



All Ears English Episode 23:

How to Rock Your English Learning

Lindsay: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 238: “How to Rock Your English Learning.”

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Welcome to the All Ears English Podcast, downloaded more than 5 million times. We believe in connection, not perfection. You’ll finally get real Native English conversation with your American hosts, Lindsay McMahon, the ‘English Adventurer’ and Michelle Kaplan, the ‘New York Radio Girl’ coming to you from Boston and New York City, USA.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: In today’s episode you’ll find out what Lindsay’s rock climbing partner knows about learning English that you don’t.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey Michelle. What’s happening?

Michelle: Not much Lindsay. How are you?

Lindsay: Good. I’m happy to be here today recording the show with you.

Michelle: Me too, me too.



Lindsay: Awesome. So, do you wanna (want to) know what I did a couple weeks ago?

Michelle: What did you do?

Lindsay: I went rock climbing.

Michelle: Really?

Lindsay: I know, I know. It was really cool. Have you ever been rock climbing?

Michelle: (Um), I have. I've been to, like, a rock climbing wall and actually I've been (uh) repelling before.

Lindsay: Ooo, what is that?

Michelle: Repelling is where you put on a harness and you, kind of, you start at the top and you walk backwards down on this harness.

Lindsay: Whoa, so you're going down with gravity, right?

Michelle: Yeah.

Lindsay: You're letting gravity pull you down? And that sounds a little scary. Were you scared?

Michelle: Yes, terrified, but it was really fun. I'm not really the (uh) type of person who does things like that.

Lindsay: Yeah, so when I went rock climbing I learned that, so I was taking a lesson from a couple of my friends. I had the harness on. It was crazy. It was really hard and scary because if you're not using the harness you can just fall right down and you can get hurt, right. So, my friend said something really interesting that I think we can help, that our listeners can actually use this insight to apply it to their English learning and their life. Do you wanna (want to) know what she told me?

Michelle: What did she tell you?



Lindsay: She told me, whenever you aren't sure what to do, always take the next easiest step.

Michelle: That's really good advice.

Lindsay: It's so deep. No, but it's practical, right? So, you're on the wall and your arm is on one of the, I don't know what you call them, but the little spokes that you grab onto when you're climbing rocks, you're rock climbing, and you don't know how you're going to get to the top of the wall, but the only thing you can do is find the next easiest step.

Michelle: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Lindsay: Yeah, so, I think this really applies to life because it's so easy to think ahead five steps, right. And we get really stressed out about what to do when we get to that point, but really all we need to do is think about the next step that we can take.

Michelle: Exactly, exactly.

[Instrumental]

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[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Okay, so Michelle, for our listeners, what can they do, how can they use this insight about taking the next easiest step to become fluent native, or not native, but native-like English speakers.

Michelle: I think this is great and you can definitely apply this, so I'm glad you brought this up. (Um) Well, one thing that I think you could do is you could make a list of (um) very specific goals. Like, we (uh) spoke about this on an



episode recently, if you go to allearsenglish.com, type in the search box, type in goals and you'll find episodes where we talk about this. (Um), so, but yeah, I think that (um) you can make just very small, small goals and you don't need to look at learning English as this huge, huge thing. You can just say, okay, like for example, this month I (uh), my goal is to be able to tell someone a funny story that happened in the past. Or like, every Wednesday I will learn five new vocabulary words from an English television show. Just like, very specific so that it doesn't look so intimidating.

Lindsay: Yeah, I like that idea. I like the idea of breaking it down into one simple task, right. (Um) For example, right now I'm working with (uh) someone who works in the medical field and he's going to need to attend a conference here and he's going to need to present his information, so what does he need to do this week, right, to succeed at that conference. He doesn't need to work on literature in English.

Michelle: Right.

Lindsay: Or, (um) you know, other things are not related to the conference. He needs to focus on the presentation, only on the phrases that he needs for the presentation. So what's the next logical step? So each day we meet, we're going to take the next simple step. We're not going to get stressed out about that presentation or about some skill that he'll need in the future, right, six months down the road.

Michelle: Right, right. I think that, you know, things are a lot less overwhelming when you break them into smaller pieces, you know. Like, yeah for, you know, your student, (um) if he just looks at oh learning English and just everything it just can be very intimidating, very (uh) overwhelming, but if he thinks okay no, my goal is to do this presentation. What is the exact next thing I need to do, I think that's a great example.

