

## VOCABULARY · EPISODE 51

# The Superpower You Didn't Know You Still Have

Key words & expressions · English + Español

10 words

Your English Toolbox

1

## dormant

latente · inactivo pero no perdido

### DEF

temporarily inactive or unused, but still present and capable of becoming active again

*Dormant is a beautiful word — it comes from the Latin 'to sleep'. Skills, languages, and abilities can go dormant but never truly disappear. Learners who studied English years ago and feel they've 'lost it' have a dormant language, not a dead one.*

### ES

Temporalmente inactivo o sin usar, pero todavía presente y capaz de volver a activarse.

Viene del latín 'dormir'. Las habilidades pueden volverse latentes pero nunca desaparecen del todo.

**Your English skills are not gone — they are dormant. Give them a week of input and watch them reawaken.**

Your English skills are not gone — they are dormant. -> Tus habilidades en inglés no han desaparecido — están latentes.

**She discovered her dormant French when she moved to Paris — it came back within ten days.**

She discovered her dormant French when she moved to Paris. -> Descubrió su francés inactivo pero no perdido cuando se mudó a París.

2

## to reactivate

reactivar · volver a encender lo que ya está ahí

### DEF

to bring something back into use or action after a period of inactivity; to restart or revive a dormant skill or habit

*Reactivation is faster than learning from scratch — the neural pathways exist, they just need stimulation. This is the good news for returning learners: a week of consistent input can reactivate months of prior study.*

### ES

Volver a poner algo en uso o acción después de un período de inactividad; reiniciar o revivir una habilidad o hábito dormido.

La reactivación es más rápida que aprender desde cero — las vías neuronales existen, solo necesitan estimulación.

**You don't need to start over — you need to reactivate what is already there.**

You don't need to start over — you need to reactivate what is already there. -> No necesitas empezar de nuevo — necesitas reactivar lo que ya está ahí.

**She reactivated her English in three weeks by returning to the same podcast she had listened to two years before.**

She reactivated her English in three weeks by returning to the same podcast she had listened to two years before. -> Reactivó su inglés en tres semanas volviendo al mismo podcast que había escuchado dos años antes.

3

## to pick up where you left off

retomar donde lo dejaste · continuar desde el punto en que te detuviste

### DEF

to resume something from the exact point at which you stopped, without needing to start again from the beginning

*Pick up where you left off is the phrase for resuming after a gap. When you return to English after months away, you are not starting from zero — your brain has retained more than you think. Acknowledging this makes returning feel achievable rather than overwhelming.*

### ES

Retomar algo desde el punto exacto en que te detuviste, sin necesidad de empezar de nuevo desde el principio.

La frase para retomar después de una pausa. Cuando vuelves al inglés tras meses de ausencia, no empiezas desde cero.

**After a break from English, pick up where you left off — your brain has kept more than you realise.**

After a break from English, pick up where you left off — your brain has kept more than you realise. -> Después de un descanso del inglés, retoma donde lo dejaste — tu cerebro ha conservado más de lo que crees.

**She returned to English after two years abroad and was able to pick up where she had left off within a week.**

She returned to English after two years abroad and was able to pick up where she had left off within a week. -> Volvió al inglés después de dos años en el extranjero y pudo continuar desde el punto en que lo había dejado en una semana.

4

## passive vocabulary

el vocabulario pasivo · palabras que entiendes pero que aún no produces

### DEF

words and phrases you understand when you hear or read them, but do not yet produce spontaneously in speech or writing

*Passive vocabulary is the iceberg of language learning — far larger than what you actively use. Most learners have two to three times more passive than active vocabulary. The goal is not just to build passive knowledge but to move words from passive to active through deliberate production practice.*

### ES

Palabras y frases que comprendes cuando las escuchas o lees, pero que aún no produces espontáneamente en el habla o la escritura.

El iceberg del aprendizaje de idiomas — mucho más grande de lo que usas activamente.

**Most of your vocabulary is passive — the goal is to move more of it into active use.**

Most of your vocabulary is passive — the goal is to move more of it into active use. -> La mayor parte de tu vocabulario es pasivo — el objetivo es mover más de él al uso activo.

**She had a large passive vocabulary from years of reading but struggled to use those words when speaking.**

She had a large passive vocabulary from years of reading but struggled to use those words when speaking. -> Tenía un gran vocabulario pasivo de años de lectura pero le costaba usar esas palabras al hablar.

5

## muscle memory

la memoria muscular · el recuerdo físico automático de un movimiento practicado

### DEF

the physical ability to perform a skilled movement automatically, without conscious thought, through repeated practice

*Muscle memory in language applies to pronunciation and rhythm. When you have spoken a phrase hundreds of times, your mouth knows how to form it without you thinking. This is why drills and shadowing matter — you are building the physical memory of English sounds.*

### ES

La capacidad física de realizar un movimiento hábil automáticamente, sin pensamiento consciente, a través de la práctica repetida.

En el lenguaje se aplica a la pronunciación y el ritmo. Cuando has pronunciado una frase cientos de veces, tu boca sabe cómo formarla sin pensar.

***Pronunciation improves through muscle memory — your mouth needs to practise the sounds until they feel natural.***

Pronunciation improves through muscle memory — your mouth needs to practise the sounds until they feel natural. -> La pronunciación mejora a través de la memoria muscular — tu boca necesita practicar los sonidos hasta que se sientan naturales.

***After months of shadowing, she had built muscle memory for English rhythm and stress patterns.***

After months of shadowing, she had built muscle memory for English rhythm and stress patterns. -> Después de meses de shadowing, había desarrollado el recuerdo físico automático para el ritmo y los patrones de acento del inglés.

