

VOCABULARY · EPISODE 05

How People Actually Get Good at English

Key words & expressions · English + Español

17 words

Your English Toolbox

1 to keep at it

perseverar · seguir adelante · no rendirse**DEF**

to continue trying despite difficulty; to persist with a task

*The single most common advice from successful language learners: keep at it even when progress feels invisible.***ES**

Continuar intentando a pesar de la dificultad.

El consejo más común de los políglotas exitosos: perseverar incluso cuando el progreso parece invisible.

The secret to fluency is simply to keep at it every single day.

The secret to fluency is simply to keep at it every single day. -> El secreto de la fluidez es simplemente perseverar cada día.

When learning feels frustrating, that is precisely the moment to keep at it.

When learning feels frustrating, that is precisely the moment to keep at it. -> Cuando el aprendizaje se siente frustrante, ese es precisamente el momento de seguir adelante.

2 to branch out

diversificarse · ampliar horizontes · aventurarse en nuevas áreas**DEF**

to try new things beyond your usual habits; to expand into new areas

*Language learners often stick to one method — branching out into different input types (films, podcasts, books) accelerates growth.***ES**

Probar cosas nuevas más allá de los hábitos habituales.

Los aprendices suelen quedarse con un método — diversificarse en distintos tipos de input acelera el progreso.

Once you reach B1, branch out into different types of English content.

Once you reach B1, branch out into different types of English content. -> Una vez que alcances el B1, diversificate en distintos tipos de contenido.

She branched out from textbooks and started listening to native-speed podcasts.

She branched out from textbooks and started listening to native-speed podcasts. -> Se alejó de los libros de texto y empezó a escuchar podcasts a velocidad nativa.

3

to brush up on

repassar · refrescar · poner al día

DEF

to quickly review and refresh knowledge you already have but haven't used recently

Different from learning from scratch — brushing up on reactivates dormant knowledge that your brain has stored.

ES

Revisar y refrescar rápidamente el conocimiento que ya tienes.

Distinto de aprender desde cero — repasar reactiva el conocimiento dormido almacenado en el cerebro.

I spent a week brushing up on my phrasal verbs before the interview.

I spent a week brushing up on my phrasal verbs before the interview. -> Pasé una semana repasando mis verbos frasales antes de la entrevista.

If you studied English years ago, you only need to brush up — not start over.

If you studied English years ago, you only need to brush up — not start over. -> Si estudiaste inglés hace años, solo necesitas repasar, no empezar de nuevo.

4

trial and error

ensayo y error · prueba y error

DEF

the process of learning through attempting things, making mistakes, and adjusting

There is no shortcut — language learning is fundamentally trial and error: you try an approach, it fails, you adjust.

ES

El proceso de aprender intentando cosas, cometiendo errores y ajustando.

No hay atajos — el aprendizaje de idiomas es fundamentalmente de ensayo y error.

Finding your best study method takes trial and error — try everything.

Finding your best study method takes trial and error — try everything. -> Encontrar tu mejor método de estudio requiere ensayo y error — prueba todo.

Through trial and error, he discovered that speaking from day one was key.

Through trial and error, he discovered that speaking from day one was key. -> A través del ensayo y error, descubrió que hablar desde el primer día era fundamental.

5

a breakthrough

un avance decisivo · un hito · un salto cualitativo

DEF

a sudden and significant advance or achievement after a period of struggle

Breakthroughs in language learning feel sudden but are the result of all the invisible work that came before.

ES

Un avance significativo y repentino tras un período de esfuerzo.

Los avances en el aprendizaje de idiomas parecen repentinos pero son el resultado de todo el trabajo invisible previo.

After six months of confusion, I had a breakthrough and everything made sense.

After six months of confusion, I had a breakthrough and everything made sense. -> Después de seis meses de confusión, tuve un avance decisivo y todo cobró sentido.

A breakthrough doesn't mean you've arrived — it means you've unlocked the next level.

A breakthrough doesn't mean you've arrived — it means you've unlocked the next level. -> Un avance decisivo no significa que hayas llegado — significa que has desbloqueado el siguiente nivel.

6

to put in the work

poner el esfuerzo · trabajar duro · dedicarse en serio

DEF

to invest the necessary effort and time to achieve something

No method replaces the hours — the polyglots who seem to acquire language effortlessly have simply put in the work.

ES

Invertir el esfuerzo y tiempo necesarios para lograr algo.

Ningún método reemplaza las horas — los políglotas que parecen adquirir idiomas sin esfuerzo simplemente han puesto el esfuerzo.

There is no shortcut — you have to put in the work if you want real fluency.

