

Transcription:

Curtis: This is the Real English Conversations Podcast.

Amy: Where you'll find the lessons and advice you need to be able to confidently use your English in the real world.

Amy: Hey, everybody, this is Amy from realenglishconversations.com. In the previous three episodes I covered the concepts of naive practice, which is where we just kind of practice some things and work on English, but without really a specific goal in mind.

Where purposeful practice is the next stage, a little bit more detail goes into that, we set goals, we think about the activities that we need to do to reach those goals, and we create a plan. And the final one was related to deliberate practice, which really is the exact same thing as purposeful practice.

But we add something else to the equation, and that is working with an expert, somebody who knows what you're going through, they also know the best activities, the things that have worked for other students to get through the same problems, and really, that is the shortcut.

Because the truth is when we're trying to figure out anything for the first time on our own, it really takes us a long time to try to figure out how to do it. And it could be something simple, like learning how to cook something in your kitchen or learning how to paint some walls in your house, when it's the very first time that you do it, it's going to take longer.

But with languages, because language learning is such a time-consuming process already, you can imagine that if you're going through that and trying to figure out how to overcome problems on your own, that can add a lot of time to your language learning journey.

I wanted to share a few stories from some of the students that we worked with in the last twelve months and how we applied this concept of deliberate practice and just to show you where they got stuck and what the outcome was as soon as they had an expert that came in and knew exactly how to help them.

The first student that I'm going to tell you about is Eli. And actually, Eli was here in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico about a week ago, and we had the opportunity to have breakfast with him, and that was really cool. It gave me an opportunity to get to know him a little bit better because he has actually been a student working with Curtis.

So, I found out that Eli is originally from Brazil, but he's been living in Canada for about ten years now.

When Eli first moved to Canada, he didn't know any English. So, just like everybody else, he went to an ESL school where they taught him the basics. But one thing that he realized was that he really hated grammar, and he didn't feel that he was learning as much as he wanted to. So, he decided to take an immersion approach to his learning. And even though it took several years for Eli to get up to an advanced level, he kept putting himself in situations where he could practice in English, work in English, and just really get that exposure that he needed every day.

So, let's fast forward to last year when Eli started to work with Curtis, and what actually brought him to Real English Conversations.

The thing is that Eli is a business professional, he's somebody who works as a consultant with other business owners at very high levels, they could be CEOs or upper-level management, but he's needing to have discussions and really have clear communication for his job. And although it sounds like we're going down the path of needing business English help, the real problem was that Eli felt incredibly nervous whenever he had an important meeting that he had to attend, whether it be with a client or an important meeting amongst his colleagues.

Whenever he had to speak in English, in those types of situations, he felt so uncomfortable, very, very, very nervous. He was totally focused on the errors that he was making in English, and he knew it was time to finally fix this problem.

When Eli came into his lessons, he actually thought that he had to get help to speak correctly. That was the number one thing that he wanted to have help with because his errors were embarrassing, and those were the things that were causing him to get nervous.

But actually, his teacher, Curtis identified, "you know what? I think that there's something else going on here. Why do you think that you need to speak perfectly?"

And really, it was this obsession with speaking perfectly and correctly that was the source of the anxiety.

So, the focus of the first few lessons was really trying to change how Eli was thinking about his English, what the triggers were that were making him nervous and why he was feeling that way and just really by realizing, "hey, you know what? My English isn't really that bad, and if I make a mistake in a business meeting, people are still going to understand me, and that's okay."

And this is an area where we're usually met with a little bit of resistance from our students. They don't really think that this is the right advice for an English teacher to be giving but hear me out, they think that if they make mistakes and they don't care about it, that means that they're not going to try to be better at their English. But that's not the case.

What it is, is accepting the fact that your English isn't perfect. It's not your first language, you're going to make mistakes, and that's okay. And when you're not in that meeting, you're still going to continue working on your English, you're still going to try to get better. And you can live in a world where you feel both of those things at the same time.

You feel comfortable about your current level of communication, and you also know that you're working to get better. And that was really the game changer for Eli.

So, after the first obstacle was dealt with, which was this extreme anxiety that he was feeling, the next obstacle was really preparing for job interviews, and he wanted to apply to other jobs and hopefully get a better one.

And that's exactly what happened, but thanks to the work, the focused work that he did with his teacher to practice job interview questions and give him the experience and feedback about his answers, he was able to go into his job interview with more confidence, and he also knew how to manage that important situation and stay focused on the communication with the person in the interview. And because of that, he was offered his dream job.

So, congratulations, Eli. I'm really happy for you that you were able to break through this barrier with your English and thank you for sharing your story or allowing us to share your story and not just Eli, all of the students that allowed us to share their story on this podcast during this series, because I know that it's going to be very inspirational to other people that are in a similar situation.

