

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. And I am really excited to be here with you and the content and lessons that I'll be sharing with you over the next three episodes because it's based on a concept called Deliberate Practice, which was something that I discovered in a very interesting book that I read a couple of months ago by Anders Erickson called Peak.

Many of the concepts that he shared in the book were directly related to learning and how you can do it in a more efficient and effective way by following a few simple steps and thinking about things in a slightly different way, that's really going to help you to see why your progress is so much slower than it needs to be, and how you can get unstuck from where you are right now and really focusing on the things that are going to help you to make the most progress in the least amount of time and move forward with your English to reach your fluency goals.

Before we get started with this special training in today's episode, I wanted to let you know that there are two important links in the description area of this podcast.

[The first one is the Worksheet](#), which is related to this podcast episode, which you can download at any time. [And the second link](#) is related to the last podcast episode that I published on January 1, which is pretty cool, it's inspirational, it's really going to help you to think about the goals that you would like to accomplish this year. And I've given a couple of student stories just to show you what's really possible if you're practicing in the right way.

Alright, now that we got all of that important stuff out of the way, let's get into this training. As many of you know, I am a language learner just like you so very often. I say we because I know exactly what you're going through. The truth is that learning a language is a very, very difficult and complicated thing, and I am just like many of you guys, where at various points throughout my language learning journey with Spanish.

I got stuck and I didn't know what to do, and this is a very frustrating place to be because you're putting in the time, you're putting in the effort, you're generally working on a specific thing, but you're not really seeing the results that you are expecting to see. For example, if you identify that you need to improve your listening skills, then it would make sense for you to listen to podcasts or watch a TV show so that you have that exposure.

Thinking of different ways to practice speaking is a little bit more complicated. Let's say that you're beyond having conversations with your dog or cat and you realize, you know what? I think I actually need to speak with another human.

And honestly, even if you're living in an English-speaking country, you're realizing that those small transactions that you have to do at the grocery store or in a restaurant, those types of small interactions aren't really giving you the type of practice that you need to express those longer and more complicated thoughts.

So, you decide, "hey, you know what? I'm going to start having conversation lessons with a teacher". And although initially you might see some progress after a little while, you realize that your progress is slowing down and you've kind of hit a new plateau.

What I'm describing here is something called naive practice, and this is when you're trying to improve something, but there's not really a solid strategy plan or goal.

And because all of those things that I just described are a little bit vague and unclear, like, for example, "I want to improve my speaking fluency". How are you ever going to know when you've reached improved? Like, what measurement is that? What can you do?

Or with listening, "I want to improve my listening skills". Okay, when are you going to know when you've actually reached that point? When can you say check yes, I've done that?

And if you don't have that goal, you're not able to work backwards to try to identify the steps or the specific elements that you might need to focus on that are going to allow you to actually reach that next level.

To really help you see this concept of naive practice, I'd like to give you an example using basketball.

Let's pretend that you decide you want to play basketball because your friends are playing a game every Sunday, it looks like fun, and you'd like to participate. So, you go down, you join them every week and little by little you are developing your skills, but your progress is very slow and you're definitely not a star player on the team, even six months later.

When we're looking at this approach of trying to improve our basketball game just by simply showing up and playing for an hour once a week, that doesn't seem like a very good strategy, and it's pretty obvious why we're not getting better much faster.

So, let's pretend that suddenly we get serious, and we don't want to be the worst player on the team anymore, so we start looking at what we can improve that would help us to become a better player.

First of all, if you're trying to shoot at the net and you're always missing, that would indicate that you should probably spend some time working on your shooting skills, and something that can probably help you to improve even faster is asking one of your friends, who is actually pretty good at getting shots in the net to give you some tips and feedback on your shooting technique, so that when you're practicing on your own, you're actually practicing with the right technique.

The same could be true for your passing skills, maybe when your teammates are passing to you, you often miss or you're giving them very bad passes. So, something that you might need to focus on is passing the ball and trying to develop those skills.

Now let's add one more layer to this one more level where we set a specific goal.

Maybe you want to be a really good shooter on the team, and when you're doing your practice, you want to be able to get eight out of ten shots that you make. You want to be successful 80% of the time, currently, you're successful maybe 10% of the time. And it feels like it's just pure luck.

When you start to think about how you're going to achieve that very specific goal, it starts to become very clear the types of steps that might be involved. And this is the type of thinking that I want you to practice today.

And to do this, I thought that I would give you a real-life example of a real-life student, and his name is Pedro.

Pedro is from Spain, and his biggest problem when he came to learn with us was listening.

When Pedro contacted us, he said that he uses English frequently at work, but he's still struggling to understand the American accent. And he said his listening was so bad that it was up to the point of missing entire sentences when he was having informal chats or discussions with his coworkers.

Now let's look at the way that Pedro was practicing. In general, he was listening to either podcast or radio shows as a way to have the exposure to listening material.

And when he was listening to a podcast, he would listen to it from start to finish. But generally, he'd listen to it a few times the first time he didn't hear as much as he did the second time. But it was only a minor improvement. And he found that every time after that that he listened to the audio, he wasn't making too much progress.

Another thing that he was doing was re-watching the recorded meetings that he had from work because he knew that this was really the type of content that he was struggling with the most. So, if he was to re watch the meeting, maybe he would understand more the second time.

Do you remember how I said that there was going to be a worksheet attached to this lesson? And in that worksheet, I'm actually going to share the first recommendations that we gave to Pedro that made a massive difference in his listening skills and helped him to overcome his problem finally. [Get the worksheet here](#)

But before you look at the answers, take a few minutes right now and really think about it. What do you think Pedro could have done differently that would have helped him to improve his listening skills?

And try to think about that before you see the answer, because that way, when you see the answer, you're going to have a massive learning opportunity and it's going to prepare you for the next step of the activity, which is trying to solve your own skill, the thing you want to improve the most. [In the worksheet](#), you're going to identify the top thing that you want to improve. You're going to write down the different activities that you're currently doing to practice that skill.

And then comes the next part where you need to try to think about how you could practice that skill, maybe a little bit differently, but more specifically to make sure that you're putting your time and energy into the right thing, that's going to help you develop the skills that you need to reach your goals.

For today, we covered the concept that I really wanted to show you and to let you know about, which is doing naive practice versus purposeful practice.

And when we do naive practice, we show up and we hope that we get some sort of result. Neither the activity that we're trying to do nor the result we're striving for has been defined.

We don't have a specific goal; we're just showing up and hoping something happens.

But with purposeful practice, we have a more specific goal, which allows us to have more specific steps and greatly increases our chances of actually achieving it.

In the next episode, we're going to be talking more about this concept of purposeful practice and deliberate practice to really help you to understand the key elements that need to be in place for you to make that rapid progress and continue to move forward with your language skills.

See you in the next episode.