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With No Grammar and No Textbooks!

Episode #239

Fluency and Correction when
Speaking English

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Hi! I'm Georgiana, your English teacher. Thanks for joining me for a new Speak English Now podcast episode.

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Ok, let's start!

Today, I'd like to take a closer look at a common issue faced by many learners of English: the **proper usage of various verb tenses**, as well as the **potential mistakes** they can make.

First, you should bear in mind that **native speakers** tend to **use fewer verb tenses when speaking** compared to when they are writing. In other words, **spoken language is more direct and simple**. And that's good news!

So, why does this happen?

We can consider how to articulate our ideas best, select suitable grammar structures, and more when writing. However, **when speaking, there is no time to think about how to construct a sentence**.

Secondly, when learning a language, there is often a conflict between two components.

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These two elements are **fluency and self-correction**. By fluency, I mean the ability to produce the language with few pauses, and by self-correction, I mean the perception that what you are saying may be wrong, and consequently, you self-correct.

To illustrate this point, let's assume that Tom is an English learner with a low level of fluency.

Tom has to make a significant effort to find the right words, finish sentences, and so on. **He is probably mentally translating from his native language to English and the other way around.**

While Tom is in a conversation, struggling to finish sentences, the last thing Tom can think about is whether he is making any grammar errors. It's hard enough trying to keep the conversation going.

If Tom wants to reduce the number of errors, he will need to pause frequently for several seconds to ponder the best way to express himself. Even so, he will make mistakes.

The last scenario is quite common in traditional language schools. Teachers often require students to speak from the beginning without errors, even if they can barely articulate sentences. Consequently, this hinders fluency, preventing students from relaxing and enjoying basic conversations.

So, what is the solution? The key is to **follow the natural process of language acquisition**.

First, you need to **listen many times to the same language patterns so that they become automatic in your mind**. This way, you can gradually focus on making fewer mistakes. That's why I often insist **you should be listening to simple content repeatedly**.

When you are fluent, you have the intuition that something sounds right. This happens because you have heard the same language patterns thousands of times.

In short, to gain mastery of the various verb tenses used in conversations and reduce mistakes, **the key is to cultivate fluency.**

Okay, let's continue with a point-of-view story.

POV-Story

(Learn grammar in context)

Let's practice with a Point-of-View lesson. I will tell you the same story several times, and each time I tell the story, I will change the person or verb tense. So, make sure you stay focused on the changes.

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There are several levels.



Ok. Let's start!

Tom was an English student who was frustrated because he wanted to improve his fluency but didn't know how.

He thought of placing an ad in a local newspaper looking for an English practice buddy. The ad read, "English practice partner wanted!".

Someone by the name of Andy answered the ad saying he was interested. Tom was delighted to find a language partner, so he arranged to meet Andy at a coffee shop the next day.

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However, something unexpected happened when Tom saw Andy. Tom wasn't sure what to think. The thing is that Andy was a chicken! Yes! A real chicken.

"It's a pleasure to meet you!" the chicken said in perfect English. Tom was shocked to hear the chicken speak English and a bit skeptical. But since this was his only option, he decided to give Andy a chance.

An interesting fact is that Andy the chicken learned English by listening to an English podcast.

Over time, Tom and Andy became close friends and talked about everything in English. Well, almost everything. Tom never told Andy what his favorite food was.

Let's listen to the same story as if it's happening right now, in the second-person point of view.

You place an ad in a local newspaper looking for an English practice buddy. The ad reads, "English practice partner wanted!"

Someone by the name of Andy answers the ad saying they are interested. You are delighted to find a language partner, so you arrange to meet Andy at a coffee shop the next day.

However, something unexpected happens when you see Andy. You aren't sure what to think. The thing is that Andy is a chicken! A real chicken!

"It's a pleasure to meet you!" the chicken says in perfect English. You are shocked to hear the chicken speak English and a bit skeptical.

But since this is your only option, you decide to give Andy a chance.

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An interesting fact is that Andy the chicken learned English by listening every day to the Speak English Now podcast.

Over time, you and Andy become close friends and talk about everything in English. Well, almost everything. You never tell Andy what your favorite food is.

Ok! That's the end of this short exercise. Notice that the changes between grammar points are subtle but important.

With this method, you don't need to memorize any boring rules. It's better to see the changes in the proper context. And with a story, it is much easier to remember all this.

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Ok! We have reached the end of this episode.

See you soon! Bye! Bye!



Georgiana

founder of
SpeakEnglishPodcast.com

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