There is no shortcut — you have to put in the work if you want real fluency. -> No hay atajos — tienes que poner el esfuerzo si quieres fluidez real.

She puts in the work every morning before the rest of the world wakes up.

She puts in the work every morning before the rest of the world wakes up. -> Ella trabaja duro cada mañana antes de que el resto del mundo despierte.

7 to mess up

meter la pata · equivocarse · cometer un error

DEF

to make a mistake; to do something wrong

Messing up is not failure — it is the primary mechanism of language acquisition. Fear of messing up is the real enemy.

ES

Cometer un error; hacer algo mal.

Meter la pata no es fracaso — es el mecanismo primario de adquisición de idiomas.

I mess up my tenses all the time — and that's exactly how I learn them.

I mess up my tenses all the time — and that's exactly how I learn them. -> Siempre meto la pata con los tiempos verbales — y eso es exactamente cómo los aprendo.

Don't apologise when you mess up — just correct yourself and continue.

Don't apologise when you mess up — just correct yourself and continue. -> No te disculpes cuando metes la pata — simplemente corrígete y continúa.

8 to take the plunge

lanzarse · tirarse a la piscina · dar el paso

DEF

to commit to doing something challenging despite uncertainty or fear

The moment of decision that separates learners who reach fluency from those who stay stuck — taking the plunge means using the language before you feel ready.

ES

Comprometerse a hacer algo desafiante a pesar de la incertidumbre.

El momento de decisión que separa a los aprendices que alcanzan fluidez de los que se quedan atascados.

Take the plunge and start speaking from day one, even with just ten words.

Take the plunge and start speaking from day one, even with just ten words. -> Lánzate y empieza a hablar desde el primer día, aunque sea con solo diez palabras.

After years of studying, she finally took the plunge and moved to London.

After years of studying, she finally took the plunge and moved to London. -> Tras años de estudio, por fin se lanzó y se mudó a Londres.

9 to get the hang of cogerle el truco · pillarle el truco · dominar

DEF

to learn how to do something and become comfortable with it

The idiom captures that lovely moment when a difficult thing stops feeling hard — it clicks and becomes natural.

ES

Aprender a hacer algo y sentirse cómodo con ello.

El modismo captura ese momento mágico en el que algo difícil deja de ser difícil.

It took me three months to get the hang of the British vowel sounds.

It took me three months to get the hang of the British vowel sounds. -> Me tardé tres meses en cogerle el truco a los sonidos vocálicos británicos.

Once you get the hang of linking, fast speech suddenly makes sense.

Once you get the hang of linking, fast speech suddenly makes sense. -> Una vez que le coges el truco al enlace, el habla rápida de repente cobra sentido.

10 output producción lingüística · expresión oral y escrita

DEF

the language a learner produces: speaking and writing, as opposed to input (listening/reading)

Input builds comprehension; output builds fluency. Both are essential, but most learners over-invest in input and neglect output.

ES

El lenguaje que un aprendiz produce: hablar y escribir, frente al input.

El input construye la comprensión; el output construye la fluidez. Ambos son esenciales.

Your output will always lag behind your input — that gap is where growth happens.

Your output will always lag behind your input — that gap is where growth happens. -> Tu producción siempre irá por detrás de tu comprensión — esa brecha es donde ocurre el crecimiento.

Start generating output from day one, even if it's just talking to yourself.

Start generating output from day one, even if it's just talking to yourself. -> Empieza a generar producción desde el primer día, aunque sea solo hablar contigo mismo.

11 to commit to

comprometerse con · dedicarse a

DEF

to dedicate yourself fully to something; to make a firm decision and follow through

Research on successful language learners shows commitment — not talent or method — as the primary differentiating factor.

ES

Dedicarse plenamente a algo; tomar una decisión firme y cumplirla.

Las investigaciones sobre aprendices exitosos muestran que el compromiso — no el talento — es el factor diferenciador principal.

Commit to listening for fifteen minutes every morning without exception.

Commit to listening for fifteen minutes every morning without exception. -> Comprométete a escuchar quince minutos cada mañana sin excepción.

Until you commit to speaking, your reading and listening won't transfer to real conversations.

Until you commit to speaking, your reading and listening won't transfer. -> Hasta que te comprometas a hablar, tu lectura y escucha no se transferirán.

12 to absorb

absorber · asimilar · interiorizar

DEF

to take in information deeply so it becomes part of your knowledge or behaviour

Absorbing language differs from studying it — absorbed language comes out in natural speech without conscious recall.

ES

Captar información profundamente para que forme parte de tu conocimiento.

Absorber el idioma difiere de estudiarlo — el idioma absorbido sale en el habla natural sin recuperación consciente.

