positive benefits or outputs from an activity comes from just 20% of the work. Or the [crosstalk].



Lindsay: Awesome.

Nick: Yeah.

Lindsay: Or the input. Perfect. So then let's take that idea and let's apply that to speaking situations and vocabulary. What is your opinion on what people can do in terms of vocabulary when they're out there in the world to apply the 80/20 rule?

Nick: Yeah, I think one of the first things is that they can really focus on the words that they're using themselves. (Like) if you wanna (want to) work in, (uh), IT (information technology), you don't really need to know about animals. But if you wanna (want to) go on...

Lindsay: Right.

Nick: ...vacation to Australia, yeah, you should know what a kangaroo, a koala, a shark, (uh), is.

Lindsay: Yeah, of course. Absolutely. That makes sense.

Nick: Yeah.

Lindsay: Okay.

Nick: Also, a little bit more, it's, (um), the way you learn. It's to find out what's the most important for you. (Um), and for me when I was learning German, the most important thing was just having casual conversations with friends. (Um)...

Lindsay: (Um). Okay. So does that mean the way you learn in terms of, (like), your learning style, or...?

Nick: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...(like) what gets... (Uh-huh).

Nick: Yeah, for me, it's, yeah, my learning style and everyone's different, but a lot of people, (uh), a lot of students of mine, I've noticed do learn very



well, just having conversations when they, they're forced to actually use the language.

Lindsay: Okay. And you mentioned that you had some ideas about places that people can go to have those conversations. What were those ideas that you had Nick?

Nick: Yeah, so around the world, there's a lot of international meetings and a lot of them take place in English, (um), which is luckily, lucky for, (um), English learners that they have this resource, (uh), to practice with. For example, couchsurfing.org or meetup.com, or internations.org are awesome places where I've met a lot of (uh) English speakers.

Lindsay: Yeah. Those are really good options. I haven't been to an InterNations meeting, but I've been wanting to go for a long time. Is InterNations mostly professionals then who are just living abroad and they're just meeting and networking?

Nick: Yeah, it's a lot of networking there. I'd say the people tend to be a little bit older, more an average age of 40 - 45...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Nick: ...and a lot of professionals who are currently living abroad.

Lindsay: Okay. And if we decide to go to any of these particular events, (I mean), I know here in Boston, if you guys, if our listeners, if you guys are here in Boston, you can find all three of these organization and events here in Boston. So any major city, you're gonna (going to) find them, which is the coolest thing. Isn't it Nick?

Nick: Yeah, definitely. And Berlin as, as well, (uh). I'm very lucky that we have all of these, (um) – we're very active communities here in Berlin.

Lindsay: Yeah, you're lucky to live in a cool city like Berlin. I'm kind of jealous. So, so if our listeners decide to go to one of these meetups or one of these events, what are – how – again, let's go deeper into the 80/20 rule, how



do we apply the 80/20 rule in terms of actual vocabulary phrases to use or to expect.

Nick: Yeah, so someone might think, “Oh, I can only go to this event if I can ask 200 or 300 questions, every possible question,” but in reality most conversations here start in the same way. So just with, I’d say, four or five different question, you could have a conversation with anybody there.
[crosstalk]

Lindsay: Well, awesome, we wanna (want to) know what... Yeah, we wanna (want to) know what those are because that’s very, very – that would be fantastic for our listeners to know what those four sentences or phrases are that are typically used to start a conversation.

Nick: Yeah, definitely. (Um), so yeah, you also have to prepare the question and prepare your answer for the question ‘cause (because) you’ll be asked these questions too. But, (uh), the first question is, normally, “Where are you from?”

Lindsay: Okay. Good. Good. Common. (I mean), so simple, right, but very common. And one common – I also hear a variation of this, but I don’t think it’s used very much. I think it’s more of a textbook phrase. Maybe you can tell me what you think. There’s another phrase that they say, “Where do you come from?” Is that, is that common or no, not so much, right.

Nick: (Um), yeah, some people say it. For me, (uh), I don’t think I would ever use it. It’s not really in my...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Nick: ...vocabulary. I think, yeah. (Um)...

Lindsay: Me neither.

Nick: Also, sometimes they’ll say “Where are you originally from?”

Lindsay: Oh, good one.



Nick: Yeah. So if they say ‘originally’, that’s just more, yeah, your birthplace or the city where you grew up. (Uh)...

Lindsay: Okay. Right. Because sometimes it’s confusing what, how to answer that question. (You know), (um), now I’m in Boston and I’ve lived in New York, I’ve lived in different parts of the (U-) – or you, for example.