6

## to get rusty

oxidarse · perder fluidez por falta de uso

### DEF

to lose skill or fluency through lack of use — to become less sharp or effective over time without practice

*Get rusty is the informal, non-dramatic word for language attrition. Like a knife that is not sharpened, a language not used becomes dull. The good news: rust is reversible. A week of daily input is often enough to restore most of what was lost.*

### ES

Perder habilidad o fluidez por falta de uso — volverse menos preciso o efectivo con el tiempo sin práctica.

La palabra informal y no dramática para la pérdida de idioma. Como un cuchillo que no se afila, un idioma no usado se embota.

***Languages get rusty quickly without use — even a few weeks of daily listening can reverse the rust.***

Languages get rusty quickly without use — even a few weeks of daily listening can reverse the rust. -> Los idiomas se oxidan rápidamente sin uso — incluso pocas semanas de escucha diaria pueden revertir el óxido.

***Her German had got rusty after years of speaking only English, but it came back faster than expected.***

Her German had got rusty after years of speaking only English, but it came back faster than expected. -> Su alemán se había oxidado después de años hablando solo inglés, pero volvió más rápido de lo esperado.

## 7 to refresh your memory

### refrescar la memoria · recordar algo que ya sabías

#### DEF

to remind yourself of something you previously learned or knew, especially after a period of not using it

*Refresh your memory is the technology metaphor for reviewing what you knew. Like reloading a page, refreshing knowledge requires briefly re-engaging with it. In language learning, refreshing is much faster than initial learning — which is why spaced repetition is so effective.*

#### ES

Recordarte algo que aprendiste o sabías anteriormente, especialmente después de un período de no usarlo.

La metáfora tecnológica para revisar lo que sabías. En el aprendizaje de idiomas, refrescar es mucho más rápido que el aprendizaje inicial.

**After time away from English, start by refreshing your memory on the basics before moving to new material.**

After time away from English, start by refreshing your memory on the basics before moving to new material. -> Después de tiempo alejado del inglés, empieza refrescando la memoria sobre lo básico antes de pasar a material nuevo.

**She refreshed her memory of English idioms by listening to old episodes before her first speaking session.**

She refreshed her memory of English idioms by listening to old episodes before her first speaking session. -> Refrescó su recuerdo de los modismos ingleses escuchando episodios antiguos antes de su primera sesión de habla.

## 8 to reconnect with something

### reconectar con algo · retomar la relación con algo que había quedado interrumpido

#### DEF

to re-establish a relationship, interest, or ability that had faded or been interrupted

*Reconnect is the warmth word for returning to something you once loved or used. Reconnecting with English after a break is not punishment — it is reunion. This framing matters: learners who approach return with curiosity reconnect faster than those who approach with guilt.*

#### ES

Restablecer una relación, interés o habilidad que se había atenuado o interrumpido.

La palabra cálida para volver a algo que una vez amaste o usaste. Reconectar con el inglés después de una pausa no es un castigo — es un reencuentro.

**Reconnect with English through something you enjoy — music, a podcast, a film — not through exercises.**

Reconnect with English through something you enjoy — music, a podcast, a film — not through exercises. -> Reconecta con el inglés a través de algo que disfrutes — música, un podcast, una película — no a través de ejercicios.

**She reconnected with her love of English by reading the novels that had inspired her years ago.**

She reconnected with her love of English by reading the novels that had inspired her years ago. -> Retomó la relación con su amor por el inglés leyendo las novelas que la habían inspirado años atrás.

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## to retain information

retener información · mantener el conocimiento en la memoria a largo plazo

### DEF

to keep knowledge in memory over time, rather than forgetting it shortly after learning it

*Retain information is the outcome that all vocabulary learning strategies aim for. Reading a word once does not mean retaining it. Retention requires repetition, context, emotional connection, and spacing. Building retention habits is more valuable than building a large initial vocabulary.*

### ES

Mantener el conocimiento en la memoria a lo largo del tiempo, en lugar de olvidarlo poco después de aprenderlo.

El resultado que persiguen todas las estrategias de aprendizaje de vocabulario. Leer una palabra una vez no significa retenerla.

**The goal is not to learn words — it is to retain them long enough to use them.**

The goal is not to learn words — it is to retain them long enough to use them. -> El objetivo no es aprender palabras — es retenerlas el tiempo suficiente para usarlas.

**She retained vocabulary much better when she used new words in sentences within twenty-four hours of learning them.**

She retained vocabulary much better when she used new words in sentences within twenty-four hours of learning them. -> Retenía el vocabulario mucho mejor cuando usaba las palabras nuevas en frases dentro de las veinticuatro horas de aprenderlas.

10

## to lose your edge

perder el filo · volverse menos preciso después de un período sin práctica

### DEF

to become slightly less sharp, skilled, or effective than you were at your peak — through lack of practice or time away

*Lose your edge is the sophisticated version of 'get rusty' — it implies that you once had an edge, a sharpness, a precision that has softened. This phrase is used by people who are advanced or were once very good. It captures the anxiety of a returning speaker who remembers how good they were.*

### ES

Volverse ligeramente menos agudo, hábil o efectivo que en tu punto más alto — por falta de práctica o tiempo alejado.

La versión sofisticada de 'oxidarse' — implica que una vez tuviste una ventaja, una precisión que se ha suavizado.

**Take a month off English and you will feel like you have lost your edge — get back to it quickly.**

Take a month off English and you will feel like you have lost your edge — get back to it quickly. -> Tómate un mes de descanso del inglés y sentirás que has perdido el filo — vuelve a él rápidamente.

**After six months without speaking English, she felt she had lost her edge in conversations.**

After six months without speaking English, she felt she had lost her edge in conversations. -> Después de seis meses sin hablar inglés, sintió que se había vuelto menos precisa después de un período sin práctica en las conversaciones.