

VOCABULARY · EPISODE 32

Why Your English Doesn't Sound Like You

Key words & expressions · English + Español

10 words

Your English Toolbox

1

to come across

dar la impresión de ser · proyectar cierta imagen

DEF

to be perceived or understood in a particular way by others; to create a specific impression

*How we come across is different from who we are — and in a second language the gap is often wide.**Learners often come across as formal, cold, or flat simply because they lack the vocabulary to project their real personality.*

ES

Ser percibido o entendido de una manera particular por los demás; crear una impresión específica.

Cómo nos perciben es diferente de quiénes somos — y en un segundo idioma la brecha suele ser grande.

She has a great sense of humour, but in English she comes across as quite serious.

She has a great sense of humour, but in English she comes across as quite serious. -> Tiene un gran sentido del humor, pero en inglés da la impresión de ser bastante seria.

The goal is not perfect grammar — it is to come across the way you really are.

The goal is to come across the way you really are. -> El objetivo es proyectar la imagen de quien realmente eres.

2

a personality

la personalidad · el modo de ser propio

DEF

the combination of characteristics, emotions, ways of speaking, and attitudes that make a person unique

Personality in English is more than character — it includes humour, timing, warmth, wit. Language learners often feel their full personality disappears in their second language and they become a 'simpler version' of themselves.

ES

La combinación de características, emociones, formas de hablar y actitudes que hacen única a una persona.

La personalidad en inglés es más que el carácter — incluye el humor, la espontaneidad, la calidez.

Her personality shines through even in her second language — that is true fluency.

Her personality shines through even in her second language. -> Su personalidad brilla incluso en su segundo idioma.

Getting your personality across in English is harder than being grammatically correct.

Getting your personality across in English is harder than being grammatically correct. -> Transmitir tu modo de ser propio en inglés es más difícil que ser gramaticalmente correcto.

3

to sound like yourself

sonar como tú mismo · hablar siendo tú de verdad

DEF

to speak in a way that reflects your real identity, humour, values, and way of seeing the world — not a scripted or filtered version of you

Sounding like yourself is the ultimate goal beyond fluency — it is the moment your second language becomes a true medium for your identity, not just a tool for information.

ES

Hablar de una manera que refleja tu identidad real, humor, valores y forma de ver el mundo.

Sonar como tú mismo es el objetivo último más allá de la fluidez.

You know you have mastered a language when you sound like yourself in it.

You know you have mastered a language when you sound like yourself in it. -> Sabes que has dominado un idioma cuando sueñas como tú mismo en él.

She doesn't just speak English well — she sounds like herself. That's the difference.

She doesn't just speak English well — she sounds like herself. That's the difference. -> No solo habla bien el inglés — habla siendo ella de verdad. Esa es la diferencia.

4

a filtered version

una versión recortada de ti mismo · una versión filtrada

DEF

a reduced or altered version of yourself that has had parts removed — usually spontaneity, humour, emotion, or cultural references

The filtered version is what many learners feel they are in their second language — safe, correct, but not fully themselves. Recognising this gap is the first step to closing it.

ES

Una versión reducida o alterada de ti mismo a la que se le han quitado partes — generalmente espontaneidad, humor, emoción o referencias culturales.

La versión recortada es lo que muchos estudiantes sienten que son en su segundo idioma — seguros, correctos, pero no completamente ellos mismos.

In English, I feel like I am presenting a filtered version of myself — all the wit has been removed.

In English, I feel like I am presenting a filtered version of myself — all the wit has been removed. -> En inglés, siento que estoy presentando una versión recortada de mí mismo — toda la agudeza ha sido eliminada.

As your vocabulary grows, the filtered version disappears and the real you starts to emerge.

As your vocabulary grows, the filtered version disappears and the real you starts to emerge. -> A medida que crece tu vocabulario, la versión filtrada desaparece y el verdadero tú empieza a aflorar.

5

to drop the mask

quitarse la máscara · mostrar tu verdadero yo

DEF

to stop pretending or performing and allow your true self to be seen — to be authentic

Dropping the mask is the goal of advanced English communication — not performing a role, but being genuinely yourself. For language learners, the mask is often the 'textbook voice': formal, careful, unnatural. Dropping it means taking the risk of sounding imperfect but real.

ES

Dejar de fingir o actuar y permitir que tu verdadero yo sea visto — ser auténtico.

El objetivo de la comunicación avanzada en inglés — no interpretar un papel, sino ser genuinamente tú mismo.

The more comfortable you become in English, the easier it is to drop the mask and just be yourself.

The more comfortable you become in English, the easier it is to drop the mask and just be yourself. -> Cuanto más cómodo te sientas en inglés, más fácil resulta quitarte la máscara y simplemente ser tú mismo.

She dropped the mask during the interview and spoke naturally — and that is exactly what got her the job.

She dropped the mask during the interview and spoke naturally — and that is exactly what got her the job. -> Se quitó la máscara durante la entrevista y habló de forma natural — y eso fue exactamente lo que le dio el trabajo.

6

to be at ease

estar a gusto · sentirse cómodo y relajado

DEF

to feel relaxed, comfortable, and free from tension in a situation

Being at ease in English is the end goal — not just understanding the language, but feeling comfortable using it. You are at ease when you stop monitoring every word and simply communicate.

ES

Sentirse relajado, cómodo y libre de tensión en una situación.