Nick: Yeah.

Lindsay: As we said in your bio, you’ve lived in Kentucky, North Carolina. Where are *you* originally from Nick?

Nick: Yeah, so, I actually always answer the question, (uh), with Kentucky.

Lindsay: Okay.

Nick: (Like), I’ve lived there till (until) I was 18 and so I pretty much identify with that. (Um), but yeah, there’s other people who grew up in six or seven cities and they always get confused by this.

Lindsay: Okay, perfect. So, “Where are you from?” or “Where are you originally from?” Can you give us another one?

Nick: Yeah, (uh), because a lot of people aren’t from the city they’re in, they’ll either ask, (uh), “How long are you staying here?” or “How long have you lived here?”

Lindsay: (Uhn).

Nick: The first one being if you’re just a traveler, (um), ‘cause (because) there are a lot of travelers at these events. And then “How long have you been living here?” (Um), yeah, “When did you move to this city?”

Lindsay: Okay, that’s really helpful. “How long have you been living here” or “How long are you staying here?” So that one is into the future, right.

Nick: Exactly.

Lindsay: “How much longer will you be here?” Okay.



Nick: (Uh-huh).

Lindsay: Okay, okay. Yeah, and a lot of these cities also have international business travelers, (right), not just backpackers, but business travelers who might be relocating for a few months. So that question could also apply.

Nick: Yeah, definitely.

Lindsay: Okay. That's great. Do you have another?

Nick: Yeah.

Lindsay: One more maybe.

Nick: And then normally, the next one they'll ask is, "What do you do here?"

Lindsay: Okay.

Nick: Or just, "What do you do?" (Um), and that meaning what do you do for work or are you still in school.

Lindsay: Okay. So it's really common to ask a question about work, (right). Very common. Is that common in German too? Is that one of the first questions that you get when you're out with German speakers, is "What do you do?"

Nick: It really depends. (Um), if you're in a more social setting meeting friends of friends and friends of friends, not as much. But...

Lindsay: (Uhn).

Nick: ...in Germany, at these kind of international events where you don't know anything about the other person.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Nick: It's a nice, easy question that everybody will have an answer to.

Lindsay: Yeah. A-absolutely. Absolutely. And, (um), "So what do you do?" Or what was the second one? "What are you doing?"

Nick: Or, "What do you do for a living?"



Lindsay: Oh, okay. "What do you do for a living?" Great. Okay. So was there a fourth or did we cover all of them that you had in mind to share?

Nick: Yeah, those were the most, (uh), main ones I wanted to share.

Lindsay: Okay.

Nick: And just with those simple questions, yeah, you can start a conversation with anybody.

Lindsay: Awesome. That is super helpful. So just to recap those, can you say them one more time for us Nick?

Nick: Yeah. So, "Where are you from?" or "Where are you originally from?"

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Nick: (Um), "How long are you staying here?" or "How long have you been living here?"

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Nick: And then "What do you do here?" or "What do you do, (uh), for a living?"

Lindsay: Perfect. I love it and those are super useful and so that by learning those phrases and going out and as we said before, having those phrases in your back pocket and having a response to them...

Nick: Yeah.

Lindsay: ...also in your back pocket is the way to (ma-), to use this 80/20 rule and really succeed in English-speaking situations, right?

Nick: Yeah, definitely.

Lindsay: Awesome Nick. This has been super helpful. So let's, let's wrap it up and just to close, I want to let everyone know that Nick is a teacher at iTalki and right now, we have a very special promo going, only for All Ears English listeners. So if you guys wanna (want to) work with Nick or a teacher like Nick, go to AllEarsEnglish.com/iTalki and specifically what you



need to do is enroll in our program, then you can go and search for Nick's username. Nick, can you tell the audience your username?

Nick: Yeah, so my username is just my full name, Nick Vance. And it's N-i-c-k V-a-n-c-e.

Lindsay: Awesome. So one more time guys. In order to get ten dollars off your second lesson with Nick, you need to go to AllEarsEnglish.com/iTalki and after you enroll, you can search for Nick Vance. That's great. Well, I hope that some of our listeners have a chance to get over and check out your lessons.

Nick: Yeah, I hope to see some of them in the next couple of weeks.

Lindsay: Yeah, very cool. Thanks so much for joining us today Nick. This has been really helpful. And I'm gonna (going to), I'm gonna (going to) try to apply the 80/20 rule in my life today. I'm gonna (going to) see if I can make that work.

Nick: All right. Sounds great.

Lindsay: Thanks a lot Nick. Take care.

Nick: All right. You too. 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.