Children absorb language through play — adults can do the same through immersion.

Children absorb language through play — adults can do the same through immersion. -> Los niños absorben el lenguaje jugando — los adultos pueden hacer lo mismo mediante la inmersión.

Don't just memorise vocabulary — give yourself time to absorb it through reading.

Don't just memorise vocabulary — give yourself time to absorb it. -> No solo memorices vocabulario — date tiempo para asimilarlo.

13 a shortcut

un atajo · un camino más corto

DEF

a faster or easier route to achieving a goal; a method that saves time or effort

There are no real shortcuts in language learning — but there are smarter paths. Understanding this distinction is itself progress.

ES

Una ruta más rápida o fácil para lograr un objetivo.

No hay atajos reales en el aprendizaje de idiomas — pero sí hay caminos más inteligentes.

There are no shortcuts — but there are efficient methods that cut years off your learning.

There are no shortcuts — but there are efficient methods that cut years off your learning. -> No hay atajos — pero sí hay métodos eficientes que recortan años de aprendizaje.

Trying to find a shortcut is itself the trap that keeps many learners stuck.

Trying to find a shortcut is itself the trap that keeps many learners stuck. -> Intentar encontrar un atajo es en sí mismo la trampa que mantiene a muchos aprendices atascados.

14 to make a habit of

hacer un hábito de · convertir en hábito · habituar

DEF

to turn something into a regular, automatic behaviour

Successful language learning is overwhelmingly about habit formation — not intelligence or talent.

ES

Convertir algo en un comportamiento regular y automático.

El aprendizaje de idiomas exitoso trata abrumadoramente de la formación de hábitos, no de inteligencia.

Make a habit of listening to English for ten minutes every morning with your coffee.

Make a habit of listening to English for ten minutes every morning with your coffee. -> Haz un hábito de escuchar inglés diez minutos cada mañana con tu café.

Once you make a habit of speaking, the anxiety disappears within weeks.

Once you make a habit of speaking, the anxiety disappears within weeks. -> Una vez que conviertes hablar en hábito, la ansiedad desaparece en pocas semanas.

15 to show off

presumir · alardear · lucirse

DEF

to display your abilities proudly, often to impress others

Showing off in language learning is actually useful — actively seeking opportunities to display your skills creates powerful output practice.

ES

Mostrar tus habilidades con orgullo, a menudo para impresionar.

Presumir en el aprendizaje de idiomas es útil — buscar activamente oportunidades para demostrar tus habilidades crea una práctica de producción poderosa.

Don't be shy — show off your new vocabulary whenever you get the chance.

Don't be shy — show off your new vocabulary whenever you get the chance. -> No seas tímido — lúcete con tu nuevo vocabulario siempre que tengas ocasión.

Every conversation is an opportunity to show off what you've been practising.

Every conversation is an opportunity to show off what you've been practising. -> Cada conversación es una oportunidad de presumir de lo que has estado practicando.

16 to immerse yourself

sumergirse · rodearse de · zambullirse en

DEF

to surround yourself completely with a language or subject so it fills your daily life

True immersion does not require living abroad — it means arranging your daily environment so English is the default language of your leisure.

ES

Rodearse completamente de un idioma para que llene tu vida diaria.

La inmersión real no requiere vivir en el extranjero — significa organizar tu entorno diario para que el inglés sea el idioma de tu ocio.

Immerse yourself by changing your phone and social media to English.

Immerse yourself by changing your phone and social media to English. -> Sumérgete cambiando tu teléfono y redes sociales al inglés.

You don't need to travel abroad to immerse yourself — it can happen in your bedroom.

You don't need to travel abroad to immerse yourself — it can happen in your bedroom. -> No necesitas viajar al extranjero para sumergirte — puede ocurrir en tu habitación.

17 eventually

finalmente · con el tiempo · al final

DEF

at some point in the future, after a period of time or a process; in the end

Signals patience and perspective — 'you will eventually speak fluently' is a promise grounded in how language acquisition works.

ES

En algún momento en el futuro, tras un período de tiempo.

[!]■ FALSO AMIGO: 'eventually' ≠ 'eventualmente'. 'Eventualmente' en español = possibly/perhaps. Use 'finalmente' o 'con el tiempo'.

Keep at it and you will eventually reach the level you're aiming for.

Keep at it and you will eventually reach the level you're aiming for. -> Persevera y con el tiempo alcanzarás el nivel al que apuntas.

Even the most advanced polyglots eventually hit a plateau — it's universal.

Even the most advanced polyglots eventually hit a plateau — it's universal. -> Incluso los políglotas más avanzados finalmente llegan a una meseta — es universal.