El objetivo final en inglés — no solo entender el idioma, sino sentirse cómodo usándolo. Estás a gusto cuando dejas de monitorear cada palabra y simplemente te comunicas.

You know your English is progressing when you start to feel at ease in conversations that used to terrify you.

You know your English is progressing when you start to feel at ease in conversations that used to terrify you. -> Sabes que tu inglés está progresando cuando empiezas a sentirte a gusto en conversaciones que antes te aterraban.

The trick is to create low-stakes situations where you can practise being at ease — then it transfers to high-stakes moments.

The trick is to create low-stakes situations where you can practise being at ease — then it transfers to high-stakes moments. -> El truco es crear situaciones de bajo riesgo donde puedas practicar estar a gusto — luego se transfiere a los momentos de alto riesgo.

7 to loosen up

soltarse · relajarse y actuar con naturalidad

DEF

to become less tense, stiff, or serious — to relax physically or in behaviour and begin acting more naturally

Loosening up is what happens between the first five awkward minutes of an English conversation and the moment when you start to flow. It is a process, not a decision — but knowing it will come helps you to wait it out.

ES

Volverse menos tenso, rígido o serio — relajarse física o conductualmente y empezar a actuar con más naturalidad.

Lo que sucede entre los primeros cinco minutos incómodos de una conversación en inglés y el momento en que empiezas a fluir.

Give yourself the first few minutes to loosen up — once the stiffness leaves, the conversation will improve fast.

Give yourself the first few minutes to loosen up — once the stiffness leaves, the conversation will improve fast. -> Date los primeros minutos para soltarte — una vez que la rigidez desaparece, la conversación mejora rápidamente.

He told himself to loosen up, took a breath, made a small joke, and the whole room relaxed.

He told himself to loosen up, took a breath, made a small joke, and the whole room relaxed. -> Se dijo a sí mismo que se relajara, respiró, hizo un pequeño chiste y toda la sala se relajó.

8 a relaxed delivery

una entrega relajada · un modo de hablar natural y sin tensión

DEF

the quality of speaking in a calm, unhurried, and natural way — without sounding tense or over-prepared

Relaxed delivery is what separates natural-sounding English from textbook English. You can have perfect grammar but if your delivery is tense, you sound unnatural. A relaxed delivery means the listener focuses on what you say, not how nervous you are.

ES

La cualidad de hablar de manera tranquila, sin prisas y natural — sin sonar tenso ni demasiado preparado.

Lo que separa el inglés con sonido natural del inglés de libro de texto. Puedes tener una gramática perfecta pero si tu forma de hablar es tensa, suenas antinatural.

Work on a relaxed delivery: slow down slightly, breathe between sentences, and let the pauses do their work.

Work on a relaxed delivery: slow down slightly, breathe between sentences, and let the pauses do their work. -> Trabaja en una entrega relajada: reduce un poco el ritmo, respira entre frases y deja que las pausas hagan su trabajo.

She noticed that native speakers had a relaxed delivery even when discussing complex topics — and she started to copy it.

She noticed that native speakers had a relaxed delivery even when discussing complex topics — and she started to copy it. -> Notó que los hablantes nativos tenían un modo de hablar natural y sin tensión incluso cuando discutían temas complejos — y empezó a copiarlo.

9

to tone it down

bajar el tono · suavizar la intensidad de lo que dices

DEF

to reduce the intensity, volume, or formality of what you are saying or how you are saying it

Toning it down is about register — matching the energy and formality of what you say to the situation. In English, over-formal language in a casual situation, or high emotion in a professional context, both signal a mismatch. Learning to tone it down is part of communicative competence.

ES

Reducir la intensidad, el volumen o la formalidad de lo que dices o de cómo lo dices.

Se trata de registro — adaptar la energía y la formalidad a la situación. En inglés, el inglés demasiado formal en una situación informal, o la alta emoción en un contexto profesional, ambos señalan un desajuste.

If you are speaking to a friend, tone it down — you do not need formal English for every conversation.

If you are speaking to a friend, tone it down — you do not need formal English for every conversation. -> Si hablas con un amigo, baja el tono — no necesitas inglés formal para cada conversación.

She realised her English was too intense for small talk and learned to tone it down for casual moments.

She realised her English was too intense for small talk and learned to tone it down for casual moments. -> Se dio cuenta de que su inglés era demasiado intenso para la charla informal y aprendió a suavizar la intensidad para los momentos informales.

10

your true self

tu yo auténtico · tu verdadero yo sin filtros

DEF

the real, authentic version of who you are — the person behind the performance or the role

Your true self in English is the version that emerges once you stop performing fluency and start actually communicating. It takes time to access in a second language, but every moment of real expression gets you closer to it.

ES

La versión real y auténtica de quien eres — la persona detrás de la actuación o el rol.

Tu yo auténtico en inglés es la versión que emerge cuando dejas de actuar fluidez y empiezas a comunicarte de verdad.

When you speak from your true self — even imperfectly — people connect with you far more than with polished but hollow English.

When you speak from your true self — even imperfectly — people connect with you far more than with polished but hollow English. -> Cuando hablas desde tu yo auténtico — aunque sea imperfectamente — la gente conecta contigo mucho más que con un inglés pulido pero vacío.

She realised her true self in English was actually warmer and funnier than the formal version she had been performing.

She realised her true self in English was actually warmer and funnier than the formal version she had been performing. -> Se dio cuenta de que su verdadero yo en inglés era en realidad más cálido y divertido que la versión formal que había estado representando.