Another student that I had the privilege of working with last year was Fortu from Spain and Fortune was at an advanced level already, he was able to communicate fairly easily, but he really hated the sound of his voice, and this was actually triggered by a video that he had to watch of a recording he did, I think when he was giving a class, and when he watched it, he was just like, "Ugh, I sound so bad, I hate my voice, I hate my accent, I sound so Spanish". And he also thought that he sounded very boring.

So, when he came in, I thought, "Hu, okay, is it his accent or what's really going on here?" So, we had to do a whole bunch of different activities to really figure out the core problem that he wanted to solve. But one of the things was that he just felt like he sounded boring. And we had to get him to do some crazy activities because for Fortu, he's actually kind of a shy, quiet guy. So, his emotion doesn't really come out that much anyway.

But in English, because he's kind of nervous or uncomfortable or thinking about whatever he's saying, it really made him sound like he was just focusing on the individual words he was saying rather than the message he wanted to transmit, which obviously, we do that through tone and emotion as we're speaking.

So, we did some things, like I had him read a story with different emotions. One would be a really sad story, and even though it was just a normal story, that wasn't sad, he had to read it with that tone, that he was sad.

And then another one, I wanted him to sound like he was really scared, and another one was where he was happy. And the funny thing is that I actually got him to record these stories with whatever emotion he wanted to transmit. And then I had to try to guess which emotion he was reading in, because that was really the only way for me to know if he was doing it in the right way.

We got him to do radio announcer ads and just crazy English to really push him outside of his comfort zone.

And really, within a couple of weeks, I remember he joined one of my classes, and I thought: "Wow! Fortu, you're like a different person! What happened to you?" And he was just this energetic happy his emotions were coming through, he was much more interactive and interesting to talk to, and it was just like he had to change overnight. It was so great to see him have this type of breakthrough.

For both Eli and Fortu, their change, this first initial breakthrough of something that they had been struggling with for a very, very long time was solved in just a few weeks. And after we get through that first obstacle, there are always new things for us to work through. And that's exactly what we did with both of the students, but the end story with Fortu is that he basically felt comfortable with his English.

And instead of hating the way that he sounded, he was able to speak and really enjoy the communication. And that's really what he set out to do. And he was able to do that in just a period of three months.

And I could go on and on and on with different stories I've shared with you just in the past few days, the story about Young, how he had been trying for years to figure out how to improve his listening skills, and he was able to do that.

I shared Min's story, how she was really uncomfortable and unsure about her English, and if what she was saying was normal and how now she's able to communicate comfortably and automatically.

And we looked at Pedro's situation, how he had a listening obstacle as well. And it was literally as soon as we solved that first issue, which we were able to do in just a couple of weeks, he was able to say: "Hey, you know what I thought the only thing I needed help with was my listening, but you're a pretty good teacher. I think I need some work on my speaking as well". And that was the next stage, it was the next thing that was a priority to work on.

But the thing that is the most important that you understand is that none of these students are exceptional. They are not special cases. We have helped all sorts of different students

with issues that were their barrier, their roadblock, their biggest problem in their English journey.

And each student has a different background, they have something unique about what they want to do or how they're thinking about it. And it's really important for us to be working one to one with the student to try to create a customized personalized plan and try things that we know work really well for other students that have similar problems.

And when we apply those concepts, these issues, these problems, these obstacles that you're struggling with suddenly become really easy, and then they go away, and then you've got a new obstacle that you don't know how to solve, but this time you have an expert there to support you to help you through it so that you don't have to spend so much time stuck like you were the last time.

So now it's your turn to make a decision. You need to ask yourself: "Hey, am I ready to speak fluently, be easily understood, and finally feel confident in English?"

And if the answer is yes to that question, then the next step is to head over to our website and to book a trial lesson with one of our teachers.

You can go down to the description area of this podcast and find the link that says Book a trial lesson where you'll be able to go select the teacher that you think is best for you, choose a date and time, and that's it.

Before you know it, you're going to be talking to one of our expert teachers, talking about the different things that you need to improve what your specific situation is, and really where you're feeling stuck, where you're needing to have that extra support or different ideas that can help you to overcome those challenges.

And remember, this trial lesson isn't just a conversation where you're meeting your teacher. This is an opportunity for you to see your teacher in action.

First, you're going to be able to explain your specific challenges and what you want to improve, and then you're going to see that the teacher is able to choose just the right activity that is exactly what you need to improve your skills in a certain way.

And that's really what it takes to show you that this teacher has what you need. They understand your problem, and they're going to be able to create a customized plan that's specifically for you so that in just a few weeks from now, you're feeling significantly better about certain areas of your English, you're full of motivation, and you're ready to continue moving forward.

Just to wrap up, I wanted to say that I really appreciate your time and listening to these podcasts over the past few episodes, and I really hope to see you as one of our newest students so that, who knows, maybe next year your story will be the success story that I'm sharing on this podcast.



Take care and I'll see you next time.