Lindsay: Yeah and I think a lot of our listeners tend to think about the big picture, right. I need to improve my English. Well that's so general.

Michelle: Right.



Lindsay: Right, and that creates anxiety because what's the answer to that? The feeling is always that you're not good enough at your English, guys, but think about why you need English, like, what is the next task that you need to do and then break it down into simple steps. Another analogy for this outside of language learning is within business building. When we build a new product, we have to put together a launch and I know some of our listeners are internet entrepreneurs. I think they know who they are and they're listening to this and they can relate to this. But, if you've ever worked in the business world and you've had to launch a product then you know it's an incredibly complex process, but what we do is we break it down into simple steps. What do we do on day one, day two, day three, day four and we do each thing one at a time.

Michelle: Yeah, I think that's great. I don't think that you should look at, like, oh I wanna (want to) make a business, right. You know, you know your final goal, and that's good, but just thinking, you know you might never even start if you just think of the end task.

Lindsay: That's it. I think that's it Michelle, what you said is really relevant and that's the key. (Um) and I really struggle with this, I have to be honest, when I want to take on a task, I think oh my gosh it's such a big task and I want to do it well, and then I, I sometimes don't even get started because I don't know where to start.

Michelle: Yeah, I'm really guilty of this one I think.

Lindsay: Do you have any examples of when this has happened to you?

Michelle: Well, I mean, I would, I would, the thing that you made me think of was (uh) song writing because (um) you know, I don't know, maybe this is a topic for a later episode: writer's block.

Lindsay: Oh, good one.

Michelle: So, (uh) it's been a long time since I've really been able to write a lot of songs and I used to just walk down the street and have an idea pop into my head like it was nothing and for a long time I've had trouble with this



and I get so frustrated. Oh, I wanna (want to) be able to write more songs, why can't I do this, but really, I mean, I think I'm going to learn something definitely from this episode is maybe I need to make it a smaller step. Maybe I just need to think of, like, a small melody or think of one idea instead of just oh, I'm having trouble writing songs, you know. Just think you know one part of one song or one small idea, you know.

Lindsay: Well, what changed for you? I mean, what changed from the time that you were able to easily come up an idea every day to now? I mean, what changed?

Michelle: That's a great question. (Um), wow, I don't know. I think really just like really I got very, like, busy and very, like, focused on my future, like, what am I doing next, what am I doing next and I think that, you know, I got a little anxious, and (um) you know, that's also kind of when you write a song it's like very personal, and you know, I don't know, I think a little afraid to like share. Something like that, so maybe fear.

Lindsay: Yeah, sometimes when we get older, we get more mature, we become more scared.

Michelle: Yep, yep, I think that's it.

Lindsay: It's true, and our listeners are adult English learners, so I think this really applies to them also.

Michelle: Right.

Lindsay: I think that adult English learners, it's easy to get scared.

Michelle: Yeah.

Lindsay: Compared with kids, if we look at kids and how kids learn languages. They don't get scared. They don't think about it.

Michelle: Right, adults are a lot more vulnerable I think.

Lindsay: Yeah, or maybe afraid to be vulnerable.



Michelle: Right, right, afraid to be vulnerable, exactly. So, I mean, I think that, you know, everyone can learn something from what your friend said to you even though it was about rock climbing, I think we can apply it to English language learning. I think we can apply it to a lot of things in (um) our lives. I know, it immediately made me think of songwriting, so (um) that's great.

Lindsay: Yeah, absolutely. So, I just wanna (want to) repeat this quote and just to finish off today's episode. So, guys, whenever you aren't sure what to do always take the next easiest step. It's so simple. So, think today about how you can apply that to your English learning. What do you need to do with your English in the short-term and what is the next step that you need to take and do that today. So Michelle, thanks for joining us today.

Michelle: Thank you Lindsay.

Lindsay: Yeah. Take care.

Michelle: Okay, great. Have a good day.

Lindsay: Bye.

Michelle: Bye.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: If you believe in connection, not perfection and you wanna (want to) put your ears into English more often, please subscribe to our podcast in iTunes on your computer or on your smartphone. And hey, if you liked today's show please let us know with a review in iTunes. Thanks so much for listening and see you next time.

